

glance at the cottages and grounds awaken a very different sensation in the mind of the traveller as he sees the taste and care manifested to make them attractive, from the nakedness and deformity meeting him in all their hideousness in his rides through New England towns.

Of course, while all these remarks are made generally, it must be admitted there are bright exceptions, yet they are only exceptions. We have beautiful gardens, too often laid out by foreign gardeners; fine painters, with few buyers for their works; sculptors, educated abroad, and if appreciated at home simply from the echo of trans-Atlantic praise. As a nation, it must be granted æsthetic culture has been but little regarded, whatever may be said of individuals.

Why is it? Without doubt, scenery has not a little to do with this, and Longfellow says, the Alps more than half educate the Swiss. Yet surely we are richly favored in scenic attractions and grand exhibitions of nature. There is but one Niagara, St. Lawrence, Montmorenci, and Trenton Falls; the Highlands of the Hudson, our lakes, rivers, cascades, and many picturesque views attract the admiration of all strangers, and have been pronounced even superior to the most celebrated objects of European scenery.

Are we naturally deficient? It cannot be so. Our children possess a love of beauty, and often can be heard pearls, thoughts full of poetry, dropped from the lips of those who in after years become as prosaic as a book of chronicles, as matter-of-fact as the veriest Yankee. Said a little girl to her mother, not long since, "I have been good to-day, mamma—is not your heart full of violets? Do not the violets blossom in your heart to-day, mamma?" And again, sitting down by her mother, and pressing her little head close to her, she said, "Mamma, I am the happiest little girl in N——. My happiness is like a wreath of beautiful roses all around my heart, with two words written in it, *from God.*" What could be more exquisite than such poetry gushing from the overflowing imagery of a little child?—and in what contrast to what that same little girl in after years might become under the training to which most of our young are subjected!

The fault is not in our scenery, in that God has placed us in the choicest of lands; nor is it want of natural gifts, in these, of whatever kind, no people were ever more highly endowed; the fault is in our education. The education of our young is of the best kind as far as it goes, but many faculties, avenues to the most exquisite pleasure and the highest refinement, are disregarded, or deadened by the influences to which they are exposed. Children are thoroughly drilled in arithmetic, grammar, geography, and everything where fact and reason are matters of inquiry, but there the instruction ends. Dryness and practicality pervade our school-rooms and crush out whatever is not in harmony with them. Their influence reacts on the teacher; and the ease with which the schoolmaster or school-mistress can be identified, after a few years, by the precision of every movement and sentence, and a peculiar air, has become proverbial. At home the influence is of the same kind; all must be practical, common sense; parents train their children as they were trained. If the child utters a poetic thought, or gives vent to an exclamation called forth by an exhibition of beauty, to which his little heart responds as God designed it should when he created a harmony between the earth and its occupants, it is not understood. Wise ones say, the child is "too bright to live long," and regard such expressions as a "doleful sound from the tomb," or tell the little ones to be more sensible; that poetry and flowers never make persons rich nor help them to get along in the world. Thus the child lives, but its sense of beauty dies.

In æsthetic perception modern civilization is far inferior to that of antiquity. We can never sufficiently wonder at the beauty and poetry of thought manifested in Grecian literature. To the Greeks, every flower awakened a feeling and taught a lesson; every breeze spoke a language; there was music everywhere to their souls; and what wonder?—they fancied they could hear the "music of the spheres!"

If the defect is in our education, the remedy must be there also. Parents who direct the earliest impressions of their children should never let an object of beauty pass unnoticed. The writer knows mothers who day by day take their children into the fields, gather flowers, point out their delicate tints and the grace and exquisite formation of the petals, teach them about the trees, talk of the sky above and the little dew-drop at their feet, and it soon becomes to them not a cold, unfeeling remark, but a living, pervading reality, that "there is beauty everywhere."

But the remark will be made, and it is too true, few mothers are fitted for this. Teachers, then, must do all they can to cultivate the taste of their pupils. They can do much, very much, towards this in the school-room and out of it, in many ways. Again comes the remark, and it is too true, our teachers are not fitted for it; many of the highest reputation are coarse in language and manner, heedless in their persons, unrefined in thought, able to teach the regular text-books, and nothing more.

Still the evil exists, and it should be remedied in the way all evils are remedied. Attention should be directed to it, and all who have an influence should strive to remove it. Let teachers be trained who can better develop the taste of the young, and when these pupils become parents they will train more wisely their children. Let more effort be made throughout the community to awaken a national taste. Let our large cities have such parks and gardens, full of the choicest flowers, where all can walk, as are found in the great cities of Europe. Let a greater love for ornamental trees be encouraged; let them be planted by the side of our streets and around our dwellings. They cost only a little labour in the outset, heaven then takes care of them, and it would be difficult to estimate their refining influence. If paintings and other works of art, too, could be accessible to the masses, as is the case in Europe, it would do much to the same end.\*

This subject has lately occupied the attention of some Massachusetts educationists; and at a recent meeting at the State House, Boston, the Hon. E. G. Parker, of the Senate, said, if anything is neglected in our New England education, it is a taste for the beautiful in Nature and Art. That which elevates us highest in the scale of being is, for the most part, disregarded; and we have few men of really refined tastes,—few who can appreciate such feelings as Ruskin said inspired him when contemplating a range of mountains.

Rev. J. F. Clark said, the mere acquisition of knowledge is the narrowest and meanest idea entertained of education. Men who are all head are dwarfs in everything else; their moral nature is coarse and hard; they are reduced to a shrivelled intellect packed with knowledge, with no perception of the beautiful, no true, complete development. John Brown looks upon the sky, and sees good weather for haying;—John Ruskin looks at the sky, and sees it full of exquisite beauty. William Wilkins has made money, and says he will travel; he sees the Alps, and thinks they are mighty pretty, "but it's dreadful tedious to get to them." William Wordsworth travels, and wherever he goes, exquisite pictures greet him; and when he returns they are hung up in the galleries of his memory. There is no luxury equal to that derived from the gratification of a cultivated taste, in the contemplation of all the different aspects of nature. The love of nature is purifying; it need, however, to be cultivated. Children should be taught to draw, should be taken into the woods and gardens, and to see museums of art. Were this course persevered in, the whole community at last would be educated into a love for the beautiful.

Rev. R. C. Waterson was the last speaker, and dwelt at length on art, its creations, and their varied and elevating influences. He praised American scenery, American taste, and American artists. Native taste is as abundant as our native wild flowers; it only needs development and direction.

It is, indeed, to be hoped that the minds of all interested in the education of the young may be thoroughly aroused to our previous neglect in this matter, and that this sad defect in American character may be remedied.—*Massachusetts Teacher.*

## II. ADORN THE SCHOOL-HOUSES.

On a recent evening we sat down to write a few words to enforce the admonition given above. We thought of the many summer schools beginning in these weeks of buds and birds nests; of the miserable shanties on the stony high-way side, in which so many would this month receive their first lessons in mistress-ship and pupilage; of the baleful and enduring influence of filth and disorder and neglect associated in the minds of the children with the school and with learning; and of the opposite influence of order, neatness and beauty. We wished, if it were possible, to persuade our readers to do something to adorn and beautify their school-houses, and the grounds belonging to them. We did not forget that many of these school-houses are hovels, too rickety for repair and too filthy for purification save by fire; and that many of them stand in the road, with no yard or play-ground. We knew, too, that many farmers' door yards were cumbered with sleds, and carts and broken boards and decaying timber, because their owners think it "nonsense to be so dreadful particular." It also occurred to us, if we must confess it, that some who were keeping school would be unwilling to make any efforts to beautify a place in which they were to remain but a few weeks. But all such were dismissed with the thought that they did not belong to the fraternity of true teachers, being quite too worldly and selfish for any such fellowship.

Knowing, as we do, the influence for good which a neat, orderly school-room, and pleasant play-ground, have upon both teacher and pupil, we cannot refrain from bringing the subject again before the people.

\* An extensive collection of both paintings and statues will be found in the Educational Museum for Upper Canada, which is open daily to visitors from 9 to 4. Sundays and holidays excepted.