

ESTHETICS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLROOM.

BY OLIVE HAMRLY.

THE word *primary* in the heading of this article should be emphasized for two reasons: first, because the many means of teaching esthetics in the higher grades are not even touched upon here; for, to the developed mind, for instance, a certain, keen-edged beauty can be extracted from the exactness of mathematics. Second, because it is intended to emphasize the fact that the primary school-room is a fit place for its introduction and cultivation. Indeed, perhaps it is the most fit, for "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely," are in place there. The danger is not in the direction of too much, but too little.

The drawing lesson has its place, at least in most graded schools, 'tis true, but *apparently* good objections are still hurled against it, not only by the ignorant, but by the cultured. I do not propose to attempt to answer these here; for to handle the *pros* and *cons* of this subject in all their bearing, would constitute an article in itself; besides, it would be unnecessary, as it has already been ably done by others, to the satisfaction of most teachers at least. Drawing can be made a means of developing and fostering the love of the beautiful among children, even when the prescribed course is neither a natural nor an ideal one. There will always be a few who will show natural taste for its and who will draw voluntarily that which is beyond their limit. Let them do so. Have their work put on the board,—if only to stay there for a short time—praising when you can, hinting and helping always. I always have some pupils pleading to put this or that on the board at recess. Perhaps the this or that is something that makes you smile at the child's innocent presumption, but perhaps, also, you will be made to smile at the success. I have often done so. We find it is with them as with ourselves,—they can do many things that they have never been taught to do. At the Washington

memorial exercises, February twenty-first, I had drawn on our board *good* pictures of Washington's tomb and his house at Ft. Vernon by pupils who had never taken a lesson in object-drawing or perspective. They were copied, too, from small photographs, and without the least assistance from me.

Drawing is not the only study, by any means, that affords opportunities in this direction. Of course there are many. Plant-lessons are an especial source from which to draw deep for this purpose. Plants should be considered almost indispensable to the schoolroom. "No place for them," says some one. Contrive a place, then. "No window-ledges, and only two windows, and they are looking north." That is pretty bad to be sure; but we must have them, so we will buy twenty-five cents' worth of plank, and get some boys to put up two shelves and paint them. Then we will get a few sturdy geraniums, ivies, and evergreens—not so many as to obstruct the light; we must always guard against that. They will live and be green and fresh without the sun, and we will love them the more, even as we do some sweet, strong souls who are so without much to cheer them. Whenever there comes one of those rare, warm days that drop upon us sometimes in the winter from the overlaid arms of bounteous Spring, as she passes over us on her journey to other lands, let the children carry the plants out to feel her smile. "I cannot afford to buy them," says some one. No, dear friend, I know you cannot; few of us can. But they need not cost you a cent—only a little forethought and management. Get slips from acquaintances in the summer. I invite the children to bring them, and take up a collection for your shelf. Have ferns, mosses, all kinds of sweet wildwood things, in a box or pan on your desk. Have something green in your room somewhere. Give to the children and yourself "The mute, mute comfort of the green things growing." One room I taught in once had four large, ugly pillars in it. The children disliked them, and so did I. They pouted when they had to sit near them, and I did