

named Whitman's "Carol to Death" as one of the most perfect poems in the language.

"Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate around the world, serenely arriving,  
arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later, delicate death.

Praised be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and know-  
ledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise!  
praise!  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool, enfolding  
death.

Dark mother, always gliding near with soft  
feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest  
welcome?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above  
all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must in-  
deed come, come unfalteringly."

Surely the "dark mother" was never greeted so cheerily and fearlessly. Joy rings through every line at the thought of death's inevitableness. Surely if the spirit of this Carol could enter the hearts of a million men, driving out the morbid fear of death which has dwelt there all too long, the happier time of which our prophet dreamed would be hastened in its coming.

There is no room for regret in the death of Walt Whitman. He has finished his appointed task, given to the world the message which was his to bear and turned with a sigh of content to sleep in the bosom of his beloved earth, "the mother of us all."

MARY E. FLETCHER.

### THE GHOST OF EDUCATION.

"ET TU, BRUTE!"

I make no pretence in this paper to any very great originality of thought, sequence of method or exhaustiveness of treatment. I simply intend to advance a few suggestive propositions, "tell you that which you yourselves do know," or should know, and what many have been knowing, seeing, and not a few publishing abroad at various times, in various ways, from various platforms. I come, indeed, not to praise Cæsar but to help bury him, or that part of him at least, which, being practically defunct and of no further service in the economic plan of practical purpose, should receive decent and immediate interment.

To the more thoughtful who may read this, I am not sure whether, in the presence of facts, a funeral oration be even necessary. I might simply point to dead Cæsar's body, "show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor, poor, dumb mouths," and "bid them speak for me" and for themselves; but, unfortunately, as is not uncommon in cases of murder, Cæsar's ghost survives, and some nineteenth century theorists and casuists are so obtuse and impractical, especially if influenced by politico-scholastic preferment, etc., that confounding the shadow with the substance, they do, in very presence of the august departed, refuse to accept Cæsar's dead body as a corpse, *de facto*, and so withhold consent to its decent burial, which they will continue to do until convinced by self-interest, through the channels of public opinion or political expediency, that the spirit divine has indeed fled, and left the mere husk, the barren shell, a monopoly on our hands.

But public opinion is as difficult to convince or coerce, as obstinate and irrational

in its way, as political expediency itself, although, truth to tell, its mistakes are less frequently the outcome of craft and selfishness than of prejudice and ignorance. It is not, indeed, until times are very ripe, nay, almost rotten, for change, that the unthinking masses can be brought to see that change is either desirable or possible. Then there is a crisis, a political and social chaos, like the French Revolution, or an unnatural internecine hiatus, like the American Civil War. The majority of people are so accustomed to let others do their thinking for them, whether political, educational, or theological, that it is quite sufficient to elevate a Borgia, a Rousseau, or a Torquemada to the purple of dignity, for millions to fall down and worship the hero of the hour, if only an enthusiast can be got with party backing and a long pointer to apotheosize the hero, and illustrate his virtues by aid of the magic lantern of a specious and often ignorant pretence, upon the white sheet of popular gullibility.

The masses in Canada have so long been taught by lecturers, politicians, and school-magnates to look upon their system of education as the most unique and perfect system in existence, its methods the most progressive and utilitarian, and its results utterly beyond compare, as contrasted with anything else of the kind on the habitable face of the globe, that they have actually come to believe it, so much so, indeed, that whenever any might has heretofore had the temerity to assume to himself an unauthorized edition of magic lantern and long pointer, to issue forth as a solitary and unpopular exponent of an opposite opinion, the educational and educated (*sic*) masses have been ready to stone him as a hobby-breaker, or carry him out, feet first, as a second and greater Ananias.

Luckily, thought, which is simply the rational principle reduced to a formula, as well as the schoolmaster, is abroad, and well it is for the people of the Province, that it is beginning to shuffle off the swaddling bands of an irrational and too long protracted infancy to peer forth and ascertain for itself that educational principle and method, as theorized over and practised in this fair Canada of ours, is not all "that fancy painted it," indeed, is neither "lovely nor divine."

We have lately unearthed some queer specimens of the genus *vulpes vulgaris* in our quarterings and searchings over political hunting-grounds. We have given the death-blow to many a hydra-headed ogre of theology and ecclesiasticism, with its fee-fi-fo-dum of arrogance and dogma. It remains for a few, bold, unshrinking intellects to dare the blatant spirit of insolent pretence in yet another direction, and beard the Cerberus, Education, at the very gates of his stronghold, where he guards the way to the banks of that inky Styx of obfuscation, in which are being annually dipped by thousands and tens of thousands our too-confiding youth, who passively suffer the immersion, without even the poor satisfaction of being restored as invulnerable in any one particular spot.

This Cerberus, like his namesake, is a three-headed monster, and his jaws are ever open to the sops which may be thrown him by those who fear or desire to ingratiate him. With one eye upon sectarian principle and prerogative, a second upon political expediency and preferment, he keeps his third rigidly fixed upon the lay and lower masses, and fattens upon the morsels thrown him from their direction in the shape of

state aid, compulsory school attendance, and a warped and ill-directed egotism, fostered by alien short-sightedness, or selfishness and diseased personal ambition; that egotism which it has been the misfortune of a new country to engender, of modern politics to pamper, and of a pseudo education to corrupt, whose aim is universal levelness, whose legend is "I am as good as you are, indeed, something better," and whose direct outcome is the colonial "gent" and "lady," a poor plagiarism of the *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, of the French Revolution, without the sharp corrective of the guillotine to save it, by its very excesses, from committing mischief, which, too late, may be found to be irreparable.

Lest it should be thought that I am but a mere Quixotic theorist, who, mounted on the Rosinante of his own crotchety deductions, has entered the lists to try a joust with the blunt-headed lance of a specious casuistry against some wind-mill of self-erected prejudice and conceit, let me premise what I have further to say, first, by a statement, and then by a quotation. The statement is this, that I have been, however unworthy, at least an earnest, conscientious instructor of Canadian youth for a period of sixteen years, and that I have taught in every grade from the rural single-room to the academic hall. The quotation, necessarily fragmentary, bearing upon my subject, is from an article entitled "Sham Education," from the pen of a no less distinguished scholar and teacher than Professor Mahaffy, of Trinity College, Dublin. Speaking of promiscuous education in the British Isles, he says: "The theory of the millennium of happiness to be produced by the spread of education can fortunately be discussed, partly at least, on practical grounds, for the incipient stages must indicate what the future is likely to bring to us."

"The results, as stated above, seem to point with certainty to this conclusion: that the progress of the race, though real, has not at all kept pace with the outlay of the treasure and toil in public instruction and competition. Our youth is not more vigorous or perfect, though it may be taught many more things. The quantity of teaching, both in hours and subjects, is damaging the quality; instruction is impeding education. In fact, the main feature of the modern system is hurry, and hurry is fatal to all good training."

"So far, then, the theory, as put into practice, is not verifying the loud promises of the theorists, and there is even a possibility, which some would call a hope, that human nature will some day rebel against this terribly increasing burden of our youth, and abolish it, as our Government has abolished the fêtes of Juggernaut in India."

"The most frequent criminals are probably the ignorant; the greatest criminals are generally those who have had their intelligence sharpened by some exercise. There is no panacea for human ills; certainly not this—the favorite one with modern theorists."

"The second point established by the foregoing argument is this, that if we make haste with our instruction, we are sure, not only to spoil it, but to destroy the education which it ought to convey; moreover, we create a new crop of physical and mental evils to take the place of those we are striving to remove. Take the clearest case. Is it a good bargain to have a boy or a girl highly instructed and eminently successful?