

THE
CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTOR.

OCTOBER, 1856.

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" THAT THE SOUL BE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NOT GOOD."—PROV. XIX. 2.  
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"I HAVE LEARNED BY EXPERIENCE," OR "LABAN'S
TEACHER."

GEN. XXX. 27

JAY tells us that "there is no spiritual meaning in these words." Perhaps there is not. Certainly the character of the speaker was not remarkable for devotional sentiment. And yet the divine agency is distinctly recognized. Laban traces to it the prosperity which had attended him. Jacob is acknowledged as the *occasion* of the blessing—but God is confessed as its *cause*. "I pray thee if I have found favour in thine eyes tarry, for *I have learned by experience* that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake."

Experience is often a very efficient instructor. She succeeds sometimes where others have completely failed. Let us look a little therefore at some of the main features in the character of this teacher, and her mode of instruction. It may aid us to profit more extensively under her tuition.

First of all then, it must have been noticed by every one that this teacher is *no theorist*. Her lessons are all eminently experimental. As an educationalist therefore she is decidedly practical. She has nothing to do with speculation. Other teachers may amuse themselves, and entertain—or puzzle—as the case may be—their pupils with fine-spun hypotheses, but *she* deals with actualities. Long before Bacon's time she proceeded to the Baconian method. This method is in truth all her own. She never had any other. She never acknowledged the "*Dogmatic System*." Her very name points to the experimental method. And all her pupils bear witness that she rigidly adheres to it.

And then again this is a teacher whose lessons are *remarkable for their pointedness*. Many teachers seem to be lost in a vague generality. The principles they propound may be correct enough—they may lead to conclusions quite sound. But they are mere abstractions—cloudy and cold. They have no individuality. They never reach details. It is not so with this teacher. There is about her a Nathan-like pointedness. She lays bare individual delinquency. She thunders in the ear of the offender, "*Thou art, the man*." This is not always pleasant. It is often very much the contrary. There is in the present day—probably there always has been—a prevalent