

THE PENALTIES OF EDUCATION.

MOST middle-aged persons can well remember the time when a very usual copy set for the youthful penman was, A good education is better than riches. Many a poor parent to-day consoles himself for his poverty in the reflection: I am not able to bequeath any money to my children, but I have given them what is really better—a good education.

This putting of education in the scales against a veritable money-bag is by no means a tradition. It is the prevalent method of estimating the value of education, although the method seems to be somewhat on the decline.

The conviction is planting itself that education is not an unmixed good. Prof. Swing, in a late sermon, presents forcibly some of the considerations that begin to impress society. Even educators cease to swell with resentment at the insinuation that the common schools have a tendency to render hard labour ignoble in the eyes of our youth.

It is a pleasant sign that Prof. Swing, in the midst of the temptations of his discourse, avoids the usual though shallow thrust at the public schools. He evidently feels what, it would seem, any fair observer must see, that it is silly to put upon the schools, a feeble agency in comparison with the total sum of education, any large responsibility for what is the general result of a literary education no matter how obtained. And educators ought to see, as some of them do, that it is equally silly to deny that the tendency of the schools is in inevitable accord with the universal result of education upon individual character. The thing to hold accountable is education in general, and not our schools in particular.

However it might be in the case of an ideal education, it seems beyond dispute that the actual effect of securing that mental power and superiority which are implied in the term education or its semblance, is to beget a self-consciousness and an aspiration that are not content with the drudgery that makes a living by hard labour.

It is not among the least of the blessings of education that it does beget this aspiration, this ambition. The effort and desire to escape mere physical labour is a strong lever in promoting both race and individual elevation. That along with this ambition often go vanity and a false estimate of what is worthy is one of the penalties that come from partaking of the tree of knowledge. But they are the accompaniments of that little learning which makes one mad, an amount that unfortunately, a large part of mankind never get beyond.

Whether the education that stops here, leaving these defects in the character, is more of a blessing than a curse to the individual and to society may be a question. But if this stage were never reached there would be no hope of reaching the stage beyond which is full of health and blessing. The evil must be endured, or the subsequent good cannot be attained. It is a penalty entailed by human nature.

But those who take to education simply as a business investment, a means of livelihood, not unfrequently pay a heavy penalty in prolonged disappointment and unrest. For them there is a sad irony in the statement, Education is better than riches. The lie is given to it by the money-getting experiences of life. Solid, thorough going education cuts no creditable