

THOUGHTS ON THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH

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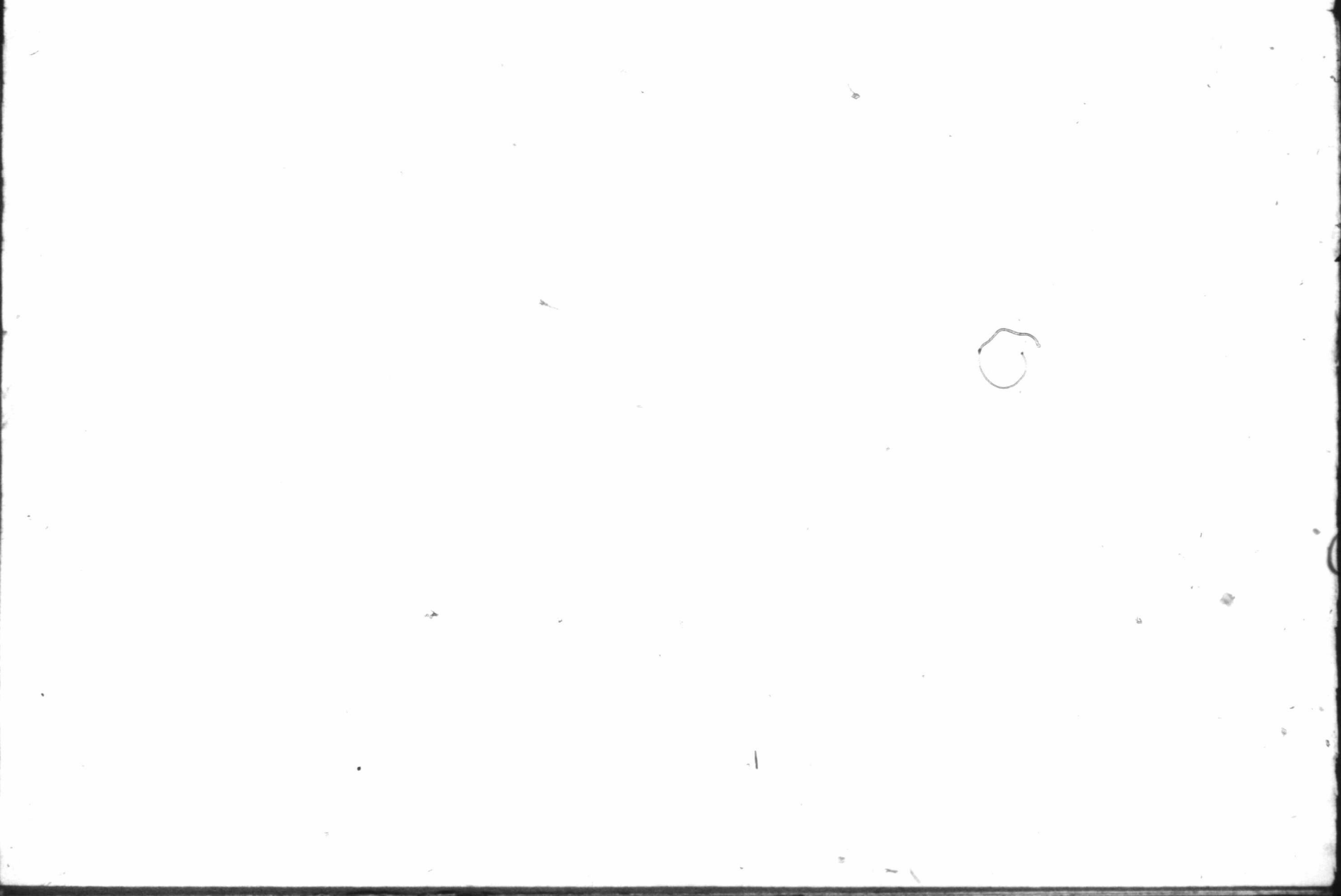


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T H O U G H T S

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Education of Youth.

By RICHARD COCKREL,

TEACHER OF THE MATHEMATICS, AT NEWARK,

UPPER CANADA.

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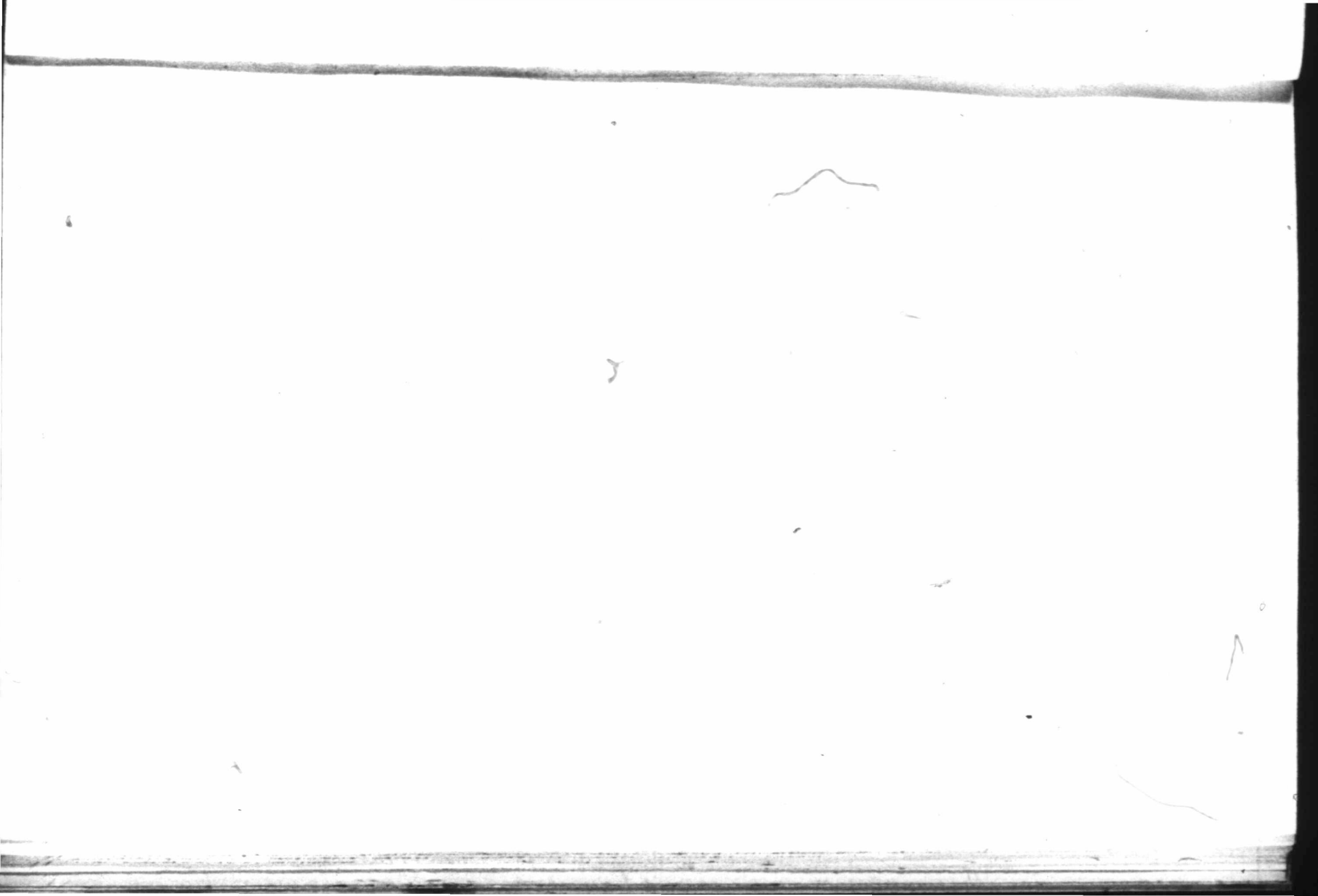
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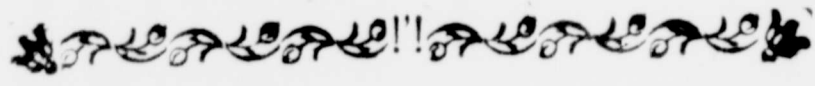
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T H O U G H T S
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E D U C A T I O N of Y O U T H .

THE education of youth is of such an important and interesting nature to society, that the man who embarks in so glorious a cause benefits a community as much as he possibly can, provided his abilities are adequate to the task ; he is not only serving the present, but is also rearing on a firm basis, the pillars of the succeeding generation.

It is certainly necessary for every person who undertakes the arduous task of a tutor, that he

be a man of sound learning, and an irreproachable character.

By a man of sound learning, I mean one who understands well the fundamentals of those branches which he undertakes to teach; this enables him to open the minds of his pupils with facility, and convey his ideas in a clear and masterly manner. The not being reduced to the miserable necessity of having recourse to old manuscripts for the questions and solutions which he proposes to his scholars; he performs the duty of the day with cheerfulness, leuētres his scholars into a knowledge of what they are about, and by thus exhibiting causes and effects, he furnishes the tender minds with something more than superficial.

The expression, *an illiterate tutor*, would in an-

cient times, I dare say, have been thought a solecism. But alas ! how frequent do we find, now-a-days, persons filling the places of tutors, who have neither abilities nor address to recommend them, scarce knowing B from a bull's foot. It is evident this description of men do not act *pro bono publico*, but for their own private ease and emolument. Hence we daily behold tailors, blacksmiths, cobblers, worn out livery servants, &c. &c. turning schoolmasters, and, Isaac Factotum like, can do every thing.

O YE mullroom gentry ! do you sincerely reflect on the consequences of your conduct ? Children placed under your tuition at a time when their minds are free from care, and their memories at the highest pitch of perfection, and you by your unwarrantable licence deceive their

parents, and instead of cultivating their geniusses, nip the embryo blossom and crush to nothing the prolific source of their future happiness.

THE moral conduct of a tutor, as I observed before, should stand unimpeached : his behavior, particularly in the presence of his pupils, should be in exact conformity with the " rule of right : " he should warmly encourage virtuous actions, and use every effort to suppress vicious ones. No master ought to be addicted to drunkenness, lying, swearing, obscene language, &c. &c. for these vices cannot fail of acting in some measure on children whose minds are susceptible of every impression ; for, as the celebrated Dryden observes,

Children like tender ozers take the bow,
 And as they first are fashion'd always grow ;
 Hence what we learn in youth, to that alone,
 In age, we are by second nature prone.

IT behoves every master of a school to become acquainted as early as possible, with the disposition of his pupils : soft words are sufficient in order to induce some boys to diligence, some will not do without threats, and others will never make any progress without now and then being brought to the birchen altar.

THE passionate man is a very improper character to have the care of children ; for when under the influence of passion, he will use such a degree of severity as oftentimes produces very serious effects. I have frequently experienced the bitterness of it myself when a boy.

In fine, "A passionate temper," says the learned Mr. Addison, "renders a man unfit for
" business, deprives him of his reason, robs him
" of all that is great and noble in his nature ;

- 1 " it makes him unfit for conversation, destroys
 " friendship, changes justice into cruelty, and
 " turns all order into confusion."

IF masters would also use proper means to gain the affections of children, I am sure they might be successful and more happy in their situations; for I am convinced from experience that it is possible to win the children so far as they shall both respect and fear you: they are reasonable beings, and in general can be wrought upon best by argument. I do not like the idea of stripes, and would never recommend them but when the strictest necessity required it.

By observation and enquiry, I am inclined to think that the education of youth is too much neglected in this Province. In some parts they have masters, in others none; and indeed those

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who have masters had almost as well be without them : I have since my arrival in this Province, had opportunities of conversing with several, and without exception found them mere novices in every branch of knowledge which is requisite in order to complete an English education. But here the cry will be against me, and the stale but customary motto brought upon the carpet, viz. "this is a new country, and therefore we must take such as we can get." Granted—and I am sure with little trouble able masters may be obtained, provided suitable encouragement be held out ; but what person, who, after spending the prime of his life in the study of the liberal sciences, &c. would be immur'd within the walls of a school on the terms on which the present masters are engaged ? which if averaged, I be-

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lieve, will not be found to exceed twelve shillings per quarter for each scholar, board &c. excluded. If parents would be somewhat more generous and allow, suppose two or three dollars annually more, which can be no great object, they would soon find men who would undertake the care of their children, and instruct them in a proper manner. It is not only teaching children to read, write or cypher, but a well informed master will by his conversation, give his scholars ideas of a superior kind, and carefully contrast the moral with the immoral, whenever occasion requires. It is not enough for a master barely to live, his salary ought to be such as would enable him to lay up a fund in order to supply the deficiencies of old age.

I wonder much the inhabitants of Newark do

not turn their thoughts towards building a school-house. The benefit which would arise is obvious, and if it was once set on foot, I am led to believe that no one who had it in his power would decline entering into a subscription in order to forward so laudable an institution.

I will now say a few words with respect to the manner of teaching.

THAT master who does not observe method in teaching, will find himself continually in confusion, and the business of the school not half done. Some masters will teach fifty scholars with more ease than others will twenty, and this difference arises merely from classing them. The master who classes his scholars in a proper manner, will not only find the business of the school performed with greater ease, but will also have

the pleasure of seeing his pupils make a greater progress, for whether it be in reading, cyphering, or mathematics, observations can be made and instruction given unto half a dozen boys, with as much ease and success as to a single one. Besides it has a tendency to create a spirit of emulation among them.

I BELIEVE, if masters would ground their scholars well in spelling, they would find them make a greater proficiency; as soon as children can tell their letters, they are generally put to reading, and spelling is totally neglected. Hence we find so many persons who can read a chapter in the bible or paragraph in the newspaper, in a tolerable manner; but with respect to spelling, they are entirely ignorant. I do not approve of children spending so much time, as is com-

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that he had never applied himself to reading, or that he had been neglected. There are several books extant which boys might be put into as soon as they can read the lessons properly, which are in the spelling books, viz. such as Enfield's speaker, Scott's lessons, &c.

The scarcity of books in this Province is to be regretted by all lovers of learning. I am clearly of opinion that if any person would send into the States, or to England, for a collection not only of school books but of others, he would greatly benefit himself, and the Province also.

By what I have written, I hope no one will accuse me of depreciating the holy writ; it is far from my intentions; I revere it, and would exert myself as much as any one, in order to promote a more general knowledge of it; but

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at the same time, when put into the hands of a school boy at a time and in a manner which I have already mentioned, I look upon it as almost useless.

IN teaching arithmetic the master should thoroughly explain and give a demonstration of every rule as the scholar enters it, shew what dependance it has upon former ones and never to let any of the scholars fret and stew over a question, a day, two or three days or perhaps a week, as I have known to be frequently the case.

IN teaching mensuration either of superficial or solid bodies, the master may give ocular demonstration of several of the rules, by cutting out the figures of the former in paper, and the latter out of apples, turnips or potatoes ; it will be found to be of infinite service to the scho-

lars. In such like manner, the master ought to proceed throughout the mathematics, whenever opportunity served. One thing I would wish to observe, before I dismiss this part of the subject, and that is, I am no advocate for giving children tasks at the time of vacation; if you give holidays, give them, and not set a scholar, perhaps as much more for a task, as he would have had to learn had he been at school; I do not like to see any thing given by halves; no master ought to be too profuse in giving holidays, but I would recommend to them that when they do give, to give cheerfully, and let them be free from the incumbrance of school duty.

I could wish that the noise which is so customary in school hours, was entirely suppressed;

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I mean that which arises from the scholars getting their lessons; many masters I know give encouragement to this way of proceeding, but I am clearly of opinion that it impedes the business of the school, rather than any thing else, for those scholars who are studying over questions, or committing any thing to memory, and not being of quite so vociferous a cast as the others, must certainly be much incommoded by this noise; a noise which I can compare to nothing but the aggregate hum of a bee-hive.

I WILL now mention those mathematical authors which are most esteemed in England at present; such information may perhaps be useful to some few in this Province, who have a mathematical turn and wish to be in possession of books written on the subject. I am not ac-

quainted with American authors, except Pike; whose arithmetic, if abridged, would make a good book for schools. The authors chiefly read in England, are as follows, viz.

Hutton's	}	Arithmetic.
Bonnycastle's		
Webster's	}	Book-keeping.
Dilworth's		
Adam's,	}	Use of the globes.
Wright's,		
Webster's		
Guthrie's		Geographical grammar.
Tho. Simpson's		Geometry.
Robt. Simpson's		Euclid.
Martin's		Trigonometry, 2 vols.
Moore's		Navigation.
Hutton's		Mensuration.

Breaks's	Surveying.
Leadbeater's	Guaging.
do.	Dialling.
do.	Astronomy.
Bonnycastle's	Algebra.
Rowe's	Fluitions.

N. B. I wish to observe that Doct. Hutton has published two treatises on mensuration, one is for the use of schools, price 3*s*. sterl. in twelves, the other is in octavo, price 15*s*. sterling, which every person which studies the mathematics should be in possession of ; it stands higher in the estimation of the learned than any other book written on the subject.

It undoubtedly is a duty incumbent on every master to teach his scholars the rules of politeness ; he should be cautious and check them

whenever he sees a deficiency, and at all opportunities be careful and set the example himself. But is it frequently the case that children seem to leave behind them at school what degree of politeness they have attained to, and take it upon their return, forgetting in the master's absence, to put into practice the precepts delivered by him. The parents are apt to raise a hue and cry that the master teaches his scholars no manners; they complain of his wearing his hat in the house, or omitting the little monosyllable, Sir, &c. But if we examine into the cause of this behaviour, I believe we shall find it not to rest with the master.

Do not parents suffer their children to be too much in the streets? where they mix into the company of boys of every description: here

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they learn nothing but lying, swearing and other bad practices. Here perhaps they choose companions who are both mischievous and immoral, and never knew what it was to be taught better. If the old saying be true that one rotten sheep corrupts a whole flock—what a speedy havoc must there be where there are as many rotten sheep as sound ones!

Parents would do well to keep their children, as much as possible from playing about the streets, where they seldom form any connexion but what does them more hurt than good. Loose, illiterate companions marr more than is generally supposed. By continually mixing with bad company, men as well as boys will find their ideas contracted, their judgments (about things of an interesting nature) will be found to

be wrong informed, the delicate ties of amity and friendship will be corroded, and many a noble sentiment will be dislodged from the breast it loved to inhabit.

AGAIN—It frequently happens that a boy who attends a seminary of learning, has brothers or sisters at home who do not attend; are these properly instructed with respect to genteel behavior? if not, their conduct must have a great influence on the boy. He perhaps is one half of his time in their company, and as example works more forcibly than precept, it is much if he is not led to copy both their actions and behaviour, so that what is done by the master at school is undone at home.

Lastly. Do parents interest themselves as they ought, in this particular? Do they themselves

set the example at home? In general, I am afraid it is too much neglected. They are extremely forward in censuring the schoolmaster, whenever their children are guilty of a breach of politeness, when at the same time the fault lies at their own door. What can a boy think when his father chides him for wearing his hat in the house at the same time that he has his own on? What can a boy think, when he hears his father curse and swear, and use obscene language continually in the house—or what a boy can imagine, when he sees his father come staggering home with all the majesty of drunkennels from the tavern, where he has been not only offering up a copious libation at the shrine of Bacchus, but perhaps has been engaged in its concomitant vices, such as gaming, &c. This is too frequent-

ly the case ; and the effect which such conduct must have on the offspring, is too evident to need recital. Let parents therefore conduct themselves in a proper manner before their children at home, let them pay a due attention to their behaviour, otherwise the master had as well do nothing as attempt a reformation in their manners.

To conclude, by the observations I have made respecting the qualifications of a tutor, I hope the reader will not accuse me of endeavoring to raise my own reputation at the expence of others. It is far from my intentions. I envy no man. But I must again say, that if masters were put under proper examination, before they were permitted to take upon them the care of a school,

it would be attended with the happiest success.*

This plan they strictly adhere to in the United States; no master is there permitted to open a school, without he appears, by a proper scrutiny of his abilities, to be a qualified person. If this plan was proposed here, it would, I think, meet with encouragement, and I for one would raise my voice and loudly exclaim

A M E N.

* Does not experience justify the truth of this observation? there are three very recent occurrences, which cannot possibly be yet obliterated from the minds of the public.

The allusion is this—within the course of these two or three last months, three men, who acted in the capacity of schoolmasters in this Province, were obliged to flee into the States, on account of their bad conduct, viz. one for robbing a gentleman of some dollars, another for **** and a third for embezzling a certain quantity of wheat, &c.