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EDUCATIONAL THEORIES.

BY THE EDITOR.

Nihil potest esse diuturnum cui non subest ratio—CURTIUS.

"*Nothing can be permanent for which there is not some latent reason.*"

THE subject on which we enter is full of interest. It calls for rigid examination. Under cover of new systems of instruction, gross deceptions have been practised. They are gilded bawbles which arrest the eye of the ignorant, and dazzle many of the sober-minded. They spring from the love of popularity or gain, or, from those who are deceived themselves, or wish to deceive others.

In coming into collision with prejudice or interest, we know, that it is neither the love of conquest over an antagonist, nor the exposition of the intellectual errors of an individual, that animates us in the great cause of education. To triumph over deception and self-esteem, or to silence by the energy of fact, the pulings of vain theorists and innovators, would afford little cause for joy, while the interests of the people and those of their children are jeopardized by paradoxical systems and incapable guides. Individual error, either in regard to philosophy, or religion, or education, is often propagated under the names of popular men, by ingenious sophistry, with the diffusive power of

over every such instance of success, with a feeling akin to that which angels experience, when a sinner has repented; and in the excess of his joy he hardly thinks for the time of those other valiant youths who have needed little more of his attention than to be shown the way. But such youths never fail to receive the admiration of strangers, and therefore they are always more than duly applauded and excited by applause. Premiums, if premiums are distributed, belong exclusively to them; the race is here always to the swift, the victory to the strong. But those unaspiring, disheartened youths—what is their reward, who from a kind of natural lameness have been unable to run; from natural imbecility have been unfit to contend; what flattering smiles of notice or of approbation fall to their share? None—from ignorant or unthinking spectators. Who then shall cheer them, or intellectually befriend them unless their teacher? and I know, I do but justice to the feelings of my professional brethren generally, when I say that to a teacher such youths are often dearer than almost all his school besides, if he has succeeded in curing in any degree their mental defect, or *they* have showed any disposition to be cured: in such case they are regarded by him as sons restored; as those who were *dead* and are alive again, who were *lost* and now are alive.

SCHOOL ETHICS.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM H. M'GUFFEY.

MUCH has been said, of late, on the subject of *moral* education. This may be taken as one of the "signs of the times." Hitherto, the object of instruction has been too exclusively the improvement of the understanding, to the neglect of the better qualities of the heart.

This reform will be likely to meet with but little opposition in theory, on the part of either parents or teachers; or even of the community at large. But in practice, it is to be feared, it may have to encounter that opposition which is arrayed against every species of innovation without regard to the difference between improvements and those changes which are not improvements.

Teachers may be reluctant to introduce an exercise, that will require them to reduce to a scientific form, that knowledge which has so long been familiar to them, in the character of practical

precepts. Their perfect understanding of moral rules, and their high sense of moral obligation, will make them unwilling to put the first to the test of speculation, or analysis; and make them impatient of that questioning of the second, which must always arise in the free discussion of the class-room. Their reasonings will not always be as clear as their convictions; and the consequent failure to impress the minds of their pupils as deeply as their own, with the solemn sanctions of moral law, cannot fail to produce at first, a hesitancy, as to the propriety of a course which seems to be promotive only of scepticism.

But a little perseverance will show, that this is only a deceptive appearance. Practice will soon enable them to succeed in finding adequate expressions for all their ideas; convincing arguments in defence of their doctrines, and a sufficient antidote for that lurking scepticism, which their incipient attempts had not originated, but only developed in the minds of their pupils.

Parents too, through inadvertence, may be found practically to oppose the study of "school ethics," on the ground that it will interfere with that which to them may appear a more important acquisition.

They will probably be found expressing some dissatisfaction with the teacher who employs a part of the day in instructing the boys in such questions as involve the characteristic difference between the faculties of brutes and the mind of man. They might, in some instances, prefer that their sons should devote more time in studying the relations of numbers; and less in the study of those relations that exist between them and their schoolfellows, and out of which grow a great variety of most important duties, strikingly analogous to those which are, at once, most obligatory and most important in civil society.

But the instructer, who shall, even for a short time, judiciously persevere in imparting to his pupils a knowledge of the *principles* upon which their "school duties" depend, will most certainly overcome all opposition on the part of every judicious and discerning parent. He will soon be able to demonstrate, that, in this way, more time will be saved from the exercise of harsh discipline, than will be sufficient for an intelligent acquisition of the first principles of ethical philosophy.

Children *are* governed by *moral* reasons, even when *corporal* punishments are resorted to. The latter can only hold in abeyance the wayward tendencies of youth, until rational motives can be brought to bear upon the understanding and the heart. There would be much less occasion for a resort to corporal inflictions, if moral culture was better understood and more correctly appreciated.

The advantages resulting from an intelligent and practical inculcation of moral principles, even in our primary shoools,

would be incalculable. I do not here mean instruction given in the principles of ethics, as a science merely; but the application of them to the art of regulating, with propriety, the intercourse of the pupils with their instructers and with each other.

Why could not the *reason* of every requisition be pointed out to the pupils? Why could not the *principle* be stated, when the *law* is promulged? Why might not the uniform coincidence of duty and interest be clearly exhibited, so as to remove all suspicion of arbitrary control, in the exercise of those functions which devolve upon the teacher? Unless this is done, there will be a constant competition between privilege and authority; the pupils looking upon every requisition as an infringement of their rights; and the teacher regarding every act, not authorized by the rules, (though it may not have been forbidden) as an encroachment upon his prerogative. The boys will try how much they may safely violate the rules: and the instructer, how far he may venture to extend their principles beyond their letter; and thus the whole will degenerate into a system of mutual strife and coercion.

Tell a boy, in tones of authority, that he *must*, and *shall* abstain from whispering, for example, and he will be likely to feel some additional motive to continue the practice, from the manner in which the prohibition was expressed. But show him that it is reasonable to grant a request, when properly made; and that it is not only proper, but requisite that you should make such a request; and that it would be proper and right that he should be silent in school, even if you had not requested it, *because* whispering disturbs you and annoys his schoolmates, while it is of almost no advantage, nor even gratification to him: and you will rarely have occasion to repeat the argument—especially if you succeed in producing conviction, as you advance with the reasonings above suggested.

But, to take a more general principle: why cannot children be made to comprehend the difference between coercion and motive? Tell them, that a cat, or a dog may be governed by fear; but that boys and girls ought to be influenced by principle. Say to them, "you cannot convince a mere animal that it has done wrong, so that it will be sorry, and not do so again. But children know the difference between right and wrong; and may, and ought to be persuaded to leave off their bad habits, not so much from fear of punishment, as because they are wrong."

Nothing weighs so much, with an ingenuous youth, as motives drawn from the dignity of his nature; except it be those arising from a sense of duty. He is thus put upon his honor; an appeal which is rarely made in vain. The complaint so generally, and what is worse, so justly made against American, and especially against western institutions, on the score of want of discipline,

will continue, and increase, until the *consciences* of the young are more systematically and directly appealed to, by those who have the care of their education.

Free governments cannot be maintained without *religion* among the people: nor can rational discipline be supported in our schools, without a high, and intelligent, and conscientious regard to duty on the part of those who are their inmates.

AMERICAN HISTORY FOR SCHOOLS.

It is a custom, in many parts of the western country, to use histories of England, Rome and Greece, as class-books, in the schools, almost to the exclusion of American history. This is a bad custom. Our youth, who, in a few years, will have the whole weight of the government upon their shoulders, should not be ignorant of the history of their country. They should possess full information about the origin, the nature, the cost and the value of the great inheritance, which is about to fall into their hands. They should be made familiar, in early life, with the pure models of public virtue, which illustrated the first days of the republic. It is also important, that they should study our history, in order to acquire that proper degree of national pride and that delicate sense of national honor, which are indispensable to an elightened, ardent and enduring patriotism.

It is not in the human heart to love a country of no character or distinction in the world, so well as one whose history is glorious and honorable. We love Poland the better, and feel more compassion for its fate, because it is the land of DeKalb and Koskiusko. In like manner, the whole world loves Greece—not for what she is, but for what she has been—not for her living, but for her dead—and will continue to love her and feel a kind of consanguinity to her, so long as her soil inurns the ashes of her ancient illustrious men. And wherever, over the wide world, we meet an honorable, generous-hearted Irishman, we cannot help feeling, that, apart from the virtues of the man, some little regard is justly due to the countryman of Grattan, of Moore, of Curran and of Emmet. We almost unconsciously transfer to the country itself—to its inhabitants—something of the admiration which we feel for its distinguisded citizens.

This disposition of the heart operates with increased force, in relation to one's own country. Let the reader analyze his