

THE
MERCERSBURG REVIEW.

JANUARY, 1871.

ART. I.—EDUCATION.

BY J. W. NEVIN, D. D.

EDUCATION has place only in the sphere of humanity. It is the privilege and dignity exclusively of man, as distinguished from every lower nature in the world. We do, indeed, speak at times of educating animals, and even go so far perhaps as to apply the term to the culture of trees and plants. But in every such case we must be considered as using language in an improper or, at least, in a simply figurative sense.

Plants and animals are not subjects for education. The constituent elements of the process, the inward spiritual forces by which only it can be brought to pass, are altogether wanting in their nature. The most we have in these lower spheres of existence, is a remote analogy only with what is here the law of our human life, conformably to the order which holds in general between the world of nature and the world of mind.

Nature at large is in order to mind, a progressive preparation for its advent as the highest and last sense of the world, and thus an obscure foreshadowing throughout of what the full presence of mind is found to be ultimately in the form of human personality. All forms of intellectual, moral, social, historical existence, as they appear in the human world, are in this way anticipated and prefigured by blind, unconscious instincts, that

reach toward them continually from all sides in lower systems of being. The distinctive peculiarities of humanity nowhere stand out in completely abrupt separation from the life of the world in its lower view.—On the contrary, the true argument of its superiority appears in the plain fact, that it strikes the roots of this superiority everywhere far down into the universal cosmical order of which it is the glorious efflorescence and crown. Reason has in it an inward affinity with instinct and unconscious plastic power. The ethical and historical are bound to the physical by innumerable analogies that meet us on all sides. And thus it is, as we now say that the idea of education also in particular, though belonging strictly only to the human sphere, is nevertheless not without its correspondence in the world below man; which then it becomes both interesting and profitable to take note of, as opening the way toward a proper conception of what the interest truly is in its own higher character.

In general it may be said of all this lower living development that it is simply natural growth. Plants and animals come to their full existence through a purely physical process, which is for them as much a matter of passive necessity, as the mechanical changes which are going forward continually in the inorganic world. In both cases, however, we have a movement adumbrating the human educational process in this, that it takes place through the co-operation of two factors or forces; namely, a principle that works from within and an element that determines and conditions this working from without. The life, in either case, can unfold itself in the way of physical growth, only as it is acted upon physically by the presence of outward means and appliances. And as these now may be exhibited in different forms and ways, it is easy to see how it is possible for an outside intelligence to take advantage of them, so as to direct and govern to a certain extent, by the manner in which they are applied, the whole physical development with which they are concerned. In this way there is wide room for horticultural art, as we all know, in the training of plants, by which they are brought to assume forms, and serve purposes al-

together different from anything belonging to what we call, by comparison, their wild or native state. And so it is with animals. They may be broken and drilled by the hand of man to much that they would never come to if left entirely to themselves. We have all met with admirably trained horses and dogs; as we have heard, no doubt, also of learned pigs, to say nothing of curiously disciplined birds and mice. In this case, however, as before, all resolves itself at last into outward physical instrumentation applied by foreign care and skill. The life has been coerced by human art to its own purposes, through an arbitrary disposition of the necessary terms and conditions of its development. All falls immeasurably short still of the true full idea of education. It is, when all is done, training only, purely physical discipline, and nothing more. The process itself, as it has place in the life of the animal, no less than in the life of the plant, is mechanical, blind, passive, and in all respects unfree.

Education properly so called begins, in the scale of being, where this law of mere physical growth ends. It does not, however, disown the physical as an absolute foreign range of existence. For humanity is itself physical as well as spiritual; mind in the case of man is bound throughout to matter; and what we call the ethical or moral world, as it comes into view through our human intelligence and will, is, as already intimated, but the sublimation of the world of matter itself into this higher order of existence. Not only does the movement of nature find its own ultimate signification in mind, but the self-actualizing movement of mind subsequently is conditioned in its whole course by nature; as we see at once in the relation by which the soul is bound to the body; a relation which, rightly considered, may easily be seen to involve of itself also a corresponding necessary conjunction with the world of nature at large. In such view all that belongs to man's life, his bodily nature as well as his mind, comes fairly within the range of education. But so far as this may be so, the physical is then lifted above itself, and brought under the action of forces which take hold of it from a higher sphere.

Education, as such, has to do directly only with the working of these forces. It comes in where the physical organization of the world, having reached its last result in the personality of man, makes room for its ethical organization; where mind bursts like a new sun on the slumbering sense of nature; and where the progress of creation becomes, thence onward, a self-wrought movement in the form of human intelligence and human will. The province of education here is nothing less than to wake mind into existence, to develop its powers, and to give it proper shape and form. Such development is something very different from growth. It is far more than the mere evolution of slumbering natural powers. Whence mind comes, and how it comes, is a great mystery. We only know that it is a product of education. Natural birth does not of itself bring it to pass; there must be added to this for the purpose a second birth going forward in a higher sphere. Only mind, in the actual history of our life, is found able to excite mind to conscious existence; a fact, enough of itself to show one would imagine that mind, as born with us, transcends potentially all the powers of nature, and is, in truth, a new divine principle superadded to these powers; since otherwise the evolution of it into actual consciousness would be sufficiently secured by the conditions of our mere natural growth. There is an original spirit in man from the inspiration of the Almighty, which only the breath of spirit can waken into life. Physical generation must in every case be followed here by moral generation; a different process altogether, which however it may be conditioned and qualified by the physical character of its subjects, holds throughout in the element of intelligence only. This is what we are to understand by education—the power which God has been pleased to lodge in the constitution of humanity, for the development of its forces out to their highest and last end.

The composition of forces which belongs to all growth in the world of nature meets us here again, as already intimated, in the form of a new and higher order foreshadowed by that lower law. All education is a result of the co-efficiency of two factors working conjointly to bring it to pass—one from within

the subject of the process, and the other from without. The high character of the process itself, as having place in the human (more than simply physical) sphere to which we have assigned it, appears strikingly in this that *both* these factors are required to hold in the element of free, conscious spirit. It is not enough that one of them simply be of spiritual quality; that mind, for example, work upon nature (as in the training of animals), or that nature work upon mind. It must be mind working upon mind; intelligence meeting intelligence; will infusing itself into will. Only so can the process be really and truly what we call education.

1. Let us look first at what we may call the outward or *objective* side of the process. Education involves necessarily teaching; and this, we say, must be human teaching, the action of living mind brought home to the subject of the process in a living way. As there are no autochthons among men, people fresh sprung from the earth, so neither are there among them, speaking strictly, any autodidacts, persons purely self-taught. It is well to consider how far this proposition reaches.

It seems to be imagined by some, that mind has the power of evolving itself in man through his individual nature alone, without any other help than what is comprehended in the conditions of his simply natural existence. But it is well established now, that in these circumstances he would never attain to any proper human development whatever. He would never awake at all to the light of thought, nor come at all to the use of speech. As a simply single existence in the system of nature he could never rise into anything more than nature. The very idea of intelligence and freedom implies escape from the power of nature in this view through conscious communion with a wider mode of existence. Mere nature may bring out all that is required for the completeness of a simply animal life; but the very first beginning of human life, in its properly distinctive character, transcends entirely the compass of her powers. The mother's milk is not more necessary for the physical sustenance of her child than is the loving intelligence that beams forth upon it from her eye to kindle in it the first scin-

tillations of spiritual existence. It is deep calling unto deep, soul summoned from the womb of otherwise impenetrable night by the magic power of soul. This is education; an awakening, quickening, generating force exercised upon its subject from without, in the form not of nature but of spirit. And what it is thus at the start, it continues to be throughout.

It might seem indeed at first view, that after education has begun, and some awakening of spirit taken place, nature comes in as a separate force to divide, at least, with mind the office which it thus assigned to its superior agency and power; and that the presence of natural objects perceived in a merely natural way works on the development of mind directly, just as the force of nature is felt in the evolution of simply vegetable or animal life. But this is not the case. It is only in the element of already awakened intelligence, and in full, open communication with its activity, that it is found possible at all for the world of nature to exert an influence upon the world of mind; and then the action is not physical, not a force that belongs to the natural world in its own order of existence, but in truth the higher force of mind itself enshrined in matter, for the sense and apprehension of which the soul has been prepared through the power of education in its proper spiritual form. In the whole case the physical comes into view as the vehicle simply of the spiritual, and offers at best but the outward occasion for this to reveal itself, and make itself felt as the presence of spirit addressing itself to spirit.

In this way, however, the whole outward world does indeed attain to significance; the light of instruction and knowledge gleams through its dark forms, and there is room then to speak of the educational power of natural objects and scenes. Sermons are hid for us then in stones and brooks, and float over us in the clouds of heaven. Waves and winds are continually uttering for us strange things. Lessons are whispered to us in the breeze, and thundered upon us by the storm. Mountains and valleys, forests and plains, spread themselves out before us as open volumes inviting us to read. The entire world, in short, around us and above us, is a parable fraught with wis-

dom for our use. But all this is something which belongs to mind and not to mere bodily sense. It is real for us only in the form of spirit, and not in the form of matter. Animals and brutish men know it not, and have no power to see it. What is for us thus educational in nature is ever the true and beautiful that lie behind it interpreted and made intelligible to us first by the light of our own intelligence, kindled and kept beaming from the world of mind around us.

Throughout, we say, education requires the action of mind on mind; and this can be fully realized only where we have the presentation of thought in other forms supported and enforced by living personal instruction through human teachers. The more remote and indirect the communication is between mind and mind in the process, the less will the relation be found to answer the demands of the case. What is needed is direct contact of life with life, like the kindling of one torch from another. In this view it is, that the spoken word is allowed on all sides to hold so important a place in the business of instruction. Committed to writing, and taken in by the eye from a book, the word is always in some degree sundered from the life that has given it birth.

There is, indeed, a difference here also among written productions themselves, some having in them the power of life far beyond others. There are books, we know, in which the living spirit of their authors is perpetuated, we cannot tell how, age after age. Such is the mysterious relation of word to life, where the word is itself, as first uttered, living and not dead; it becomes, as it were, instinct with the spirit from which it has proceeded in the beginning, so as to carry with it ever after the force of a felt personal presence. So it was most especially with the word of Him who was Himself the Incarnate Word of God, and of whom it is said never man spake like Him. In Him speech became at once the embodiment of absolute truth itself, and what He spake is felt to be of this character still as it has come down to us on the inspired page of the New Testament. "The words that I speak unto you," we hear Him saying, "they are spirit and they are life." So were they to His

disciples in the days of His flesh; but so have they proved themselves to be, in their written form also, through all ages since. And what is thus true eminently of the words of Christ, as committed to writing, must be allowed to hold good, in some degree also, of what is written by the better sort of uninspired men. Something of the same spiritual vitality is to be met with not unfrequently in one class of books, while in another it is wanting altogether.

Still, with all this, it is beyond question, that the word written is not so near to the life it represents as the word spoken; and that instruction addressed to the ear through the voice is, for this reason, more of a lively and life-giving nature, than instruction addressed to the eye through the letter. True, there may be oral teaching that is itself mechanical and dead—the use of words that come from the lips only, and not at all from the soul; in comparison with which, then, many a good book, or vigorously written essay, shall be felt to be full of spirit and life. But we have in view now oral teaching as it ought to be; and are considering simply what may be called the constitutional difference of two modes of instruction—that by books and that by the living teacher. Looking at the matter in this way, it is very certain that the most material and necessary form of education is that which is comprehended in oral instruction. It is just on this principle, that preaching and catechizing are of such vast account for the evangelization of the world, and that hearing the word must ever be, as it ever has been, for Christianity in any wide and general view, something far more important than reading the word. The idea of education can never be complete, without including in the conception of its objective factor the presence of the living human instructor.

Especially must this be so with what we mean by education, taken in its special technical sense, as the discipline by which the young are to be trained and prepared for full-grown life. Here, emphatically, from the nursery to the close of the college course, all depends on having mind held in felt, near, continual intercourse and communion with mind, not through

books, but by means of the voice and the ear. All depends, in other words, in maintaining in full force throughout the old significance and sense of the old relation expressed by the terms master and disciple.

How much is involved in this relation, how much of sacred interest and worth and deeply solemn responsibility it carries with it, is sufficiently clear from what has been already said. In its true ideal, it is emphatically a relation of life, of life, I may add, in its deepest and most inward sense. For where teaching goes forward here in the right way, it is nothing less in fact than the transmission of living light and heat from one soul to another. In their measure, the words of every true teacher are spirit and life. They have in them an inspiration that comes fresh and full from his inmost being, and breathes itself into the inmost being of those who hear him; so that they are made to have part thus in his spiritual existence, and are brought to share in his nature, more than if they were born simply of his natural life. There is brought to pass in the case an inward cognation which goes beyond the bond of kindred blood. It is the consanguinity of ethereal spirit, the relationship of immortal mind.

All this is spoken of course, only of the master and teacher who has in him what the true idea of his vocation requires. How often, alas, the ideal character is found wanting in that which is real. This is necessarily the case always, where the life of the teacher is itself, intellectually or morally, a false bad life; for then by the law of generation here, as everywhere else, any power it may have to propagate itself must prove a curse only for those to whom the propagation extends. It will be a leprosy, not of the body but of the soul, the Mosiac doom in its worst form, transmitting itself from spiritual father to spiritual son, down it may be to the third and fourth generation. Only think of the soul life of a Voltaire, a Byron, or an Aaron Burr, perpetuating itself in this hereditary way! But there is teaching again, it is sad to think how much of it, which is altogether unworthy of the name, not just because it is the power of a positively corrupt life, but because it has in it no real life of any

sort whatever—because, in other words, it resolves itself at last into mere mechanical routine and form. The teacher, in such case, becomes an automaton; his office is shorn of its dignity and strength; and of his whole work and service we may say, that it is the ministration of the letter that killeth rather than the ministration of the spirit that maketh alive.

Education as it should be involves the full opposite of all this; the living presence of the school-master, himself alive with the spirit of virtue and knowledge, and having power to energize into life whatever he is called to touch in his educational work. This is more vastly than all literary and scientific apparatus besides. Without this libraries are dead, and laboratories dreary and cold. This it is that alone has power to light up the walks of science, and to make all studies both fruitful and pleasant. For school, academy, or college, let me reiterate the thought, the one thing needful above every other thing is the presence of living teachers able to teach in a living way.

II. There is however, as already said, another side to the process—a *subjective* side, we may call it, necessary in every case, to complete the working of the objective agency, which we have had thus far under consideration. The power from without the subject must be met harmoniously and co-operatively by a power from within the subject; and this, by the nature of the case as already explained, must also be not physical but moral, the free response of mind answering in its own order of existence to the awakening challenge of mind. To this our attention must now be briefly directed.

There is no education, we have seen which is absolutely its own work; none that is not the result in some way of foreign outside action, and this not in the way of exciting and stimulating occasion simply in the world of nature, but in the way also of kindling life in the world of mind. This is one view of the subject. There are no strictly self-educated and self-made men. But now in opposition to this, though not in real contradiction to it, we have before us the no less unquestionable truth that there can be no education which is not self-education, which is not self-produced and self-wrought. What men

become in this way is ever their own work. They are not simply passive in the development, but active and free. They make themselves. Not only does their nature determine blindly how they are to be acted upon by outside influence, as in the case of animals and plants; but it is only through their own positive activity, put forth as intelligence and will, that any such outside influence can have for them any educational force whatever. Such is the distinguishing prerogative of all personal existence. It is a citadel which no force can enter from without against its own consent. The development of mind can go forward only through its own action as mind. It involves at every point intelligence and will, both exercised in continual conjunction. Knowledge cannot be forced into the brain as food may be crammed into the stomach. The knowing of it, by which only it becomes knowledge, is for every human being his own act, and is something which can never be done for him by proxy or put into him by outward coercion. What a man is through his understanding, that he is emphatically only of and through himself. And still more plainly may this be seen to be true of his practical or moral life, as this holds in the being of the will. For the will, by its very conception, is pure self-action. Nothing can come into it except by its own consent. Thus it is that all truth and virtue are made to be actual and real for men, only by being brought to have place in them by their own act. In this view, every man's life, ethically considered, is a problem which he must solve for himself, which no one else can solve for him. His character throughout is his own work. He creates his personality. Not of course without occasions, opportunities, influences, impulses and motives, both physical and spiritual, brought to bear upon him on all sides from without; but in such a way always, that the power of deciding what amount of plastic force all these shall carry with them is found to rest ultimately still in his own hands. It depends upon himself how far they shall be allowed to come in at all, and also in what manner and form they shall come in, as conditioning means of his education and culture. What takes place actually as such inward work, is something which the sub-

ject of the process in the end has always brought to pass himself.

The law is universal, reaching through the whole course of human training from the cradle to the grave. The relation between freedom and dependence varies with the progress of personal development. The child requires to be held in the leading strings of mere outward, more or less physical discipline, beyond what is proper for youth or early manhood. Yet from the very start, all outward discipline here serves the purpose only of a medium for bringing mind into contact with mind, will into felt relation to will. It is not for the human subject, even in childhood and infancy, what it is for the merely animal or brute subject. In the human subject mind yet undeveloped, and still only potential, is nevertheless actually at hand, and capable of being so reached and wrought upon pre-consciously in its own proper spiritual substance; and its education in these circumstances (its awakening and out-drawing) is from the very beginning always, not a simple physical effect following the constraint of discipline as an outward cause, but a veritable spiritual echo and response to the true higher law of the spiritual world made to touch it in this way. The order of our life demands, that this potential, more or less unconscious freedom should unfold itself more and more into the power of conscious self-apprehension and self-direction; that is what all right education looks to as its great purpose and end; but it lies in the very nature of this process, that it should involve within the subject of it throughout the action of mind working as mind, which is necessarily free always and self-produced. Even the first spark of intelligence in the new born infant, though kindled by the ictus of a ray which is shot into it from another soul, is nevertheless struck from the soul of the infant itself as a principle of light and freedom waiting there to be excited in this way. And so from this point outward; nothing can be put into children educationally, except through their own attention and receptivity voluntarily opened to take in what is offered for that purpose. To how much more then must not such co-working agency amount in more ad-

vanced forms of education, where the right and the power of conscious personal independence are more fully developed? In higher institutions of learning, especially, the relation of teacher and pupil, master and disciple, as we have it here under consideration, necessarily clothes this subjective side of the process with the largest amount of such self-determining freedom. College students are expected to take a far more independently active part in their own education, than children in the nursery or boys in the common school. Indeed their education is a failure, if it do not bring them continually more and more to be a law unto themselves, to do their own thinking and to will their own working. They cannot be educated to any extent successfully, without their own free consent and active co-operation. In a very large and deep sense it may be said of them always that they must educate themselves.

All such owe it to themselves to take this thought into earnest consideration. There is a side of the great work in which they are engaged, which belongs of course to their teachers. The relation of master and pupil can never be what it ought to be, if the master have not the true spirit of his office. Dull teachers are sure to make dull students; as dull, lifeless preachers also put whole congregations to sleep. The college professor must be himself awake (a living fountain and not a dead pool of learning only), if either black-board or crucible, text-book or lecture, is to have any waking sense for his class. But it is just as true on the other side, that the relation of master to disciple never can be what it ought to be, if the disciple also has not the true spirit of *his* office. The power of communication everywhere needs for its completion the correlative power of reception. Without this it stagnates and becomes waste. Good students help powerfully to make good teachers. The best inspiration a faithful instructor can have in his work, is that which is made to flow in upon him from the wakeful attention and sympathetic intelligence, and loving confidence of the pupils who sit at his feet, and drink in the words of wisdom that proceed from his lips.

The great matter all round is to understand, and keep stea-

dily in view, the great end of all right education; something, which it is to be feared, is largely lost sight of in our educational schemes at this time. Education is, in general terms, the development of man's ethical and spiritual being. But this may be directed to different purposes and ends. It may be ordered in such a way as to subordinate the powers of the soul to purely physical and material interests. It may look in the direction, sometimes of one science and sometimes of another. It may have for its object practical pursuits, the necessities of common secular business, under all imaginable various forms. But it is plain that through all this multiplication of possible partial ends, good or bad, there must be one supreme end answering to the universal idea of humanity, a so-called "chief end of man," in harmony with which alone it can be possible for the development of his life to be at all normal or true to its own original constitution. This end is determined at once by our human nature itself: and as soon as it is apprehended, it sets before us what must necessarily be regarded as the absolute and last sense of all education. It is the perfecting of the spiritual existence of its subjects. It is, in one word, the development of a true vigorous personal life, answerable to the relations and conditions under which it is brought to pass. The chief end of man, the Westminster Catechism tells us, is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. This is true; but it comes to the same thing in the end, when we say that the chief end of every man is to realize the proper idea of humanity in his own person and to be a man in the right and full sense of the term.

The personality of a man is not just his self-consciousness, with its powers of reason and will; it is this wrought into ethical volume and form (the proper conception of *character*) through its own free action. As such it stands in the exercise of reason and will; but it is immeasurably more than any particular property, faculty, or force, embraced in their exercise. It is the sum total of what the man makes of himself in the great work on which he is put of raising his nature, the original base of his being, into the region of intelligence and freedom. This is

not development strictly speaking, but construction. The process is architectonic. In a profound, awful sense, every man is the architect of his own person; he builds himself, year after year, into spiritual being. What he shall be in this way in himself, then, and not in anything beyond himself, is for him the one great problem of life, the one great purpose of all right education. It is a great thing to know this; and it is a still greater thing to hold it continually in view; so that a man shall reverence the idea of his own nature, and make supreme account of completing it in all his ways. Directed toward this object, and only as thus directed, education becomes worthy of its name. This is more than all merely outward knowing or doing; more than all simply professional or technical business skill. We have no wish to undervalue these in their proper place. But wisdom, we say with Solomon, is the principal thing. Let us therefore get wisdom; and with all our getting, let us get understanding. For "wisdom is better than rubies, and all things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."