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THE TABLET.

No. LXXVIII.

"People never misapply their economy so much, as when they make mean provision for the education of children."

THE essay, contained in this and the two following numbers of the Tablet, points out some of the most usual defects of country schools. It was written by a young gentleman, some years ago, who in travelling through the country saw, in a very forcible light, the evils he has described. The author calls it one of his juvenile performances; but the remarks are judicious, and the expressions clear and pointed. It is hoped it will prove entertaining to the reader.

"THOUGH man is said to hold the lowest rank in the intellectual system, he is still supposed to have a soul, whose powers are susceptible of endless progressive improvement. We come into the world with minds totally unfurnished with ideas; but, like white paper, capable of receiving and retaining any notions, good or bad, which education or accident first happens to impress. The perverse actions of men demonstrate the danger of imbibing wrong ideas and forming bad habits, and the difficulty of correcting or removing them afterwards. This consideration should make those who superintend the education of children, particularly cautious that their first instructions should be the best. To cultivate the faculties of the human mind, and to enlarge and improve its powers has ever been considered, by the civilized part of mankind, as an object of the utmost concern. The general institution of schools in this country is a full proof that its inhabitants are convinced of their utility and importance. But from fear of expence, from want of interest, from carelessness, from ignorance, or from some other causes, it happens that most of the schools amongst us are under very defective regulations. They are placed on so disadvantageous a footing, that the design of parents, which is to give their children the best education with the least expence, is unfortunately defeated. Having attentively observed the defects which attend the common method of education, and being fully convinced that much money is expended in that way to little effect, I am induced to make a few remarks on the subject. My observations are calculated more particularly for the common schools in the country.

In the first place, I would observe that the houses built for schools are very inconvenient, very expensive and ill adapted to answer the end for which they are intended. The design of an house seems to be to shelter us from the inclemency of the weather; and one would think, that to erect a building that would not answer this purpose, is to mispend time and to lavish away money. But the school-houses in the country are, some of them at least, such wretched thin shells, that in extreme weather, the largest fire that can be built in them will not render children comfortable, at any distance from it. Besides, the extraordinary quantity of wood, which must necessarily be consumed, in such houses, is a consideration that ought to have influence in a country, where wood is in so great demand. There is another ill consequence of more importance, though less attended to by people in general; which is, that such schools are less beneficial to the children. If the master keeps them at their business, where they ought to be kept, at a distance from the fire, they sit shivering with cold and never look on a book; and if he permits them to crowd round the fire, they will push and abuse each other, and the master's ears will be stung with the din of endless complaints. The most that a master can do, at such a time, is to prevent and redress these petty injuries; and he may think himself happy to do that to satisfaction. In such an house, where a child has no higher ambition than to get warm, it is folly to expect he will receive much benefit. As parents send their children to school for some other purpose than merely to keep warm, the house should be so comfortable, that they can have no need to approach the fire. A master might than govern them with much less difficulty, and his instructions would be attended with better success. Brick houses are much to be preferred, not only as they are cooler in summer, and warmer in winter, but because they are less liable to accident and damage from mischievous boys.

Children should likewise be furnished with drawers, locks and keys, where they might lay their books and papers in safety: Otherwise they will be obliged, as is too much the case, to throw them down upon a table or a bench, where they may be undesignedly brushed off, trodden on, and tore to pieces. When I mention drawers, I

suppose that children have books at school; for those that have none will have no need of drawers. Nothing but the absolute impossibility of obtaining books will render negligence in this respect excusable. How odd does it appear to send a child to learn to read, without a book, in expectation that he will be furnished by others! Would not a man appear exceedingly ridiculous and foolish, who should go into the field to work without tools? And if he should go, in expectation that his neighbor would furnish him, I dare say there is not a person who would not laugh at him.

It is an ill judged piece of economy to supply children with implements for writing, that are bad or indifferent. Coarse paper, pale ink and flawy quills are the common fare of lads, while they are learning to write. The expence in the first instance is lessened by such pitiful provision of materials; but they are dearest in the end, even if it should be practicable to make improvement in writing, under such disadvantages. This practice should not be continued, but the articles used at schools should be the best that can be procured. The pupil should have nothing to discourage him; and I appeal to every person who is accustomed to writing, how vexatious it is to write with a bad apparatus. The tables used at schools in general are too low, and they are often so rough that paper cannot be kept smooth. This is another inconvenience that hinders the ill-fated lad from making progress. It will occur to every person, who has tried the experiment, that writing-desks are preferable to tables. Paper, lying horizontally, exposes the person, who writes, to an awkward situation, and if this mode is persisted in, by one who writes much, it will injure his health. Such remarks may appear trivial, but they are of much greater importance, than will, at first view, be imagined.

(To be continued.)

What tones, when genius strikes the lyre!

Extract from the New-Year's wish of the Carrier of the American Mercury. [Hartford.]

"FAIR LIBERTY, whose gentle sway
First blest these shores, has cross'd the sea,
To visit Gallia, and inflame,
Her sons their ancient rights to claim.
From realm to realm she still shall fly,
As lightning shoots across the sky,
And tyrants her just empire own,
And at her feet submit their crown.
Go, tell your country, she is still
Heaven's care; and happy, if she will.
But all must first their station fix,
Nor craze their skulls with politics;
His proper calling each pursue,
And thus his worth and wisdom shew.
Let sailors tempt the watery main,
And peasants urge the soil for gain;
The merchant at his counter stand;
The artist keep his tools in hand;
The cobbler ply his last and awl;
To patch old kettles tinkers bawl;
Smiths at the forge their temples rub;
The cooper rattle round his tub;
Astronomers makes almanacks;
And pills and purges leave to quacks;
Wife pedagogues their pupils teach,
The parson be content to preach.

FROM THE GEORGIA GAZETTE.

THE FEDERAL OATH.

"I A. B. do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States."

FEDERAL OATH.

THIS oath is very simple, and yet there is a hue and cry raised against it. Whether ignorance or design generated the objection I know not. It is, however, objected, that "this oath obliges the oath-taker to comply with and obey all the laws of Congress, although some of those very laws may be so framed as to deprive the citizens of their breeches and petticoats, and other civil rights and privileges to which they have a natural or a federal claim."

This is so strange a sophisticated inversion of the words of the oath that something besides ignorance appears to have had a share in the inversion; for their true intent and meaning do not pass her comprehension. The Constitution of the States, and the laws of their Congress, are inherently, as different as the aforesaid articles of dress; and, as decency most positively commands all her subjects to cover their nakedness, so does this oath positively oblige all Federalists (who take it) to expose the nakedness of that law which has any thing in it contrary to the Constitution.

Should it ever, unhappily be the curse of these States, to have a Congress, weak and wicked enough to enact laws everfive of one single section, or even clause of the Constitution, the Members of that Congress, by enacting such laws, will betray the great trust reposed in them by their fellow citizens, and consequently become traitors

to the States. Can folly conceive, or credulity believe, that this oath enjoins obedience or support to such laws? As well may you believe that the robber, who knocked you down, and took your money, did the one to relieve you from care, and the other to cure you of the headach.

We shall here, perhaps be told of the excellencies of Jealousy, which (say its advocates) is a certain preservative of our liberty, and has done such great things for our political welfare, that it is boldly asked, What has it not done?

Be it even so, my good trumpeters; but, in running over the beadroll of your guardian's virtues, you forget, or pass unnoticed, some of her most remarkable achievements.

This patro-theos, or tutelar saint, of yours, had well nigh wrested Independence from the States; They were floating, in a tempestuous sea, on the last plank of the wreck, and, to prevent sinking, they were forced to solicit aid from their new alliance: By this aid, it is true, they were enabled to regain the shore of safety; but the requisition left a foul stain upon the States; because, in the beginning, an army sufficient for the great purposes of the Union might have been raised, and kept complete to the end of the war: But, it seems, this tender eyed guardian of our liberty could not behold a standing army!

Such, Jealousy, are thy mighty works! for which let the United States extol thy glorious name, and the inhabitants thereof obey thy wife commands?

From these premises, then, this conclusion is clear, that jealousy is an excellent sentinel, but a very bad commandant. Arm it, then, as a sentinel ought to be armed, at all points; but make it forever obedient to the orders of Reason, which the SUPREME hath been pleased to make Commander in Chief in the Republic of Man.— If you supercede, or disobey this great commander, instead of laurels you will secure to yourselves disgrace, perhaps ruin.

In the delightful realms of Hymen, if Jealousy be ever admitted, it turns to bitterness the choicest sweets, poisons the delicious banquet, and revels in mischief like a devil unchained: So likewise, in the world of politics, if it ever gain the ascendant, it throws every thing into a ferment, destroys mutual confidence, and rages like Lucifer, with all his imps at his heels.

The dignity, the order, the happiness, of such a government, are obvious; and, if they enchant the wife and good, where lies the wonder?

But the ill-founded jealousy, or jealousy contrary to reason, should be considered, as in fact it is, the fruitful source of evil, yet it is by no means prudent or safe to repose on the pillar of security, when the ax is laid to the root.

The advice of Apollo, "All extremes avoid,"† merits general adoption; though short, it is comprehensive, and applies to every case; for all extremes are vicious, and there are certain boundaries on neither side of which is it possible to avoid error.‡ It is the region of Folly, and amidst the infinite variety of her flower-strewn paths there is not one in which the man of rectitude can walk.

Such a country as this of Folly's, is that in which Jealousy reigns supreme: Yet this difference should be observed: In the suite of Folly, Malice is but rarely seen; but, in the suite of Jealousy, there are numberless spirits as malicious as old Belzebub can make them.

Scorn then, my countrymen, to commit yourselves to such a ruler: Consult Reason, and hearken to the voice of Experience. A Constitution all-perfect and complete is not to be expected, and a Legislature instantly reprobate to every good work, for which it was created a Legislature, is not to be apprehended: Like the Lindamira Indamora of Scriblerus, they are both out of nature.

But suppose the worst, however improbable it may be; suppose that, contrary to the usual progress in villainy, you should have a Legislature that shall violate their oaths as soon as taken, and pounce with the rapidity of an eagle upon your precious quarry, yet why despair of the Commonwealth? Such conduct might and should alarm you: But, if you will be but just to yourselves, I mean, if you will be but true to your oath, much mischief they cannot do to the States; for, you being their political creators, you have in your own hands an effectual remedy: You can clap an extinguisher upon them, and put them out.

A FEDERALIST.

NOTES.

* This remark applies only to the troops of France: Her ships were essential; for a naval force it was not in the power of the States to establish.

† A standing army! Was there ever a more absurd idea conceived even by Folly? It was to stand only during the conflict, and that, every one knows, is necessary to insure success.

‡ Medio tutissimus ibis. Ovid.

† Est modus in rebus. Sunc certi denique fines, &c.