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THE TABLET.—No. LXXX.

"No errors are more dangerous than those which appear too trifling to be corrected."

(Continued from the last number, and concluded.)

I WOULD just observe concerning the manner of teaching arithmetic, that boys in general spend a vast deal more time and pains to learn that art, than is necessary, and do not always learn it, when they have done. Boys cannot learn arithmetic mechanically, as they do writing: They must be old enough to understand it. If lads are put upon the study of arithmetic before they are fourteen or fifteen years old, slow will be their progress, and imperfect their attainments. The mind must have formed some skill in combination, before it can be employed in that study to profit. But boys may acquire a sufficient knowledge in arithmetic for all the purposes of common life, by applying five or six weeks closely to it, under a good instructor, and at a proper age. Instead of this, how often do we see boys spend winter after winter in learning a few of the most simple rules of that art, and at last not be able to reduce a single rule to practice? And is it not requisite that females should have some acquaintance with arithmetic? A venerable old man, in grey hairs, and an aged matron, who cannot keep their own accounts, may justly weep over a misfortune, for which they are not answerable; but an indifferent spectator, who knows the worth of an education, may view with indignation that criminal negligence in men of interest, which will render the fate of posterity not less unfortunate.

Thus have I hinted at the principal defects and inconveniences that attend the present mode of education. I am sensible that, though all I have said may be confessed, yet there is one general objection to any alteration; which is, that the people cannot support more expensive schools. But in answer to this I would observe, that if they would venture upon the experiment, they might support schools with the same or less expence, that would be much more advantageous. Economy may defeat itself by being carried to an extreme. When calculations are too close, there may be a saving in the expence, but the object will not be accomplished; and by attempting to save too much, all may be lost. Men who are always employed in small, trifling business, who pursue an unsteady course of life; and who, to use a familiar phrase, are always creeping along by the edges, will never make a head in the world, but must always remain poor and contemptible. It is just so with schools. People build an house, or rather put up something that will do the turn for the present; they send fifty, sixty, or seventy children to one instructor, though this is too great a number, they own, yet, *he must do as well as he can*: Part of them have books—some have only pieces of a book which *must do the turn for the present*; and some have none at all, but these *must do as well as they can*. The children cannot be spared, more than two or three days in a week, to attend school, but when they do go, they must learn *as well as they can*. A master is hired, who perhaps is a vagabond, and if he is not quite so good as could be wished, yet he is cheap, and people must do *as well as they can these hard times*. What is all this but creeping along by the edges? What is it but squandering away money and making a mock of education?

Dare, my candid readers, to step from the beaten path of custom and prejudice. Erect schools upon a different footing, and you will find them not only more advantageous for your children, but in the end, much cheaper for yourselves.—But even upon the supposition that good schools are eventually more expensive than bad ones, this should not frighten people, when they reflect that a good education is the best legacy they can bequeath their children. Thousands of persons, who have grown up to a state of manhood and found they could scarcely read or write, have wished, fervently wished their parents had left them less estate and a better education. But there is one argument of more weight than private advantages, and which ought to make parents more solicitous to encourage schools. We inhabit a country evidently formed for a great empire, where civil and religious liberty have taken up their abode, and where they will be found, as long as they are found on earth. The only way to preserve these unimpaired, is to diffuse knowledge among the body of the people. Once reduce the mass of the people to a state of ignorance and their bondage is inevitable. We have struggled through an arduous war to defend our religion and freedom, and let us be vigilant to furnish posterity with the means of defending them. We should remember at the same time, that we live in a late period of the world, as well as a glorious one, and may we not look forward with

eagerness to that finished state of society, when the diffusion of science shall have taught men, that there can be no happiness but in virtue; no liberty but in law?"

FROM THE INDEPENDENT GAZETTEER.

MR. OSWALD,

AT a noted inn upon the road to Reading, I found two countrymen, who had arrived nearly at the same time. After warming themselves, they began a conversation, which appeared to me at once interesting and diverting. I therefore took the first opportunity of putting it in writing, as nearly in the words of the parties as my memory could enable me. If you think it will either be useful or entertaining to your readers, it is at your service. A TRAVELLER.

Andrew. Aye! three days! Why, how could you spare so much time?

Henry. I was waiting for my waggons; and it was such fine fun to hear the speeches, that I could hardly get away at last.

A. Then you can tell us a great deal of what they are doing.

H. Why as to that—I do not know very well what they are doing; but some of them make monstrous fine speeches.

A. Well and what do they say?

H. O! they do pay one another off so cleverly.

A. Why Henry I suppose that you and I must put our hands in our pockets and help to pay them all at last. If they spend their time in paying one another off in words, we shall be forced to pay all hands of them in solid coin. But can't you tell us any thing about the business they were about?

H. Yes—the first day I was there, they were just finishing a long dispute about Electors. They had been at it all the week before.

A. What about Electors?

H. Why, whether the people should chuse for themselves, or find some others to chuse for them.

A. To chuse what?

H. Why, to chuse Senators, I think they called them.

A. And why were the people not to chuse for themselves?

H. Because they would not chuse right—and it was too much like the old Constitution—so they said.

A. And who were to chuse the Senators?

H. The people were to chuse men to chuse them—I don't well understand it.

A. Will there be no end of distrusting the people? Have our gentry so soon forgot where they sprung from? I suppose the people will not be trusted to get their own children, by and by.—But how did it end?

H. It was voted at last, that the people should chuse the Senators themselves.

A. Very good—I'm glad to hear it.—What was the next thing?

H. Compound rations was the next.

A. Compound rations! what's that?

H. I did not quite understand it—but they talked as if a rich man was to have a great many more votes than a poor man—Something about reckoning a man's head worth twenty shillings, and then making compound rations of his head and his money.

A. What! are we to be governed only by the wealthy?

H. Why not? Would you have beggars and vagabonds govern us?

A. No, by no means; for beggars and vagabonds always vote on the side of the rich, whether they are right or wrong; so that the wealthy will always have full as much weight as they ought to have, without increasing the number of their own votes. The middling class of people, freeholders and householders, of moderate property, settled residents, who live industriously upon their labor, are the firmest supporters of the country. They have a firm attachment to their country, and they are free from those ambitious, aspiring thoughts which lead a man to seek his own aggrandizement at the expence of his neighbours. A rich man is always wishing to be richer and greater; and he always has a rabble of needy dependents ready to assist him. He need not be helped to more influence.†

NOTES.

† I believe it will be found upon a very little reflection that those are naturally most attached to their country, who have the most to lose in consequence of any disasters which may happen to it: As the great body of our citizens consists of those in middling circumstances, it necessarily follows, that they must be the support of the country; but that "they are free from ambitious thoughts" either collectively or individually, is contradicted by the experience of all ages; and especially by that of the State of Pennsylvania, otherwise a form of government which centered all power in a purely democratic assembly, never would have been so obstinately supported—a form of government, which left nothing to the wealthy part of the community, but what they obtained by intrigue, and the influence of property. And pray have the rich no rights in which to be secured? That wealth which is the object

H. Why, truly, there seems something in this—but how will you hinder beggars and vagrants from voting?

A. This might be done. Suppose that nobody was to vote till his name had been at least a twelve-month on the county tax books, and the taxes paid. I think this matter might be managed.

H. Well! Andrew! you could always out-talk me; but if you were to hear the orators in the Convention, you would be quite dumbfounded.

A. And who are the great orators?

H. Why there is Wilson; but they say he has changed sides.

A. How so? what side is he of?

H. Why, he was against Electors, and against the compound rations.

A. Well, whether he changed sides or not, I find he's on the right side. Who are the other orators?

H. Why, there's a tall lean gentleman—I forget his name; but it seems to me that his throat is lined with bell metal, and his tongue steaked like a broad-axe—He hack'd and hew'd at Wilson, like any wood-chopper—But Wilson could talk back again—and it's fine fun. There's a heap of them—all speakers—and they talk by the hour.

A. But you forgot to tell me what became of the compound rations, as you call them?

H. O! they had not finished that yet.—

A. No!—and when do they expect to get thro' their business?

H. Some time next Summer, they talk.

A. Some time next Summer!—Why I thought, when some of you were carrying petitions about, you told the people they were to save expences; that the Convention would sit only a fortnight and make us a cheap government.—

H. Why;—yes;—it was—somehow so;—but, to say the truth, they begin to talk that the new government is to cost more money than the old one.

A. How so?

H. I can't tell;—but they talk about Chancellors and Judges with salaries all over the State. * Indeed neighbor Andrew I almost wish I had been quiet as you advised me, and contented myself as I was.

A. Well! well! come don't be discouraged, since the Convention is met, let us hope for the best. I trust they will go through with what they are about; and if they do but give us a tolerable government and cure the people of the itch for calling Conventions for altering the government every twelvemonth, I shall be contented.—Good, sometimes comes out of evil, and, for my part, I really wish this Convention may not rise, till they present us with a bill of costs that shall make us sick of them.—**

H. Why I hardly think I shall carry about a petition for a new Convention very soon again.—But which way are you travelling Andrew?

A. To Philadelphia upon the old affair.—My Lawyer writes me word that the Supreme Court sits this month, and, if I will attend, he expects to get final judgment for me this term. And then I expect old Nicodemus will pay me off. I really want my money, neighbour Henry; and if you and some others had not befriended me, I do not know how I could have held out so long without it.

H. Well, Andrew—have patience!—I have bad news for you. So many of the Judges and Lawyers are in the Convention, that the Supreme Court is put off.

Upon this piece of information, honest Andrew assumed an attitude and countenance that was too distressing for my feelings. As I could not relieve him, I left the room.

of envy, of desire—and the great spring of exertion to every man, let his situation be what it will, in a simple democracy, may be, and generally is employed to the most pernicious purposes; or else being considered as a grievance, or necessary to be assumed by the majority for exigencies of State, proves the destruction of its possessors—† Its justify these observations. How important and necessary then is the great revolution in Pennsylvania, by which the Rights of every class of citizens are more clearly ascertained and secured—

"For nature hath left the tincture in the blood,
"All men would be tyrants if they could."

Poor men are always wishing to be rich: Rich men to be richer; and power is equally attractive to all, but most dangerous in the hands of those who are the most ignorant.

* "Chancellors, Judges, and Salaries."—Individual, competent, and responsible officers, are held up as a bugbear—while the expences of the people for their support, bear no proportion to those innumerable streams which drain the public treasury to defray the charges of Committees on Committees, State officers without titles, and without responsibility, who always keep public business in a circle, and never bring any to conclusion, while they have a majority to keep the public purse open for their emolument. ** A very laudable wish! but a free people never will be easy under a bad Constitution; and Conventions are the wisest expedient that mankind ever adopted; and next to the wisdom of our country discovered in making Constitutions, they do the greatest honor to our invention and philanthropy as a people: Let the people feel the salutary influences of a good Constitution, and they will not think of Conventions.