

Jeffersonian Republican.

THE WHOLE ART OF GOVERNMENT CONSISTS IN THE ART OF BEING HONEST.—JEFFERSON.

VOL. 9.

STROUDSBURG, MONROE COUNTY, PA., THURSDAY, JULY 5, 1849.

No. 49

Published by Theodore Schoch.

TERMS—Two dollars per annum in advance—Two dollars a quarter, half yearly—and if not paid before the end of the year, Two dollars and a half. Those who receive their papers by a carrier or stage drivers employed by the proprietor, will be charged 37 1/2 cents, per year, extra. No papers discontinued until all arrearages are paid, except at the option of the Editor. Advertisements not exceeding one square (sixteen lines) will be inserted three weeks for one dollar, and twenty-five cents for every subsequent insertion. The charge for one and three insertions the same. A liberal discount made to yearly advertisers. All letters addressed to the Editor must be post-paid.

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From Sartain's Union Magazine.

Thoughts on Education.

Addressed to young Women who are "Finishing."

BY MRS. C. M. KIRKLAND.

A FRIEND told me, the other day, that he had been shocked to hear a girl of sixteen say, in company that she had finished her education. Not that he would have construed with severity the mere adoption of a conventional form of expression, but that he observed in the young lady's manner something which assured him that she accepted the phrase in full force, and meant by it all that the words seem to imply.

Female education seems with some to have only a technical meaning;—to contemplate a certain amount of knowledge acquired at school, with an addition, more or less considerable, derived from private instructors. The first includes a little Geography, principally that which may be learned from maps; a little History—as much as is included in half a dozen compends used in the schools; a little Grammar, which requiring some abstraction is generally "hated" by the scholar; with a tolerable knowledge of Reading, Writing, and common Arithmetic, and a very slight smattering of Natural Philosophy, Rhetoric, and perhaps Botany or Geology. If Mental and Moral Philosophy be on the list of studies, a young lady is in some danger of becoming masculine; if Algebra and Geometry, she must take care to keep it a secret.

The addition is partly in the shape of languages; first French, the language of the modistes; next Italian, rendered necessary by the use of fashionable songs. Then come Music, Dancing, and possibly a little Drawing, though not often more than will suffice to copy in crayons a landscape a foot long, which has to be retouched by the teacher before it is fit for the portfolio.

Now all these things are very well, as far as they go. Education should include them all.—But does the young lady thus "accomplished" know how to read? Of course she knows the sounds of words; but can she read a scene in Shakespeare, or a chapter in the Bible, or even a paragraph from the newspaper, as it should be read, in order to give pleasure as well as instruction to the hearer? If she cannot—if she have not made this peculiar power the subject of earnest study and effort, let her be sure she has neglected an important part of her education. All music is good; but the "sweet music of speech"—that which at once arouses the mind and delights the ear—that which requires no instrument but the due use and command of the organs God has given us; which asks no particular endowment in the musician, no particular taste in the hearer—this is the music first in demand for the family circle; and if its acquirement be deferred to the piano-forte or the harp, education is going backward instead of forward.

The geography which we acquire at school is indispensable, certainly, but is it sufficient? We learn the general appearance of countries on the map, the position of certain large islands, the names of many bays and straits. We even study the population and possibly the latitude and longitude of some of the principal cities, and recite them with tolerable precision in the class. And this is, perhaps, all that can be expected for the time. But do we acquire an interest in the study founded upon its real use? Have we done anything but accept it as one part of the school routine? Do we connect the knowledge thus acquired in any degree with the general business and enjoyment of life? If we do, we shall never see the name of a place for the first time without desiring to know exactly where it is to be found; we shall not read in the newspaper an account of the opening of a new branch of trade, the adventures of an exploring expedition, the colonizing of an island in the South Seas, or the search after a missing commander,—without a desire immediately to seek out on the map the position of the points named, and in the gazetteer all that is known about them. An atlas will be at least as necessary a

companion to our private store of books as a novel, and we shall not advance far in life without having formed for ourselves a sort of mental chart, in which will be laid down, ready for immediate use, the general aspect of the face of the earth, with an accompanying commentary, showing the climate, productions, advantages and peculiarities of all important points; first and clearest and best, those of our own extensive country and its dependencies. When we read history, it will be with a map at hand; and we shall not content ourselves with the vague jumble which seemed to torment a lady of my acquaintance, who could never remember whether the Lexington at which the first revolutionary battle was fought was that in Massachusetts, or its namesake in Kentucky, and always wondered how it was that the troops could get to Boston so speedily! We laugh at the ludicrous mistakes made by foreigners—even the English—with regard to the different portions of our country; but mere vastness does not entitle us to attention. It is in truth as unpardonable in an American young woman who has "finished her education," not to know the exact position of York and Birmingham, Kenilworth and Canterbury, as for an English girl to suppose that we are fanned in summer by the breezes of the Cordilleras, or that New York is within half a day of New Orleans. She who learns geography intelligently, and for its uses and its pleasures, will turn it to account in all these matters. Far from regarding it as a mere school-study, she will count it among the means of acquiring general intelligence, and of guarding against that sad barrenness of mind which is always at a loss for interesting topics of conversation unless in company with those equally unprovided. As a preparation for travel, or for enjoying the travels of others, such a knowledge of geography as I have attempted to indicate, is invaluable. For this, the amount that we acquire at school, is to be considered merely the stepping-stone. The pleasure and advantage of continuing the study can be appreciated only by those who have been induced to believe that, on leaving the "finishing" school, this branch of knowledge deserved a place among those which may have uses in after life.

History is another study sometimes "finished" at school. I once knew a young man who, desirous of improving himself, read assiduously for an entire winter, the history of the Punic wars. He appeared in the spring to be much gratified on reviewing the amount of his labors, but said that somehow or other he never could tell exactly which side Hannibal was on! A young lady of no little intelligence in some directions, asked once in my hearing in what century our revolutionary War took place, observing that she never could remember whether it was in this one, or the last or the one before that. The first instance—that of the young man—is plainly referable to that mechanical and soulless way of reading which looks but at the words without any corresponding pictures being formed in the mind. People of this class read, as we sometimes do, when the thoughts are pre-occupied, or sleep imminent, so that we find ourselves going over the same page or paragraph again and again, in order to discover the sense which strangely seems to elude us. The young lady's inconsequence, not being the result of natural incapacity, must of course be traced to the indulgence of utter thoughtlessness, want of all rational interest in the object, or such a habit of learning by rote as takes the life out of any study, however important or attractive in itself. The youth of darkened mind to whom I have alluded, was too completely ignorant and uncultivated to reap any important good from a single ill-directed effort at improvement; the lively, intelligent girl, far less pardonable in her ignorance, is probably destined to a life either of empty frivolity, ending without dignity or self respect, or one of dull routine, which will find her year by year the still submissive victim of ennui and indifference.

The study of history is far from deserving to be rated among things to be learned according to law and forgotten as speedily as possible. It is somewhat the custom of young people to disparage, secretly or openly, any study which does not seem to promise immediate use or immediate pleasure. Indeed, too large a part of what they learn at school, is learned solely under the immediate stimulus of praise or blame, reward or punishment, without reference to the remote future at all.—The effort of all judicious instructors is to lead the pupil's mind forward, beyond the task of the moment, to the general usefulness of knowledge, the exhaustless pleasure and advantage of cultivation. History is among the studies which are thoughtlessly supposed to have no particular applicability to the needs of female life. What kings and queens and governments have done, seems not necessarily important to the furnishing of a young woman's mind. But why is any knowledge important? Why have books been written? Why may not each age, and each family, and each person, go through life as if nobody else had ever existed? Because, by this plan no accumulation of

wisdom could ever have been made, no examples or warnings, beyond the little round of our personal experience or observation, could have been brought to bear upon our lives. History is "philosophy teaching by example," or what is more to our purpose, it offers experience without cost.—Kings and queens are but men and women, endowed with passions like our own, and acting on so conspicuous a stage, that the workings and effects of these passions are rendered more striking than in private life. Governments are subject to the laws of God and nature; and when they transgress these laws they suffer, as do individuals; and their sufferings are for the benefit of all who live, if they will take the trouble to observe and reason. Merely to know that a thing has been done, would be a trifle indeed, if it were possible for any intelligent and sentient being to know a fact without drawing any deductions from it. But it is not. Whether consciously or not, we reason and conclude upon everything that presents itself to our minds. When we read the life and the fate of Mary of Scotland, do we not in our own minds say "What a pity she did—this or that?" When we study the history of Charles I. of England, can we fail to see what were the errors which made him a bad ruler and a bad man? If we study the character of Washington, are we so much taken up with following him through his career, that our hearts do not glow and feel a noble expansion as we contemplate his virtues? And not only with regard to the broad distinctions of virtue and vice—good and bad—does the study of history have its effect in the formation of our sentiments, but in those subtler and less palpable gradations between right and wrong, which can hardly from their multitude be taught by express precept, exemplification in the case of others is of incalculable value. The young may not perceive this influence, but it is irresistible. Its unsuspected power is that which makes bad novels so intensely bad for the young. History, if it tells the truth, exposes the natural or providential results of certain courses of action or traits of character; a bad novel often reverses this order of things—makes evil tempers appear happy and successful, which they never are, and shows that the right may be unprofitable, irreligious charming and amiable, falsehood justifiable, and the whole course of human affairs so altered in the case of certain individuals, that cause and effect are no longer indissoluble—a fallacy which is destructive to wisdom and virtue in the youthful mind. The more we become acquainted with the truth of the past, the more shall we be impressed with God's overruling power,—the less shall we hope any exception in his laws for our relief in case of disobedience.—Human governments, as well as individuals, sometimes undertake to set aside these laws, on consideration of what they deem expediency, and for the present, or to the superficial observer, they may seem successful. But one may as well place himself on the railroad track, and expect God's mercy to turn aside the train before it shall cut him to pieces, as to transgress any of the immutable moral laws and dream of eluding their consequences. If our study of history have not taught us this, it has not been carried far enough. We have but discovered a mystery; further investigation will furnish us with its key.

But there is another advantage of the study of history which must not be overlooked. It furnishes rational and innocent subjects of thought and conversation, for which if we make no provision, we must be content to take our places with those whose talk is as the "perpetual dropping," which makes their society intolerable to people of sense. I would put it to the candor of any reader, whether the conversation of the circle which she frequents is what it should be; whether there are not persons whose entrance causes a sensation of pleasure from our consciousness that what they say will have some value. I hate pedantry; I should flee the woman who prosed history to me, or anything else; I dread a common-place, droning moralizer as I do a musquito; but I do love,—and so does everybody that I ever had an opportunity of observing, a person that can say something! Many people talk immensely, yet never by any chance say anything that dwells in the mind of the hearer for a moment after the speaker is out of sight. Far from getting an idea from them, we cannot flatter ourselves that we have succeeded in imparting one. Now no one study can be depended upon for providing materials for agreeable conversation; it requires a general furnishing and enriching of the mind. We might grow silent by cultivating ourselves exclusively in one direction—for in that case we should but seldom find an interlocutor—but we should not grow agreeable. One who pursues anything intently will never be an empty chatterer; but a woman wants something beside such a negative qualification as this, to fit her for her place in society; which I am heretical enough to think, after all the wise things that have been said, is a distinct one. A woman who would fill the station for which God evidently designed her, must make being agreeable a part of her

duty. We need no urging to look as pretty as we can; nature takes care of that. But nature contents herself with this lower prompting.—She does not always suggest to us that higher attractiveness without which even beauty is shorn of its beams, and which often supplies the place of beauty. If any of my readers have ever seen a foolish old woman, they will not need anything further on this point. Foolish young women we see every day; their youth and good looks carry them along in a certain way and among a certain class, pretty well for the present—may even get them husbands, such as they are. But when we see the results of such marriages, let us ask ourselves seriously, where lay the difficulty? What drove the husband to dissipation—the wife to folly? May it not have been something which made home distasteful? Life is full of petty trials, so petty that they are not to be met directly, or with special efforts of principle, but provided against, in the mass, by such stores of mind as will give us something to think of besides the occurrences of the moment. Without this, every trifle of daily life becomes of consequence, every little vexation finds a bare nerve; a woman may become sour without knowing it, and think her lot peculiarly hard, merely because she is ill-provided with the requisite defenses against a lot which she partakes with the whole sisterhood.

But will History help her? Yes! As the difficulties and trials which arise are multiform, so must be the modes and implements of defence. As emptiness of mind and barrenness of soul and frigidity of imagination are allies of the enemy, we must drive them out by the aid of information, taste, principle, sympathy,—all within our power if we are sensible enough of their value to pay the requisite price,—and history has a bearing upon them all. It is emphatically a rich study, and unlike some others, it pays as we go along too.

Grammar is among the things likely to be learned by rote, if the scholar be not capable of philosophizing a little about it. It requires an effort of memory too, for I hold that its rules should be learned with verbal accuracy, in order that they may be retained, and always at hand when a point is to be decided. This appears at first irk-some to the scholar, at least to some scholars. When there is a logical or systematic power—not so common as we could wish among girls—grammar is exciting and delightful, and in such cases serves not only the main purpose of forming the taste and judgment for a faultless construction of language, but the further one of advantageous mental exercise.

The opinion has been advanced, that if a child hears always correct language and reads well-written books, the study of grammar as a science will be unnecessary, and the time usually appropriated to it may be used to better advantage. Allowing this opinion to be correct, though I could never assent to it, since many peculiar cases must arise in the course of our reading, and still more of our writing—it would be totally inapplicable in most cases; for very few young people are so situated as to hear none but correct language. The inaccuracies which give us most trouble are those which are learned unconsciously in early youth, and which a subsequent knowledge of grammar alone enables us to detect. Americans are peculiarly careless in their construction of language, and some among us even pride themselves on certain inaccuracies, maintaining that the correct form is pedantic. How many people who know better use learn for teach, lay for lie, &c. Not long since I heard a person of considerable pretension say, "Me and you will go—them that's afraid may stay away;" and such errors as this, "Neither of them were there," are sadly common. Now these things may seem trifling, but they are sufficient to stamp one's conversation with vulgarity, and to incapacitate us for writing with ease and elegance. So I wish I could persuade all my young friends to have patience with grammar, and even if it is quite distasteful, give it due attention, trusting for the fruits until by and by.

This "by and by" is the object of all school-teachings, and the best result of the best school-teaching is to show us how to learn and inspire us with a love of improvement. How different is this from the common notion of "finishing" the education at sixteen or eighteen! What we have learned before that age is but the stepping-stone to our education. The girl who puts her books on leaving school, and feels that the time has come when they ought to be exchanged for visiting, dress, and perhaps some showy accomplishments, bids fair to become—I had almost said a goose. I would really much prefer the society of a good sensible country maiden, who has been too much occupied in helping her mother and learning common things to go to school except for a part of the winter, yet who is conscious of ignorance and has a desire to improve, for improvement's sake, to that of a flippant, conceited little creature, like the one mentioned early in this paper; who knows no one thing well, yet is perfectly satisfied, and ready to turn over a new chapter in her destiny. How many sensible girls are spoiled by this silly mistake of supposing them-

selves "educated." I wish I could reach the private ear of every one of them, and be heard with patience while I should try to explain what education means. I have but commenced on the subject in this paper, and shall probably resume it at a future day.

New Religious Organization.

A correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, writing from Waterloo, Seneca county, N. Y., under date of the 7th ult., gives an account of a meeting which was held near that village, called for the purpose of forming a new religious organization of a more liberal and reformatory character than that of the old sects. It was composed mainly of members of, or seceders from the Society of (Hicksite) Friends, dissatisfied with their society for refusing to adopt the ultra opinions held and expressed by the Reformers of the Age, upon the subjects of Slavery, Intemperance, Woman's Rights, &c., &c.

The call of the Convention was issued by a Conference of members of the Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends. It proposed, as a substitute for the old Quaker Organization, whereby the Yearly Meeting is endowed with ecclesiastical power over the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, that each local congregation should manage its own internal and disciplinary affairs on such plan as may be best adapted to its own peculiar circumstances. Retaining the essential principles of Quakerism, it proposed to abolish what is known as the "Select Meeting," or the meeting of Ministers and elders, and to render the organization more democratic by placing all its members upon one level of rights and prerogatives, leaving each individual to exert the influence which character alone can confer. The practice of recommending [ordaining] ministers and seating them above their brethren, it also proposed to abolish, leaving each individual free to speak or be silent, according to his highest perceptions of duty.—Proposing no theological test, it was designed to form a union of all those, of whatever sect, who desired to co-operate in works of charity and benevolence, on a basis which should allow the widest freedom of speech in respect to all subjects on which there might be an honest difference of opinion.

The call was responded to by a large number of persons, mostly members of the Genesee Yearly Meeting, but including a few from other parts of the country, and some who were not Quakers. Among those in attendance from abroad were LUCRETIA MOTT of Philadelphia, NICHOLAS HALLOCK of Milton, and JOSEPH A. DUGDALE and RUTH DUGDALE of Ohio. Contrary to the usual practice of Friends, the sessions of the Yearly Meeting were not private, but open to anybody who chose to attend; and men and women instead of meeting separately, came together in the same room on terms of perfect equality. The Clerks were THOMAS MCCLINTOCK of Waterloo, a well-known minister, and RHODA DE GARMO of Rochester.—Epistles of sympathy were received from various meetings and individuals in different parts of the country, which afforded proof that the movement is confined to no locality. The name assumed by the meeting, after considerable discussion, is that of Congregational Friends.

The discussions of the meeting were conducted with great kindness of spirit, earnestness of manner, and, on the part of some, with much ability and eloquence.

The subjects brought before the meeting were mostly of a practical nature. Intemperance, Slavery, War, Licentiousness, Land Monopoly, the Rights and Wrongs of Woman, Priestcraft, Sectarianism, Capital Punishment, &c. all received some share of attention. A general Address (written by THOMAS MCCLINTOCK) setting forth the views of the meeting in relation to these subjects, and defining the position of Congregational Friends in respect to question of Theology, was unanimously adopted. Congress was memorialized for the abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia and the Territories, and the inter-State Slave Trade, and against the Extension of Slavery to California and New Mexico. The Legislature of New York was memorialized in opposition to Capital Punishment.

ABOUT CARATS.—"Twenty-two carats! They make a great fuss about California carats! I've got more'n fifty in my garden as good as they've got there, and my blood boils—don't talk to me of your twenty-two fine carats." And Mrs. P. looked into her jar of pickles with the utmost complacency.

A certain physician, when he visited his rich and luxurious patients, always went into their kitchens and shook hands with the cooks.—"My good friends" said he "I owe you much, for you confer great favors upon me. Your skill, your ingenious and palatable art of poisoning, enables us medical men to ride in carriages; without your aid we should go on foot and be starved."

New flour is advertised for sale in the papers of Augusta, Ga.