

all his simplicity of diction and exquisite moral feeling, is a very unsafe model for imitation; and it is worth while to observe, how invariably those who have imitated him have fallen into tedious mannerism. As the human mind is so constituted, that all men receive to a greater or less degree a complexion from those with whom they are conversant, the writer who means to school himself to poetic composition—we mean so far as regards style and diction—should be very careful what authors he studies. He should leave the present age, and go back to the older time. He should make, not the writings of an individual, but the whole body of English classical literature, his study. There is a strength of expression, a clearness, and force and raciness of thought in the elder English poets, which we may look for in vain among those who flourish in these days of verbiage. Truly the degeneracy of modern poetry is no school-boy declamation! The stream, whose fabled fountain gushes from the Grecian mount, flowed brightly through those ages, when the souls of men stood forth in the rugged freedom of nature, and gave a wild and romantic character to the ideal landscape. But in these practical days, whose spirit has so unsparingly levelled to the even surface of utility the bold irregularities of human genius, and lopped off the luxuriance of poetic feeling, which once lent its grateful shade to the haunts of song, that stream has spread itself into stagnant pools, which exhale an unhealthy atmosphere, whilst the parti-colored bubbles that glitter on its surface, show the corruption from which they spring.

Another circumstance which tends to give an effeminate and unmanly character to our literature, is the precocity of our writers. Premature exhibitions of talent are an unstable foundation to build a national literature upon. Roger Ascham, the schoolmaster of princes, and for the sake of antithesis, we suppose, called the Prince of Schoolmasters, has well said of precocious minds,—‘They be like trees that show forth faire blossoms and broad leaves in spring time, but bring out small and not long-lasting fruit in harvest-time; and that only such as fall and rot before they be ripe, and so never, or seldom come to any good at all.’ It is natural that the young should be enticed by the wreaths of literary fame, whose hues are so passing beautiful even to the more sober-sighted, and whose flowers breathe around them such exquisite perfumes. Many are deceived into a misconception of their talents by the indiscreet and indiscriminate praise of friends. They think themselves destined to roadeem the glory of their age and country; to shine as ‘bright particular stars;’ but, in reality, their genius

‘Is like the glow-worm’s light, the apes so wondered at,
Which, when they gather sticks and laid upon’t,
And blew,—and blew,—turn’d tail and went out presently.’

We have set forth the portrait of modern poetry in rather gloomy colors; for we really think, that the greater part of what is published in this book-writing age, ought in justice to suffer the fate of the children of Thetis, whose immortality was tried by fire. We hope, however, that ere long, some one of our most gifted bards will throw his fetters off, and relying on himself alone, fathom the recesses of his own mind, and bring up rich pearls from the secret depths of thought.

We will conclude these suggestions to our native poets, by quoting Ben Johnson’s ‘Ode to Himself,’ which we address to each of them individually.

‘Where dost thou careless lie,
Buried in ease and sloth?
Knowledge, that sleeps, doth die;
And this securitie

Is the common noth
That ease on wits, and arts, and quite destroyes them both.

‘Are all th’ Aonian springs
Dried up? lies Thespia waste,
Doth Clarus’ harp want strings?
That not a nymph now sings?
Or droop they as disgrac’t?

To see their seats and bowers by chattering pies defac’t?

‘If hence thy silence be,
As ’tis too just a cause,
Let this thought quicken thee,
Shouldst not on fortune pause;

‘Tis crowne enough to virtue still, her owne applause.

‘What though the greedy frie
Be taken with false baytes
Of worded balladrie,
And think it poesie?

They die with their conceits,
And only pious scorn upon their folly waits.’

Silliman’s ‘Elements of Chemistry’ occupy the next article, and the opinion is pronounced of that book, that, ‘if the excellence of a work consists mainly in its adaptation to the professed object for which it was written,’ that of presenting the science in the most intelligible form to those who are learn-

ing its elements, this ‘is truly one of the best productions on the subject of Chemistry.’

Croker’s *Boswell* occupies a large space, but of that so much has already been said in our columns, that we dismiss it with this mere mention. *Griffin’s Remains*, and the admirable biographical memoir, are justly praised. The life of *Mary Queen of Scots*, by W. Bell, as prepared for the Family Library, is made the occasion, in the next article, of an exposition of the main incidents in the life of that ill-fated and ill-treated Queen, and of vindicating her innocence. The remaining articles of the number, which we have room only to enumerate by their titles, are *The two Conventions*, *Popular Superstitions*, *Effects of Machinery*, *Military Academy*, and *Encyclopaedia Americana*.

In the January number of the *CHRISTIAN EXAMINER*, is a paper on *Self-Education*, from which we would gladly extract largely, as inculcating with eloquence and effect, the important truth, that, unless a student will work hard himself, all the instruction of schools, and labor of masters is, for any great results, thrown away.

‘Education,’ says this forcible writer,—considered in reference to the grand divisions of man’s intellectual and moral nature, is of two kinds:—that which teaches him to know, and that which induces him to be; that which instructs him, and that which improves him: that which makes him a wiser being, and that which makes him a better being; that which fills his mind with light, and that which fills his heart with love; that which opens to him a fuller communion with the intelligence of the Deity, and that which brings him into an ever-increasing conformity to his moral perfections.

Education, further, viewed in reference to the modes in which it is conducted, is of three kinds.

First, there is that which consists of direct instruction, and is communicated by parents, teachers, and in seminaries prepared for this purpose.

Secondly, there is that instruction which is indirect, and consists of the insensible influence of events, and of the condition in which, in providence, we are placed. It is that, for example, which a child sees, when we perceive not him; what he hears, when we are unmindful that he is a listener; what he thinks of us and of our conduct, when we do not think of him; his silent inferences from our modes of life, habits, opinions, likings, and prejudices; the unsuspected influences of our associates and of his own; in a word, all the influence of all the circumstances wherein he is placed, which, though quiet and unsuspected in their operation, are very palpable and decisive in their effects.

And, thirdly, there is that education which the individual accomplishes in and for himself, that self-education, which is the result of voluntary effort and self-discipline.

Of these three modes of education, the first, namely, direct instruction, which is commonly thought to be of the greatest importance, has least influence in the formation of character; the second, or the silent education of events and circumstances, exerts a more decisive influence; and the third, Self-Education, is, on all accounts, the most essential.

A little further on the indispensableness of this Self-Education is thus insisted on:—

There is a vague notion, as has been justly remarked, widely prevalent, that schools, and ampler seminaries, are able, by a power inherent in themselves, to fill the mind with learning; or that it is to be received inertly, like the influences of the atmosphere, by a mere residence at the places of instruction.—But this is a sad mistake. Something in this way, doubtless, may be effected. Something may be thus insensibly imbibed. A young person cannot pass his time, for years, in scenes like these, without catching something from the inspiration of the place. Intercourse, conversation, sympathy with his companions, will, without much voluntary effort on his part, convey some information, and mould, in some degree, the habits of his mind. But this, admitting it in its full extent, amounts to but very little. It is, moreover, too vague to be of any practical value. The truth, after all, is, that the most elaborate and manifold apparatus of instruction can impart nothing of importance to the passive and inert mind. It is almost as unavailing as the warmth and light of the sun, and all the sweet influences of the heavens, shed upon the desert sands. ‘The schoolmaster,’ we are told by one, who, he it observed, is him-

self a prodigy of self-education, ‘the schoolmaster is abroad.’ The word has been caught up by the nations as prophetic of mighty changes. But the schoolmaster is abroad to little purpose, unless his pupils stand ready in their places to receive him with open and active minds, and to labor with him for their own benefit. And it would be a happier auspice still, for the great cause of human improvement, if it could be said, that men were bent on becoming, each in his several station, their own instructors.—If all the means of education which are scattered over the world, and if all the philosophers and teachers of ancient and modern times, were to be collected together, and made to bring their combined efforts to bear upon an individual; all they could do would be to afford the opportunity of improvement. They could not give him a single valuable thought independently of his own exertion. All that could be accomplished must still be done within the little compass of his own mind; and they could not approach this, by a hair’s breadth nearer, than access was made for them by his own co-operation. Nothing short of a miracle can teach a man any thing independently of this. All that he learns is effected by self-discipline, and self-discipline is the mind’s own work. We all are, under God, intellectually, the makers of ourselves.

After adverting to the danger, that in the strife to make learning easy and popular, mere superficial knowledge only will be obtained, the writer takes this other view of the evil consequences of such instruction: and with this extract we must leave him.

There is another view of this subject which seems to us to be, at this time especially, worthy of particular attention. It is the influence which the attempts to render every thing popular amongst us are liable to exert on the growth and establishment of a sound, a vigorous, an elevated, and truly national literature. How much this has become a crying want of the country, has been amply shown in a former number of this journal. Indeed, does not our present condition as a people render such a literature vitally necessary? Do we not need it to control our selfish pursuits; to adorn our prosperity; to bridle the lust, and shame the pride of wealth; to rebuke frivolity in all its forms; to raise the tone of public sentiment; to purify the public taste; to neutralize, in some measure, the effects of that dark and portentous bigotry, which is now spreading over the land; to give us ‘a name and a praise’ among the nations of the earth? We have proved ourselves, confessedly, an active, shrewd, enterprising, and indefatigable people. Our yeomanry are among the happiest, most enlightened, and most efficient of any upon earth. Our commercial enterprise has, almost literally, no limits. The productive arts receive and reward a full share of attention. The various professions meet the claims of society, and will, necessarily, always monopolize a large part of the talent of the country. Natural science, in all its branches, is not neglected, and our mechanical invention has made Europeans, in some remarkable instances, our reluctant as well as ungrateful pupils. Our systems of common-school education, and of religious instruction, are, of themselves alone, monuments of prophetic wisdom and of true public spirit, which place the founders of our republic among the greatest legislators who have lived. But while the immediately profitable and necessary interests of life are thus worthily cared for, and a degree of information more widely diffused in our country, than in any other; it should not be kept out of view, that the higher branches of literature, using the term in its widest extent, have languished for want of culture. More, indeed, has been done, than has been willingly allowed to us; but still it must be confessed, that profound scholars, in every department of learning, are rare. There are comparatively very few, within the compass of our broad land, whose attainments have depth, solidity, and finish. Such, until recently, has been the natural, and, perhaps, the necessary course of things. America, like the Spartan children, was cradled upon a shield; and the din of arms was the only music of her infancy. The cares of subsistence, then, and the more productive arts and professions, received, as they ought, the first attention. But we are now becoming rich and powerful, and it is quite time to lay deep and strong the foundations of intellectual greatness. Let us reverently take counsel of our ancestors in this respect. When the country was yet new; and scarcely a spot in the thick and boundless forest was penetrable to a sun-beam, they, with a meek and sublime confidence in their own virtue and energy, and a holy trust in God, who had divided the waters before them and been the pillar and cloud of their