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ARTICLE I.

RECENT VIEWS OF GERMAN WRITERS ON THE ART OF EDUCATION.

Abridged and Modified from the German of Dr. G. Baur.

NEARLY a century has elapsed, since the publication of Rousseau's "Emile" created a new era in the history of pedagogy. It would be difficult to exaggerate the excitement produced by this remarkable book, or the confidence with which many philanthropists indulged the expectation that henceforth in education "old things were to pass away and all things to become new." Nor can it be denied that its loud and fearless declaration of war *à l'outrance* with the weaknesses of the systems then in vogue, and its energetic representations of the advantages to be derived from the adoption of its own theory, were inopportune or uncalled for, if a more universal interest was to be awakened in the vocation of the teacher, and rational and effective action to supersede the "antiquated imbecilities" of stale and time-worn routine. That the pedagogues of this period gave vigorous impulsion to the new movement, is their high praise and undisputed merit. Pestalozzi might fairly write that he "now hoped and desired nothing further; a new and better method of human culture is at hand. Whether my system will usher in the desirable event, or whether on its ashes a better light will chase away the darkness; still less, whether the results of my method will be important before my decease, or its efficiency not be recognized until I am in the tomb, is to me a matter of indifference. Enough, that I have succeeded in interesting the heads and hearts of hundreds of worthy men in favor of the establishment of a more thorough educational system, who will strive to reach my goal in a way and with a power, which I never ventured to expect, or hoped that I should live to see." On the other hand, the one-sidedness and error, which distinguished alike the opposition to the old, and the attempt to introduce a system entirely new, could not long escape detection; more particularly in a sphere, in which theoretic suggestions are promptly submitted to the fiery ordeal of practical application. A reform, which is intended to exert a widely diffused and permanent influence upon human thought and practice, cannot be the offspring of a purely subjective creation; it must originate in an accurate knowledge of the actual relations of daily life, and be pressed forward by their necessarily progressive development. If this fact is not always kept in view, every project for the reform of education must be beset with difficulties, which will constantly oppose, and probably destroy, its practical utility. Unfortunately, the men who took the initiative in the movement of which we have been speaking, were but slightly acquainted with the world, and had enjoyed, in their own personal experience, few opportunities of learning how important an influence the occurrences of every-day life exert upon education. Rousseau's mother expired shortly after his birth, and he never knew the blessings of a well-ordered home; neglect in childhood and dissipation in the years of advancing manhood, were the precursors of a life, which, like the knowledge he acquired, was altogether devoid of order, harmony and plan. The imperfection he discovered in the pedagogy of his day, taught him nothing satisfactory in the way of its improvement; and the man, who aspired to reform all existing theories and methods of education, was obliged to confess how miserably he had failed, as the tutor of two pupils who had been confided to his care. In sound and varied culture, Basedow had greatly the advantage of Rousseau, but his boyhood was in like manner destitute of the wholesome influences of careful domestic training, and the inspiring breath of an affectionate mother's love; and if, in this particular, Pestalozzi, who has so glowingly set forth the value and advantages of maternal care, was more favored than his predecessors, still, in his case, the loss in early life of a father's guidance, and an education, conspired to render him signally deficient in that practical tact, which can only be gained from an intimate familiarity with real life. It is not surprising, therefore, that those foundations, which were quoted as "model establishments" by the reformers of this period, — the "Philanthropin" of Basedow at Dessau and Pestalozzi's "Institute" at Iferten, — were sickly and short-lived, while schools, on the contrary, in which the rigor of the old regime was modified by a prudent regard to the altered circumstances of the times, and its deficiencies supplied with proper practical tact, took deep root and flourished.

In this way, then, the objective results of every-day experience, as opposed to the theoretic projects of mere speculative reformers, have vindicated their importance in the sphere of practical life, and recently, also, in the more limited domain of scientific culture. As this recognition of their value, was not, however, like the reforms to which we have alluded, of sudden, but, on the contrary, of very gradual, growth, it has not obtruded itself in an equal degree upon public notice, and hence it may be useful, in exhibiting the *data* it has already furnished, to direct attention to the proceedings of a people in reference to education, who, without declaring themselves the enemies of every attempt at improvement, have always shown peculiar reverence for institutions, which are recommended by the experience of former generations. Our purpose will be best fulfilled by entering upon some slight consideration of Mr. Wiese's "Letters upon English Education;"[1] and, from the circumstance that this interesting publication has been much canvassed in other theological Reviews, it is hoped that the following observations may justify its claim to a similar distinction in the pages of the "Bibliotheca Sacra;" inasmuch as the conviction now generally entertained by educational reformers as to the necessity of paying due regard to the results of actual experience, and especially to the indispensable premonitions of history, is certainly a conscious admission of the close alliance which exists between the cause they have at heart and Christian theology.

The imperfection and weakness of the educational movement which commenced at the close of the 18th century, consisted, therefore, in the contemptuous disregard with which the results of past experience were set at naught by the advocates of the new theory in their eager anxiety for the dissemination of their own views; while its strength and merit are to be found mainly in the energetic assertion of the principle, that, independently of all pedagogic tradition, education must be brought into greater harmony with nature, conducted in accordance with a prearranged plan, and regulated by constant reference to its fundamental principles. But what is meant by "harmony with nature?" The answer given to this inquiry by the writers already mentioned, reveals at once their weakness, want of patient observation, and indiscreet neglect of the teachings of experience. Rousseau, the noisiest advocate of natural education, after having withdrawn the pupil, in direct opposition to his own maxims, from all intercourse with human society, maintained that the true nature of man was to be looked for solely in the efforts of the isolated individual after sensual prosperity. Basedow introduced, it is true, the tyro into society, but retained an unhealthy bias for the same utilitarian philosophy. In his view, the endeavor to attain whatever the sensual well-being of the individual and of society might demand, was "harmony with nature;" and in the same spirit Campe declared that the inventor of a successful spinning-jenny was a far greater man than the poet of the Iliad and the Odyssey. The large and generous heart of Pestalozzi could not be contented with a creed of such unmitigated selfishness, but clung to an ideal manhood, which education was to develop through a vindication of the Divine law in the heart of the pupil, and while insisting that instruction should begin with the perceptive faculties, he was in no way disposed to limit the task of education to the development of that calculating intelligence, to which the utilitarian doctrines of Rousseau and Basedow necessarily led. His method, however, of instructing the faculties of perception, and employing them with the abstract ideas of language, form and number, shows that he himself did not obey his own emphatic requisition as to the necessity of laying down no definite principles in respect of education, but leaving them to be gained from attentive observation of the nature of the child, inasmuch as, by making its young and vivid perceptions the basis of intelligent meditation, he substituted the ripened intelligence of the man for the simplicity of the child; and hence no injustice will be done him by affirming, that the system of natural education recommended by all these writers consisted simply in the effort to lead their pupils, as isolated individuals, to an intelligent examination and improvement of what is perceptible to the senses. From this fundamental principle the following special phenomena were then elicited:

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[1] Recently translated into English by a son of the late Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby.

First, a too exclusively intellectual character was given to instruction. Rousseau laid down the axiom, that the information imparted to the child should be closely connected with the knowledge obtained through its senses from the objects with which it was most immediately surrounded; Basedow founded his tuition entirely upon pictorial delineations, and Pestalozzi made the "instruction of the intuitive faculties" a kind of didactic watchword. But, in spite of all their efforts, the child's perceptive faculties, however limited their field of operation, were not suffered to act with the necessary freedom from restraint; the reflective reason was placed, as a strict sentinel, at every avenue of approach to the youthful mind, only such subjects as it had minutely investigated being permitted to enter, and only what it could thoroughly comprehend being privileged to remain; while no inquiry was instituted as to any further value it might have in forming the character and conduct of the man. In all this, it will be evident, demands are made which the child's mind cannot satisfy, and with which, on the other hand, the labors of the teacher ought not to rest contented. The child cannot satisfy them, because it is still incapable of the enlightened reflection of maturer intellect, and hence instruction fulfils its duty to him in a formal point of view, when it simply calls his mental powers into play. This is accomplished whenever his wandering attention is concentrated upon a given topic, and his memory retains firmly the information he may have picked up from observation and perception. To prevent such instruction from degenerating into a mere mechanical exercise of memory, nothing more is necessary than to see that the pupil is able to form a distinct conception of the fact to be remembered, and so far to make it really his own; to understand it in its deeper and more specific relations is of course beyond his ability. Hence it would most assuredly be unwise to urge a boy of eight or ten years of age to commit to memory, say Schiller's "Proverbs of Confucius," which would prove to him a useless acquisition; while, on the contrary, the same writer's "Maiden from Abroad" would employ and excite his imagination very profitably, however incompetent he might be to appreciate the full import and pathos of this poem. In like manner, for such a child to repeat the text: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," would be nothing else than the merest lip-work; nevertheless, into the spirit of Paul's magnificent expression: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," his mind could really enter, albeit the experience of a saintly life would be inadequate to exhaust this affirmation in the whole extent of its significance. It is precisely for the reason that what is thus learnt contains, besides such portions as are understood, a stimulus to exertion in the yet unintelligible residue, that it becomes to the pupil a truly living possession, which continually engages meditation, and incites him to renewed and independent effort, in order to attain a deeper insight into what at the outset was a matter of mere external acquisition. When, on the other hand, the preceptor intermingles his own more accurate knowledge with the näive perceptions of the child, and, during his pupil's subsequent consideration of the subject, guides his thoughts in accordance with a pre-determined purpose of his own, or, more correctly, thinks for him, the peculiar nature of the child's conception is disturbed, and the object sought, namely, independent mental action, is precisely that which is not attained. The explanatory addenda of the master, even when most glibly repeated by the scholar, involve no independent exercise of his own mental power, in consequence of their being in many cases quite beyond his understanding, and are merely uttered in parrot fashion after the tutor, to say nothing of the fact that such training induces a precocious and immature judgment respecting things whose real nature is still unknown, and leads, in the generality of instances, to a superficial mode of examination, which shuns all deeper investigation, and, indeed, arrogantly places itself above the need of it. In the näive superficiality and want of thought, with which the public at large is accustomed now-a-days to decide off-hand upon questions of profound and far-reaching import, the "thorough dialectics" and "Exercises in Thinking" of modern pedagogy, have certainly had no insignificant share.

The extravagancies and errors of this system of an exclusively intellectual education, which have been particularized in the preceding observations, are perhaps most distinctly to be seen in the treatment of two leading subjects of instruction, the vernacular language and religion. In teaching the former, a minute and circumstantial analysis of the construction of the simple and compound sentence, and a great variety of rules respecting the changes of the various parts of speech in declension and conjugation, are put before the beginner in the elementary school, not merely for the purpose of enabling him to understand the lesson before him, but that he may construe it only in accordance with these purely technical formulae, while nothing is more common than to require from him, and still more from the pupil of the higher schools, written compositions upon abstract ideas and other matters, which manifestly transcend their intellectual capacity. And the result of all such efforts has been that the scholar handles his own language with much less ease and precision than others, whose attention has been confined to a few general remarks upon the different parts of speech, the fundamental elements of the sentence, and the leading rules of orthography, so that many, who speak with sufficient accuracy, no sooner attempt to write, than they imagine their composition can only be in order, when nobody comprehends it. As an additional illustration of the truth of these remarks, we may mention that professors of pastoral theology experience the greatest difficulty in persuading students to banish from their first sermons the hollow phrases they bring with them from gymnasial essays and public declamations, and in inducing them to express in simple words what they have really thought. In religious instruction children are not merely asked with the evangelist Philip: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" but the entire system of revealed truth is sought to be developed from their own understanding. As a consequence, we too frequently observe that the doctrine of the cross, which is to overcome the world, is converted into a few sorry common-places, and, if an account were demanded from the majority of even our cultivated men respecting the faith into which they have been baptized, it would be found, notwithstanding their acquired or innate religious convictions, that they would stand the test very badly.

It may probably be said that the science of education has been reclaimed from the errors above indicated. Admitting frankly that the advocates of the revolutionary school were in some degree justified in the opposition they offered to that mechanical cultivation of the memory, on which previously everything was thought to depend, it is now-a-days maintained that befitting attention must be paid to the spontaneous evolution of the mental powers of the tyro. The fact is now universally recognized that in the mind of a child other faculties are in vigorous action than those which bear sway in the ripened intellect of the man, and that the former must, in the first instance, be suffered to acquire intellectual knowledge through the direct exercise of perception and memory in his own way and manner, in order that this knowledge may gradually become, at some after period, the subject of meditation, and finally prove a stimulus to free and independent production. The more improved system of the present day, therefore, inculcates the necessity of teaching the *mother*-tongue in the way the word itself suggests; and if, in so doing, it expressly repudiates the doctrine, which maintains that the lesson should be expounded only in accordance with grammatical rules, it does not require a perfect mastery of the vernacular even from the elementary *teacher*, much less from the scholar, inasmuch as it is only by familiarity with the grammar of a foreign language, that his own tongue is presented to his examination so objectively, as to render an insight into its grammatical structure possible. Otherwise, it is so completely overlaid by the mental processes demanded of the pupil, that any clear insight into its organization is quite out of the question. Lastly, education has now given up the idea of leaving children to discover for themselves the true religion; an investigation which has in all ages baffled the efforts of mankind. It insists upon the fact that there is salvation in none other than in Christ, and that without Him, however rich and contented we may think ourselves to be, we are poor and miserable and blind and naked. It places the preparation and fulfilment of this salvation, as narrated in the histories of the Old and New Testaments, in visible pictures before the souls of children; impresses upon them in pregnant proverbs its most essential truths; teaches them hymns, in which the vivid need and consciousness of redemption has found emphatic expression, and thus imparts to the young mind a treasure for all time, whose immediate and complete comprehension it insists upon the less, because its depth and riches no man in this life fully ascertains.

In all these particulars, an unerring tact has preserved the English people from extremes, and led them to pursue a more judicious course. "It is," says Dr. Arnold, "a great mistake to suppose that boys should understand everything they commit to memory. God has so ordained that in youth the memory is vigorous and independent of the reason, whereas a man cannot as a general rule retain anything, if he does not understand it." How detestable must such a doctrine appear to the followers of Basedow and Pestalozzi! And, although in the mouth of a teacher so eminently wise and practical as Arnold, there can be no ground for supposing that a mere mechanical discipline of the memory is thereby recommended; although Wiese's surmise that such an opinion will be pronounced extremely objectionable by many a German theorist, may probably be correct, there are now certainly as many teachers among ourselves, who will give it their unqualified assent, and that the Englishman, who has been brought up in accordance with these principles knows very well how to use his reason, is equally certain. On the study of grammars in its application to the mother-tongue in English schools, Wiese, characteristically enough, communicates no information. But if we look into their text-books, for example, into Murray's English Grammar, the fifty-seventh edition of which, published in 1847, lies now before us, we discover at once the practical common sense of the great island-nation. It commences with orthography, and, leaving the acquisition of a copious vocabulary to daily practice, proceeds to lay down such etymological, syntactical and stylistic rules as will insure the avoidance of ordinary errors, and promote an habitually accurate method of expression. We learn from Wiese that no great importance is attached to original essays, and even from the more advanced scholars of the "public schools," which stand on pretty much the same level as our gymnasia, "intellectual production" is not required. On the other hand, in class recitations a more complete and thorough comprehension of the matter in hand is insisted upon, and in every statement made by the pupil it is expected that he should always distinctly know and properly understand what he says. Written compositions do not treat of propositions, with which the boy is unable to grapple, but relate to well-known subjects, in order that more undivided attention may be bestowed upon the style and diction. Hence translations from foreign languages, in which, without violence to vernacular idioms, a faithful reproduction of the original in sense and form is the object kept in view, were rightly regarded by Dr. Arnold as an excellent auxiliary in the formation of style; and in the interesting letters of the first Earl of Chatham to his nephew, Thomas Pitt,[1] it is instructive, and to many a German father should prove an occasion for self-humiliation, to observe, that the great minister, even when surrounded by all-engrossing cares and anxieties, could yet find time to revise and correct a poetical rendering by his nephew, of the First Eclogue of Virgil, and to give him in addition many admirable suggestions for the improvement of his phraseology. The practical result of these simple and pretensionless exercises is, that in dexterity, and, more especially, in clearness and precision of verbal expression, the English take precedence of all modern nations. To be convinced of the truth of this remark, it is only necessary to compare German and English authors of average ability and culture with each other, for example, an ordinary writer of German fiction with an English novelist of like standing; how full is the former of hollow phrases and idle repetitions, which are found but sparingly here and there in the pages of the latter! In classical studies, again, the English school-master, by judiciously confining himself to points of essential importance, succeeds in making an excellent grammatical acquaintance with the ancient languages a much more common accomplishment of educated men than in our own best cultivated circles; and Gottfried Hermann would in England have had no occasion to complain that "in the schools they read authors critically, while in the universities our first duty is to teach the rudiments of grammar."[2] Religion, lastly, is not made a subject of instruction in the same sense as with ourselves, but rather forms an integrant part of *school-life*. The favorite conceit of many German preceptors, that children should be made acquainted with all extant systems of belief, in order that they may subsequently determine for themselves, whether they will embrace Christianity, Judaism, Islamism, Buddhism or Mormonism, would never enter an Englishman's head. For him, this election has been in point of fact decided; his earliest intuitions take deep root in his church, upon which, moreover, his school is firmly planted; morning devotions based upon the Book of Common Prayer, and a diligent perusal of the sacred writings occupy the place of religious instruction; and in the well-grounded confidence that the Bible, in proportion as it is known, will prove its own interpreter, it is deemed unnecessary to elucidate its language by any lengthened explanation. And what, again, is the consequence? a familiarity on the part of every cultivated Englishman with the fundamental doctrines of his church, and a thoroughness of Biblical knowledge, which may well cause many German theologians to blush, and of which the great majority of our educated laymen have not even a presentiment.

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[1] Afterwards Lord Camelford.

[2] Wiese, p. 60.

In the preceding observations. we have spoken of this one-sided intellectual tuition as embracing a multitude of requirements, which the child's mind is unable to meet, and which for that reason produce the exact opposite of their own real aim. On the other hand, it imposes on the teacher a too contracted and secondary task, with which he ought not in any respect to feel contented. As every sound theory of education contemplates the development of the pupil's mind in its entire totality, and must, consequently, address itself to the discipline, not only of his intellect, but also of his affections and his will, the tutor ought never to forget that, even as a teacher, he has still higher functions to discharge in respect of moral training, and that, although instruction applies itself more particularly to the understanding, it is nevertheless the understanding of a being endowed with feeling and volition, which cannot starve or remain inactive, while his intellect is fed to excess or unnaturally urged. That the writers, who gave tone to public opinion upon educational questions, at the close of the eighteenth century, are justly reprehensible for the meagre attention, which, in their eager advocacy of an exclusively intellectual method of instruction, they paid to the cultivation of the heart and the will, no one can entertain a doubt. How exceedingly this was the case in reference to the proper training of the affections, is most strikingly shown by the manner in which they availed themselves of poetry in their pedagogical labors. Nothing conduces so greatly to the culture of the heart as success on the part of the teacher in awakening the pupil to sympathetic and self-forgetting enjoyment of the creations of art. Now the essence of art consists in its revealing to our minds in a palpable and concrete form whatever is of universal and spiritual significance; hence its productions require of the student that, rising above his own individual and sensual perceptions, he should realize a vivid apprehension of the spiritual forces which govern everything in nature, and, as a necessary consequence, abandon the individuality of his own contracted subjectivity in favor of a higher and "universal inspiration." In this way, art, by subduing the refractory and arbitrary will of the narrow perceptive and emotional nature, and opening up the mind to a consciousness of the general law, moulds anew the man, rescues him perforce from brutal appetites, and materially aids him in attaining that likeness unto God which is his true vocation. This most valuable quality in art has been acknowledged and celebrated by the sages and poets of all ages. Ovid (Pont. II. 9, 47 seq.) tells us:

— — ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

To represent art as the teacher and refiner of mankind, is an oft-recurring theme in the poems of our Schiller, and to this same subject he has devoted a masterly exposition of his views in his "Letters upon Aesthetic Education." From what has been previously said respecting the nature of art, the close relationship in which it stands to religion, will at once be seen. A direct influence upon the will, we grant, it does not exert; whereas it is of the very essence of religion to develop a practical effect upon the character. Art is satisfied, apart from all set aim and purpose, in exhibiting the oneness of a speciality perceptible to the senses, and its more general and intrinsic significance discernible only by the intellect, in order that its representations may be enjoyed with corresponding freedom in the mental view or perception, and thus assists in causing that devout and reverent attitude of the soul, in which the relation of a particular subject to the Divine and universal is consummated by a simple act of the will. Hence, then, a religious element is found, on the one hand, in every genuine production of art; and, on the other, all real religion is seen to be creative in an artistic point of view, so that a large portion of the principles laid down by Schiller in the work just mentioned, could be converted, with some slight modification, into an argument for religious education. For the harmony, which he sought to establish between the special and the universal law, can be taught after all by aesthetic instruction only as an object of contemplation; its realization in the individual himself is the effect of vital religion, or, in more definite terms, of the religion which He founded, who could truly say of Himself, "I and the Father are one," and who in His own person, as God and man, exhibited the most perfect union of the individual finite and the Divine natures.

Of the educating power of art, and more especially of poetry, in the way above indicated, our pedagogical reformers had no conception. They felt nothing of that divine breath, which breathes through every genuine work of art, and remained utterly insensible to that higher inspiration, which establishes the poet in intimate communion with the Deity, and imparts to him superabundantly above everything which he himself knows or intends. They viewed poetry simply as a medium for communicating rational instruction to children, in a form which they could master and retain. Hence, from the poems already in existence for the use of schools, they selected only those from which an intelligible moral could readily be drawn; hence, too, their extraordinary preference for fables. All others must be stripped of their poetic drapery, and stand forth in naked, sober intelligibility; while those, which they themselves prepared, were merely bald, didactic prose disguised in execrable rhyme. In proof of this, we may refer not only to the scattered verses in Basedow's "Elements," and the various poetical compilations published in accordance with his suggestions for the express use of schools, but also to the fact that this mania for purely intellectual tuition has seized upon our hymn-books, spoiling the good old matter they contained, and supplying its place with new and far inferior material. In this process the expressions of the orthodox piety of former generations were not expelled solely on account of doctrinal considerations; on the contrary, when Gerhard's lines:

Du, aller Welt Verlangen,
Du, meiner Seele Zier,

were transformed into

Du Freude, du Verlangen
Der Trost-bedürftigen!

and the correction of Novalis:

Furcht vor des Todes-Richterschwerte
Verschlang der Hoffnung Ueberrest,

resulted in the tame and feeble couplet:

Und Furcht, dass er vernichtet werde,
Verschlang der Hoffnung Ueberrest;

it is quite plain that no objection to the sense prompted these alterations, but a rage for sobriety of language, which is naturally averse to every form of poetical expression. Pestalozzi, whose poetic capabilities are displayed in his "Leonard and Gertrude," "Hermit's Evening Hour," and other productions, was personally free from these barbaric tastes; but the one-sidedness of his system deprived his pupils of the opportunity of deriving any profit from his great imaginative gifts. The effect of these erroneous views upon the minds of children, and of the public generally, was soon evidenced in the repression and decline of a pure and simple taste for art. Only that poetry was approved, from which a clearly defined moral could be extracted, and the characters in which were distinctly represented as examples to be followed or avoided. With no recognition of the truth that in poetry, no less than in the order of the universe itself, a moral, as well as a poetical justice, is even in process of fulfilment, they were, of course, completely unable to discern in what way the "Werther" and "Elective Affinities" of Göthe, or even the plays of Shakspeare, with their coarse and frequently indecorous expressions, could be turned to profitable account. In this particular, a change for the better in the art of education has been gaining ground. Parents, who remember the childish trash, or dull compendia of "useful knowledge," which formed the mental pabulum of their youth, may well rejoice at the excellent books which their children read with such unflagging interest and wondering admiration. Poetry is no longer regarded as a kind of electuary, wherewith to disguise the taste of lessons and admonitions that are unpalatable to the youthful appetite, but as a vital element, in which children are to breathe and move, and which is, in fact, as indispensable to their peculiar intellectual life, as water to the fish. Instead of histories of the "good William" and the "naughty Richard," the allegory and the fairy tale are no longer laid on the shelf as forbidden objects of curiosity, but are reinstated in the public favor as admirably in unison with the imaginative temperament of the young, and excellently adapted, not merely to encourage high and generous aspiration, but, by giving exercise to the imagination, to kindle a sense of the depth and riches of that invisible realm, which is so greatly overshadowed by the daily formalities and occurrences of common life. So, too, the collections of poems intended for somewhat older children—for example, those of

Echtermayer, Hiecke and Wackernagel—have assumed an entirely different form; and it is now acknowledged by persons of every religious school, that a ballad of Schiller, Göthe or Uhland, and a song of Körner, Arndt or Schenkendorf, acts more powerfully upon the understanding, and is retained more lastingly by the memory than one of Gellert's Fables, or such metrical narratives as those about "little Louisa," who was a sad wild child, "Haus," who even in long clothes was a mischievous urchin, "greedy Fritz," or the turbulent "Hellmuth," who caused his good teacher much sorrow, and the like. Two things, however, remain to be achieved: in the first place, these text-books should consist of strictly classic poetry; in after-days the pupil will have abundant opportunities of becoming acquainted with the indifferent and the bad; and, in the second, life should not in this respect lag behind the school, but all endeavors should be made to banish false prophets, and to introduce, yet more and more upon the stage and in the concert-room, the heaven-inspired interpreters of genuine art, in order that these places may contribute to the invigoration and refinement of the mind, instead of subserving, as at present, the purposes of a pernicious, because a purely sensual, enjoyment.

In respect of the advantages derivable from poetry as a means of juvenile culture, we can scarcely expect to gain much instruction from the method pursued in English schools. Less capable of perceiving ideal principles than their German rivals, English teachers bestow their chief pains upon the formation of sound judgment and practical ability, and attach comparatively little importance to the development of the affections and the imagination. It is, consequently, not surprising that the English prefer to borrow books of allegory and poetry from their continental cousins, showing, nevertheless, in the selection they make, an unerring appreciation of the really good and excellent. In their higher schools, poetic taste is awakened and exercised only by the works of classical antiquity; and, despite the tenacity, with which they cling to notions we regard as superannuated, the method they follow is in two points worthy of our attention. In the first place, in choosing their material, the quantity to which the attention of the scholar is directed is but small, and in this they strive to render him perfectly at home; in the second, it is evident that English thoroughness, as it is called, is a totally different thing from our philological hair-splitting, being carefully adapted to the pupil's wants, and leaving much to be worked out by his own independent conception and appropriation of the poem. As the result of this method of procedure, Wiese observes that "a truly classic culture and reverence for antiquity is much more common in England than with us, however long the roll of celebrated names which German philology is able to display;" and we may add to this remark that another consequence is certainly apparent in the correctness and purity which distinguish the productions of even second and third rate English poets above French and German poetry.

Whatever may be the short-comings of the English in the department of instruction last under our consideration, it must be confessed that they excel all other nations in the cultivation and discipline of the disposition and the will. Nothing can be more alien to this practical people than the neglect with which, in this particular, the one-sided intellectuality of our educational reformers is justly chargeable. Although, as we have remarked above, the whole system of instruction of Basedow and his followers kept practical utility constantly in view, and one of the fundamental principles of the Pestalozzian method insisted strongly upon the necessity of educating the pupil not merely to increase his knowledge, but also, and in still higher degree, to develop practical ability, it must, nevertheless, be admitted that repeated experiment and failure have shown, that the practice of interfering with the normal evolution of children's minds, by urging them to make the impressions they have acquired through the senses, the immediate object of intelligent reflection, contribute neither to the activity of the faculties, nor to capability of performance. They were not suffered to act, until some consideration had been given to the question, whether the motive of their conduct was resolvable into a general rule, and they knew so much about the reasons for which, and the different ways in which, a thing could be done, as to lose entirely the disposition and the aptitude to grasp promply and energetically what the exigencies of circumstance and the occasion might require. In the observation addressed one day to Wiese by an English clergyman: "In Germany you are as zealous after science, as if the Tree of Knowledge were the Tree of Life," the weakness and error of this theory are strikingly exhibited. With this want of a proper co-adaptation of instruction to the requirements of daily life, the absence of a suitable limitation of the subjects of study is very closely connected. Every conceivable thing may be made an object of purely theoretic speculation. Limitation begins with the inquiry, What can become a cause or object of vital activity? a question completely overlooked by modern theorists in their one-sided effort to develop and strengthen the understanding, as if their object could be attained in any other way than by exercising the reasoning faculty upon matters which stand in a real relation to the whole life of the pupil. To the disregard of an inquiry so obviously necessary may be ascribed that multiplicity of studies in many German educational establishments, from the elementary school up to the university, which so greatly paralyzes their efficiency, and from whose bewildering and debilitating influence only those possessed of extraordinary talent can hope to escape. Very different is the system which is followed in English schools. The invariable attention bestowed, not, indeed, upon what is materially useful, but upon what the pupil's future will require, and which, when school-days end, may still work as an element of active life, and become a living germ, from which his entire personality, and, above all, his character, may be evolved, leads to a judicious abridgment of the material of instruction. In this more contracted sphere, however, a greater certainty in reproducing, and a greater dexterity in turning what is learnt to profitable account, are certainly secured; "the scholar learns far less than ours, but one thing he learns decidedly better, and that is, *how to learn.* He gains a more extended capability of judgment, and such knowledge as qualifies him to form correct views of other matters, while with us many know only just as much as they have been taught, and never break loose from their dependence on what they have learnt at school."[1] "Let the same task," continues Wiese, "be proposed to an English and a German boy of like attainments, for example, the translation of a difficult and unknown passage, and I venture to assert that the latter will be either stupidly embarrassed, or will hurriedly slur over his reply, and, prompt enough with words, talk nonsense, while the former will examine the passage more quietly, appear in no way confused or at a loss, and then either distinctly confess his inability, or, notwithstanding his perhaps more limited acquirements, give a better answer; in any event he will not open his mouth unless he feels convinced that he has really something pertinent to say. It seems to me that in German schools the teacher estimates too slightly the importance of teaching his pupils to be silent by propounding questions. If that sound discretion, to which in England every educational auxiliary is made subservient, is only secured, little regard is paid to the taunt of confining the attention of the pupil to a too contracted range of study; they feel assured, that thoroughness in a single branch, and the mental habits thereby engendered, will impart, in days of more mature development and self-direction, insight and judgment for all things, to which he may then spontaneously apply his intellectual energies." By this prudent restriction of the course of study, it becomes possible for every scholar to satisfy the demands which are made upon his industry. Whoever is familiar with the standing and performances of the pupils of our gymnasia, cannot deny that, as a general rule, particularly in the upper classes, the number is but small of those who are able to execute in a satisfactory manner the manifold and high-pitched requisitions of the curriculum; the great majority plod on with labor and difficulty, and not a few, despairing of success or neglected by the teacher, are left completely behind; while not infrequently, in consequence of the slight attention paid to realities in our gymnasia, there are others, who are incited to distinguish themselves in the mathematical and natural sciences, and after a brief period to outstrip their classmates, whose standing was previously better than their own. No mistake can be greater than that of making the talent possessed by a few scholars the standard for the requisitions of the programme, which, on the contrary, should be arranged with reference to average attainment and capacity, in order that the lessons it prescribes may not be beyond the reach of the conscientious industry of less favored pupils. The instruction imparted in the public schools of England is based upon a recognition of this principle, and the distribution of prizes at the close of every half year is, therefore, not regulated by reference to superior talent, or a special aptitude for scientific study, which must always be the result of peculiar endowments and inclination, but by the question, who has most distinguished himself by "good behavior and a strict regard to his duties;" considerations, which can fairly be applied to *every* member of the class. The great truth proclaimed by Rousseau, that zeal will sooner supply the place of talent, than talent that of zeal, is firmly embraced by the practical and common-sense English. To the honor of our latest writers upon the art of education, it must also be acknowledged, that, retracing their steps from the erroneous paths of a too highly pitched and multifarious system of instruction, they now insist rather upon a thorough and productive study of essential knowledge, than upon a superficial smattering of every subject of intellectual pursuit. In the elementary schools, measures in conformity with this wiser view have already been taken, although that variety and multiplicity of the objects of instruction, which is more adapted for momentary display, than for permanent utility, is still but too prevalent in our gymnasia and other schools of mechanical or technical art, where the teachers, generally speaking, are more enamored of ancient routine, and bestow less consideration upon the reasons of their mode of procedure, than those who are entrusted with the superintendence of our more elementary schools. Sincerely do we wish that the conductors of these establishments, for whose instruction Mr. Wiese's book was written, may not content themselves with merely praising his principles, while still adhering to a method of tuition which is completely opposed to his recommendations, but apply them to the real benefit of themselves and their pupils.

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[1] Wiese, p. 62.

We have dwelt thus at length upon this one-sided intellectuality of instruction, because, in the pedagogy of our modern educational reformers, it is the grand distinctive feature. In briefly summing up the result of his observations, Mr. Wiese describes the peculiar defects and excellencies of German, as opposed to English, education, in the following words: "In scientific attainment our schools are far in advance of the English, but the training of the latter is a more efficient means of ensuring the true purpose of education, because it imparts a better outfit and preparation for actual life." Some other peculiarities in the system, which addresses instruction exclusively to the intellect, remain to be noticed, and to their consideration we hope to proceed in a subsequent Article.