

ADDRESS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE CONVENTION OF THE FRIENDS OF EDUCATION,

IN INDIANAPOLIS, JANUARY 3, 1837,

BY ANDREW WYLIE, DD.

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1837.

SENATE CHAMBER, January 4, 1837.

DEAR SIR,

I have been appointed by the Senate of Indiana, to request of you a copy of the address, upon the subject of Common Schools, delivered by you on the evening of the 3d instant, before the Convention of the friends of Education. The object of the Senate is to print and circulate the same.

Your compliance with this request, as early as may suit your convenience, will be no less grateful to the Senate than to

Your ob't serv't,

R. W. THOMPSON.

Rev. Dr. A. WYLIE.

JANUARY 4, 1837.

DEAR SIR,

Please express to the Senate of Indiana my grateful sense of the honor they have done me by their request, as signified through you in your note of this morning. I regret that the discourse is not more worthy of the kind attention which it has pleased the Senate, and yourself as their committee, to bestow upon it; yet, hoping that it may contribute something to advance the important cause which it advocates, a copy of the discourse is herewith submitted to the disposal of the Senate.

With high respect,

Your friend,

And humble serv't,

ANDREW WYLIE.

ADDRESS.

Respected Audience:

I HAVE come to this place, at this inclement season of the year, for the purpose of discharging, in part, an obligation imposed upon me by the course of the past years of my life, and the duty I owe to the people of this state, and particularly to those of them who feel a deep and lively concern for the education of the youth in their families, and the generation which they see rising up in the families around them.

I have more experience, perhaps, in the business of giving instruction in the different parts of education, than any other man of my age, having been engaged in the employment very early in life, and persevered in it, without the interruption of any considerable interval, to the present hour. Two years of my life I spent in teaching a common school; two in teaching one of a higher grade; two as tutor and professor in college, and twenty-four as president—thirty years in all. If, therefore, I have gained any useful information by the experience of so many years spent in the business of instruction, it is but reasonable that I should be willing to be at some pains and trouble to impart it to others, especially to you, fellow-citizens, to whom I ought to feel, as I trust I do, the attachment arising out of common interests and a common country. Here, in the midst of you, I have fixed my residence for the remainder of life, as I hope; and here in the midst of you, when life shall end, I expect to leave a numerous family of children to share with your children in the good or ill which may result from what we may do, or neglect to do, for the benefit of those who come after us. I have, therefore, embraced, with peculiar pleasure, this opportunity of offering for your consideration some thoughts on the subject which has called us together, a subject in which the best interests of our families, and of the whole community are deeply involved.

The subject before us is common school education, or what, in the light in which it ought to be viewed, and in which I shall at present consider it, might, with greater propriety, be denominated common education. For it will be seen, in the course of the following remarks, that the best part of a common education, that is, such an education as all children may, and ought to, obtain, must be gained, if gained at all, not in schools, but at home in the family circle.

We shall commence our remarks by making the enquiry: What should a common education embrace? This question must be determined by a strict regard to the ends to be obtained: for it is a suggestion which common

sense must make to every man who seriously engages in any undertaking, that the means must be adapted to the end to be accomplished.

What, then, let it be asked, ought every parent to desire for his children? To this question it will probably be answered, health, long life, competency, honor, usefulness. In such an answer, so far as it is goes, all probably would agree: but highest in the best of things to be desired for our children, and consequently to be aimed at in education, every believer in the doctrine of a future state would unhesitatingly place happiness in the world to come.

In examining this list of desirables, the first observation that naturally strikes us is that, so far as we can learn by actual observation, not one of them is attainable but by means of the greatest care on the part of the parent. And hence analogy would lead us to a similar conclusion in regard to that one among their number, namely, happiness in a future life, of which we can directly learn nothing by actual observation. The life of human beings would last but for a few minutes, and consequently the race become extinct, did not nature prompt parents to extend to their helpless offspring that tender care which their weakness demands, and which, when in similar circumstances, was bestowed upon themselves. Instinct teaches the human parent, as it does the parents of other animals, to extend the necessary care to the child in infancy. Yet we know that superstition has authorized infanticide; that savages leave their infants to perish; and that, in many instances, ladies—females pretending to the highest refinement and the most tender sensibility, do the same—I say, leave their children to perish, literally to perish, for want of that attention which none but mothers can give, but which they choose rather to bestow on other objects, in obedience to the calls of fashion.

Instances are still more frequent of children doomed to drag out a miserable existence, a burthen to themselves and useless to the community, in consequence of the indigent condition of their parents. Not, indeed, that they are actually so poor but that they might provide the means of sustenance and comfort for their little ones; but, either because they are ignorant of that mode of treatment which is necessary to prevent disease in children, or because they are improvident, negligent and reckless. Both these causes of so much misery and loss of life—I mean the ignorance and recklessness of parents—would have been prevented by a good common education. For one of the many happy fruits of such an education is the influence it has upon the mind in forming it to habits of reflection and forecast, the want of which is as often the cause as the consequence of extreme poverty.

No person, possessed of even an ordinary faculty and opportunity for observation, needs to be told, that misery and disgrace are the proper fruits and inevitable consequences of a vicious course of conduct. It is no less manifest that a vicious course of conduct proceeds, in almost every case, from the want of good instruction and wholesome discipline in early life. Truth of every kind tends to what is fair and good in morals. The connection is not in all cases obvious; but it may be seen upon reflection. What branch of knowledge, for instance, seems so remote from virtuous conduct as Arithmetic, or the science of numbers? And yet, I believe, there is a connection between them. There can be little doubt, that much of that idleness, intemperance and other thriftless habits, which we see so prevalent in the lives and conduct of certain classes of people, is owing, in part, to the fact that they have not been taught in early life the powers of numbers. If the vast sum, to which certain items of expenditure, for things useless or even

pernicious in the consumption, amount in the course of time, were clearly understood, and if the power of multiplying itself, by prudent use, which such a sum involves, were fully and habitually in view, is it conceivable, that people would, as we see them doing, not only consent to forego all the advantages which are lost, but to suffer all the privations or hardships which are incurred, by these uncalculating habits of profligacy and intemperance? People do not run into these habits from the force of any vicious propensity so often as from mere thoughtlessness. The bait is swallowed, because the hook is not perceived. Give the habit of consideration, and you reveal the hook. It is true that, when a depraved habit is once formed a sight of the hook will not deter. But previously it may: and this is enough for my argument. Are we under no obligation to stop up one avenue to ruin, because there are more avenues than one? Because some will climb over all the obstructions that can be heaped up in their way to perdition, is that a reason why no obstructions should be placed there?

That the connection, which has been just now affirmed to exist between a knowledge of Arithmetic and a prudent course of conduct, may be the more manifest, let us contemplate, for a moment, its application to time, on the improvement of which, every one knows, the most important advantages are suspended. The limit usually assigned to human life is the seventieth year; though that is about double the time to which the individuals of our race actually live, taking them on an average. But extending life to its utmost limit, and allowing one-third of the time for sleep, another third for the scenes and frivolities of youth and for those numerous fragments of time which through life are spent, even by the most diligent in small and trivial matters, and making allowance for sickness and the infirmities of age, it will be found that not more than twenty years, and that according to the most favorable suppositions that can be made, will remain to be bestowed in the accomplishment of the great ends for which life was given. Now, I am persuaded that less than the half of this short period of twenty years comprizes every hour that the most of people devote to any worthy and valuable purpose: that is, they employ, in providing for themselves, in providing for their children, in providing for the interests of the community, and in providing for the scenes which are to open upon them at the close of life—for all these purposes together, they spend less than the one-seventh of the time to which, at the farthest, they can reasonably hope to exist in the world! This, I say, is the state of the fact, as it respects the majority—people who are not chargable with any very remarkable delinquency as it respects the improvement of time. With respect to such as are thus chargable the representation which truth requires is infinitely more frightful. Their life is a blank—as to what is fair, good, and useful, it is a blank—but as to things of an opposite character, things low and base, and vile and villainous, and impure and pestilential, it is full of them, crammed, packed and overflowing. And yet, such persons wonder at the success—the eminence, and respectability of others, who, they say, have been more fortunate, and whom, on account of what they call their superior good fortune, they envy. They wonder, too, why it is that they do not get along in the world. Had they been taught the simplest of the powers of numbers, the wonder had never happened, for then they would have known that months, and years, and life itself is made up of swift-winged hours, by the improvement of which they would have realized those advantages for the want of which they pine.

⁶ Were man a mere animal, and were this the highest end and purpose of his being to supply himself with the means of a comfortable subsistence in

the sphere for which nature designed him, and were he endowed with the powers of speech and reason as other animals with their respective instincts, merely for the purpose of accomplishing this end with the greater ease and certainty, education would still be necessary. For the means to this end are found out not at once but in the course of experience. Those who have trod the thorny path of life before us have gradually been adding, at the expense of many a persevering effort and many a perilous experiment to the stock of knowledge in the useful arts, which have multiplied to so great an extent the comforts and enjoyments of civilized life. And it is by means of education that this stock of knowledge must be handed down to the men of future times. For this purpose it is even necessary that a portion of each generation, as it advances to take charge of the affairs of life, should be made proficient in literature and science. But this is necessary only for a few. The majority have neither the capacity, the means, nor the inclination requisite for such a purpose. It is well that it is so. For were all philosophers all would want bread. Some talk about education in such a style of magniloquent enthusiasm as seems to imply an expectation of such improvements in the art of making science easy to the learner, as shall put the advantages of a liberal education in the possession of all classes. They talk of equalizing every thing. It is idle. Nature interposes an effectual veto, by limiting her gifts to a few. The rich, who can afford to make experiments, some times take it into their heads to try how far they can succeed without her permission in their attempts to make out of a silly boy a Newton. Accordingly, he is, while almost an infant, sent to school, and afterwards to college. There he has all possible facilities and advantages; a host of lads around him all emulous to excel; professors in every branch of literature and science, each pouring forth a constant stream of "learned lore," books which the Muses have filled with the choicest fruits of their inspiration, cabinets containing specimens of all things in nature; planetariums to explain the mechanism of the heavens; all kinds of implements and contrivances of art wherewith to try experiments and make discoveries:—and with all these advantages what does he do? What advances does he make towards the glorious object held out before him. Just none at all. He may, it is true, be dragged through the course. But he is in distress all the time, and never ceases to wonder and to inquire of what use learning is. Yes, and to his latest hour he may wonder, but he will never be able to find out. One thing he will probably find out, that it has been of no use to him, a discovery which shrewd people had long before foreseen. I shall not stop to say what are the marks of genius, or from what early indications future eminence may be prognosticated. Because I know that so long as parental fondness interprets the omens they are all likely to be propitious. One thing, however, I must say, that whenever a boy lingers at the threshold of every department of knowledge which it is proposed for him to acquire, asking and doubting whether it will be of use, he may be infallibly set down for a blockhead. Wherever there is a spark of genius there will be a burning, irrepressible thirst for knowledge, for the mere sake of knowing, and irrespective of any further advantage.

I have made these remarks, not, certainly, to disparage the higher branches of learning. Philosophy is as necessary to the practical arts of common life, as *they* are to philosophy. There must, indeed, be those in the community who can content themselves to ply the loom and speed the plough, else the philosophers will go unclad and unfed; but, at the same time, let it

be remembered, that but for the philosophers the loom and the plough had never been.

But though it is vain to think of giving the means of acquiring a liberal education to all, or even to a majority of the youth of our country; yet such an enlargement of the course of instruction in our common schools is, I hope, practicable, and certainly it is in the highest degree desirable, as, when compared with that which at present prevails, may well be deemed liberal. This is necessary to exalt the character of the people to an elevation which shall better comport with their rank and dignity as intellectual and moral beings, and better qualify them for the enjoyment of those high privileges, and the discharge of those important duties which belong to them as the citizens of the freest government on earth. A competent knowledge of Geography, History, Philology, Trigonometry, Astronomy, Chemistry, so far as applicable to the useful arts, Mechanics, Miscellaneous Literature, and above all, Christian Morality, in addition to Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, ought to be communicated in all the common schools in our country. You ask, with surprise, how this can be effected. On this point you may expect something to be advanced in another part of this discourse. In the mean time I am compelled to make a remark or two with the view to obviate a prejudice that lies in my way. It has been thought that increase in knowledge tends not to promote purity of morals, but rather the contrary. The grossly ignorant, to whose ranks this prejudice has heretofore been confined, may be excused for entertaining it, on the principle that it is natural for us to fear what we do not comprehend, and to suspect danger wherever there is mystery. It is not wonderful, therefore, that such as have never learned the value of knowledge should entertain apprehensions from the prospect of its increase. But what can be plead by way of excuse for such as are not ignorant—such as are zealous for education, and such as claim to be particularly earnest on the subject of religious education, when they are found laboring to confirm and strengthen the prejudice in question? It is strange that it should never have occurred to such reasoners, that they are taking the most effectual means of injuring the cause which they mean to promote; since, while they try to convince mankind, that knowledge without religion is dangerous, they make religion itself and not knowledge, the object of suspicion. For that surely is of small account which seems important only in the dark. The truth is, it is dangerous to be without religion for any people enlightened or not, and the tendency of all knowledge, so far as it has a moral tendency at all, must be towards that which is good. No man was ever the better for his ignorance. What if the public records of France do shew a greater amount of crimes in the enlightened than in the unenlightened districts? This proves not that a greater number of crimes are committed in the former than in the latter, but only that a greater number are detected and punished. The worst state of society is that in which virtue is punished; the next is that in which crime is not punished, though it exists. And, in such a case, whoever estimates the state of public morals from statistical tables, will be deceived, for the records will be pure. Would we know the true amount of virtue or piety in a place, we must not depend on statistical tables. It is like learning a man's character from himself. The recital of his virtues will be in proportion to their number—inversely.

It is truly trying on one's patience to be under the necessity of refuting statements such as are made on this subject from time to time—statements which go to contradict the fixed laws of nature, and which, therefore, deserve

to be placed in the same list with those discoveries, which, ingenious artists are ever on the point of making, of a way to produce perpetual motion. It has been proved by the success of every experiment which has ever been made since the world began, that the qualities of every useful plant and vegetable is susceptible of improvement by culture, that the same is true of the instincts of animals and the physical powers of man, in so much that the Græcian Athletæ, the Roman Soldier, and the Knights of Chivalry performed, without an effort, feats of strength and agility which no man without their training would have the hardihood even to attempt. All experience shews that the same law of improvement holds throughout the intellectual and moral world, that ignorance leads to vice and misery, and that knowledge tends to the contrary results. It is moreover demonstrable, from fact as well as from the laws of mind; that the exercise of the intellect is necessary to the very existence of every thing like moral excellence in the character, or virtue in the conduct, and yet we are told that education, so far as the mere communication of knowledge is concerned, is not even neutral but positively opposed to virtue! I will believe it when it shall be demonstrated that the cold of Nova Zembla is produced by the sun's rays. That Knowledge does not of itself produce virtue is readily admitted; neither does rain of itself produce flowers. But yet we know that where no rain distills flowers do not grow; and "that where there is no vision the people perish."

Such as are unbelievers in the power of education to improve the moral character would do well to reflect on the counterpart of this truth, which is somewhat more obvious, the tendency of families to degenerate through the want of it. The human race is, I believe, like all things else that have life, either improving or declining. There are limits, doubtless, on either hand. And when a people are urged to a certain point of depression by the weight of their vices, they feel the sharp and envenomed points of calamity goading them so severely that they are glad to struggle with all their might to regain their former standing. But the ascent is always difficult and in fact impracticable, without that assistance from above which it is consolatory to think is always held in reserve for the extremity of human distress. And yet, instances have not been wanting in the history of the world to shew that a tribe and even a whole people may suffer themselves so far to degenerate, that reaction cannot be produced even by the stimulus of the most pungent suffering. Such is the sad case of a people doomed to perish.

To prevent evil, fellow-citizens, is proverbially easier than to cure. This, then, we must do to prevent the ruin of our country, we must effect a great and permanent improvement in the system of common education. It is a great and difficult undertaking, much more so, than that stupendous scheme of internal improvement, in which we have with so much spirit engaged. And it is more important also. See what must be done. School houses and academies must be every where provided, wholesome and comfortable in their construction, and furnished each one with an apparatus such as will cost from twenty to fifty dollars. Competent teachers must be provided at a salary varying according to circumstances, from four hundred to a thousand dollars: for such as are competent, except in very rare instances, cannot be procured for less. Books, in addition to those on hand, must be purchased, which will cost to supply the children of the state—not less than two millions of dollars. And, what must come first in the execution of this great reform, and what it will be, I fear, the most difficult to accomplish, the people must be convinced that they are abundantly able to furnish all these

means, and that it is their interest to do so. The whole of the difficulty lies in the first step, to enlist the feelings and the interests of the community in the great and glorious undertaking. Where shall we begin? I answer, let our leading and influential men take up the cause; and let the press and the pulpit speak. I wish I could sound the trumpet so as to awaken the soul of every preacher in the land. I would say to him: "Consider the influence and responsibility attached to your office. Shew the people the importance of knowledge. Make your own discourses instructive. Do not so often repeat the same stale truths, but bring out "things new" as well as "old." Enlarge your views by reading and study, that you may feed the people with wholesome and various food. Bring your instructions home to the circumstances of your hearers, shewing them how they ought to live and what duties they owe to their children. The pulpit stands first among the means of educating the minds and forming the characters of the young. The preacher who can win the attention and the hearts of the young, and thus allure them in "the good and right way," is an unspeakable blessing to the community. Many a snowy day, and many a sultry day, have I, in my boyhood, gone afoot between four and five miles, to listen to the discourses of a man whom I heard with ever fresh delight—I could not then have told why; but now I can. He set my mind to thinking. He explained things in their natures, relations, causes, consequences, bearings and connections. He not only always told me something that I did not know before, but showed the evidence of it. He did not convey his hearers so often beyond the limits of what belongs to the present scene as some preachers are wont to do. But this life—human nature—the temptations—the trials, the dangers—sufferings, hopes, fears, interests, rules and motives of action, which belong to us here—these were the themes on which he chiefly dwelt, and which he rarely failed to make interesting to his hearers. He was, in short, a christian Socrates, and as much beloved by the young folks as was that ancient sage, and for a similar reason: he made them think, taught them the use of their own faculties, and moral powers.

It is much to be regretted that the pulpit and the Sabbath, as they stand connected with the improvement of the young in that most essential branch of a good common education which consists in morals and religion, are treated with so much neglect by our men of influence. If any such delinquents are present—for such I must call them—though I trust it has been through inadvertence—I beg and pray you to consider the matter—how people, especially the young, could do without some such means of improving their character and manners as the pulpit affords; and if this is not precisely what you would have, contrive something better. But do something. Give your influence and example, in someway, to a cause so important, and one which, as all are deeply interested in it, demands countenance and support from all.

In the second place let a taste for reading be formed and cherished in families. Let the newspaper, the tract, the instructive moral tale, the history, the well selected novel (such as Robinson Crusoe and the Vicar of Wakefield), the allegory (such as Pilgrim's Progress), the biography furnish employment for the young in these long winter nights. Parents! buy books as premiums to reward your children for their good behavior. And, when you can borrow books from a kind neighbor, do so. Be assured, that a well selected library will be better to your children than a field, or orchard, or garden; for its fruits are imperishable. The impressions which give a turn to character in youth are often produced by circumstances that may seem trivial in themselves; and the sight of a parent or older brother intent, in an interval of business, on the pages of some useful volume replete with

the matured wisdom of sages, has often awakened in the young members of a family a thirst for knowledge. In this way improvement beginning with individuals is diffused through families, and extending from families to neighborhoods, pervades, at length, the entire community.

The care of every parent should be directed to the forming of a taste for reading in the minds of his children, not merely because by reading comes knowledge, but because it affords a delightful recreation in hours of leisure, which might otherwise be spent amidst the debasing scenes of gross frolic and low sensuality. Seldom indeed do we see a boy who is fond of his book turn aside to such scenes. They have irresistible charms only for those whose animal feelings have in youth been suffered to get the start of their powers of intellect.

The want of ability in parents is sometimes plead as the reason why they do not procure books for their children; others alledge that they cannot find the means of sending their children to school. In very few cases that have come under my observation can such excuses be sustained. The true reason why so many children are brought up in ignorance, is, that the parents are idle, reckless, improvident, and in most cases given to intemperance. Poverty in such a country as this can never be so extreme as to preclude parents from the means of giving their children a good common education, provided they be prudent and industrious. In some respects, I am fully persuaded, from the observations I have made on the subject, that the children of the poor in our country, or, at least, those who are born in what we call moderate circumstances, are more favorably situated, as it respects the prospect of obtaining a good education, than the children of the rich. And, further, I declare it as a fact, which the most thorough examination will verify, that more of the former than of the latter are in fact thus educated. Let us sift this matter a little. The first seven years of life the child requires a physical education; that is, plain but nutritious food—milk, for instance, which the chymist knows, goes to make strong the bones—and plenty of exercise in the open air. Now the employments of the farm—and every poor family can get the very best opportunity for such employments—afford both in the greatest purity and abundance. In this period, set the boys to work—aye, and the girls too. Work is the first part of an education for both, and the most important too. Gymnastics—fiddle-sticks!—are no substitute for it. Now the rich cannot learn their children to work. Hence they are puny, often, in body and mind. I will mention a secret here which has great influence. Children can make comparisons. Set a boy to work and make him work hard; keep him at it early and late—and the consequence is, he eats his plain bread and meat, and drinks his milk with exquisite relish—and he sleeps so sweetly, Sardanapalus never enjoyed such luxury. And of all this another consequence is, that his joints are knit, his sinews strong, his nerves strung, his brain—the organ of thought—developed and purified. But all this is not the secret. The secret is, that the tired boy thinks that work is a harder task than his book, and he hies him to school with the alacrity of a young colt. Now see the rich man's son. There he goes to school, slow, and reluctant, sobbing and blubbering; because books and slate and the confinement of the school room are found, on comparison, not so agreeable to his feelings, as rolling on the carpet and eating candy at home.

There is another thing here which I think it of importance to mention, for the purpose of showing the advantage enjoyed by such as are in moderate circumstances over the wealthy, in respect to the education of their children. The fact which I am about to relate is, indeed, no secret to those who

have used their eyes in observing the course of human affairs: the manner of accounting for it I shall leave, with a single remark, to the reflections of the audience.

Take two boys of equal talents and ages, the one sent to school as soon as he was able to walk, but, treated with that indulgence which usually prevails in wealthy families; fed upon exciting and stimulating food, and urged to mental effort by fondness and flattery: the other brought up in the manner I have described, accustomed to work and to plain diet; and first mark the difference between them. The first is quite a proficient for his age, in every thing which constitutes what is usually called smartness: he is pert, sprightly, self-confident, fluent in speech, ready and shrewd in his answers, bright in his appearance, and lively in his movements. In short, you would say he is a genius, and destined to figure in the world. The other has apparently more brawn than brains; he is, compared with his competitor, slow, bashful, diffident, and, but for certain glimmerings of sense, which a skilful eye may see through his awkwardness, you would pronounce him a dunce.

Next, let these two boys be put, for five or six years, to some public school, where they shall enjoy precisely equal advantages; and, at the end of that period, the latter will be seen as far in advance of the former, as he was behind him at the beginning; and the distance between them will increase more and more every year of their lives; so that, long after the one of them becomes stationary, the other shall continue to proceed in his course with fresh vigor and delight.

To what this eventual superiority is owing cannot be particularly explained at present. Various causes co-operate to produce it, one of which is sufficiently manifest, namely, the vigor which toil imparts to the youthful constitution, and which enables it to sustain itself under those intellectual efforts that are afterwards to be made. And, what it behooves all who have taken upon themselves the weighty and responsible concern of rearing a family, ought well to consider is, that this constitutional vigor must be gained in youth, and at home in the family, or not at all. Schools on the manual labor system will not answer the purpose, unless in those very peculiar circumstances to which Fellenberg is indebted for the success of his establishment at Hofwyl, circumstances, which, happily for us, are not likely to take place in this country for ages to come.

The wisdom of God has divided mankind into families, communities of such a size and peculiar structure as to render them conveniently manageable by those who are its natural heads, and whose authority is sweetened to its subjects, as is the toil of its exercise to themselves, by the strongest instincts of our nature. But if you take a company of individuals characterized by the same diversities as the members of a family, the young, and the old, the inexperienced, and the experienced, the weak, and the strong; and place them, out of the relations of the natural family, into other relations of man's institution and devising, in the expectation that such of them as need it shall be instructed in economy and industry and the ten thousand little things—not little in importance, which constitute what we call good breeding, you deprive yourself of nature's help where it is indispensable, and are consequently laying up for yourself the reward which must ever follow every experiment of that impious quackery which presumes to set aside the laws of Heaven's ordaining—disappointment and shame. The best part of a good education is to be obtained at home within the domestic circle, under the inspection of the parent's eye, and the influence of the parent's example. Yet, there are parents, who are not insane in other matters, who act, in re-

gard to the education of their children, as if they believed the arrangements of nature were the freaks of chance, or rather, as if they expected the order and economy of nature were to be reversed to flatter their indolence. They utterly neglect the government of their children, suffer them to go where and when they please, to saunter about the streets and public places, to associate with whoever they may chance to fall in with—no restraint—no employment—gratified in every whim, appetite, passion, propensity: and then, when these same hopeful lads are sent to college, or boarding school, they expect the teacher will do a miracle,—without parental authority they expect him to effect what they have not done, with it; nay more—to undo what they have done, to root up the vices they have implanted; to teach those industry whom they have nurtured in idleness,—to inculcate maxims and principles of prudence, temperance and frugality in those whom they have brought up in folly, intemperance and prodigality; and to inspire with an ardor for pursuits requiring the utmost application and diligence those whom they have taught to consider themselves as above labor of every kind! Preposterous people! To expect us to bestow gifts by nature denied to their children, were less extravagant.

In the capacious and boiling caldron, which contains the commingled elements of human society there is an ascending, and there is a descending current: and this perhaps is the law of the vessel. Of those who are born to no hereditary advantages of condition, there are some on whom nature has bestowed talents which, with proper cultivation, fit them for rising to eminence in those conditions in society in which they may exert a wide and lasting influence for the general good. And the humble circumstances which attend their entrance into life are among the causes which raise them to their high destiny. They are thrown from the first, upon their own resources. Want forbids indulgence and stimulates to exertion. A desire to excel urges them forward. No time is lost. No energy misspent or enervated by pleasure. Obstacle after obstacle is surmounted; and thus new strength and experience is gained for future and still more powerful efforts. Every day and hour brings with it some new acquisition. The mind is put on the alert, and every opportunity and advantage is turned to good account. And when, by patient perseverance, the knowledge thirsted for is obtained; and the industrious frugal boy has become a man, advantages which he had never before thought of throng around him. The community offers him employment, because he is seen to possess qualifications for being useful. In winning his way to that eminence in knowledge and virtue which he all along aspired after, he finds what he may not before have thought of, that he has also won his way to the esteem and confidence of mankind. And now, in the enjoyment of competence and surrounded by a rising family, he feels happy in the reflection, that he is able to supply them with those means of acquiring knowledge which he remembers it cost him so much pains and self-denial to gain for himself; and he rejoices in the brighter prospect that opens up before them, while he thinks how much more rapid advances he would have made, in the earlier stages of his career, had he enjoyed those superior advantages which his success in life has enabled him to bestow upon them. But there is another view of the subject, which it is not so natural for him to take, and which the result is likely to justify, namely; that these very advantages may prove an injury to his children. And that this will be the case, is certain, should they become to his children the means of relaxing their own personal efforts, generating habits of thoughtlessness and

presumption, and seducing them into the gay scenes and tempting pleasures of the fashionable world. Should this prove to be the case, as it generally does, the experience of the parent will be reversed in his children: they will sink into insignificance as fast as he rose out of it. Thus we often see the doctrine of the assending current verified in one generation, and that of the descending current in the next following.

It might serve to abate that passion for accumulating wealth for their children, which most parents in our country so excessively indulge, if they would reflect how few have ever been found, in the history of mankind, who were proof against the corrupting influence of exorbitant wealth. It is difficult for men who have risen to eminence to continue themselves in the practice of those hardy and self-denying virtues to which they are indebted for their elevation: it is much more so to teach them to their children. By the time that a man has established himself in that state of competence and respectability, which naturally flows from vigorous and well directed efforts in youth and manhood, the energies of nature begin to yield under the weight of years, and call for relaxation and indulgence. It is difficult for parents in this case, to resist the belief, that what has become necessary for them is not also necessary for their children. For this reason, it so often happens, that the younger members of a large family are more tenderly—that is to say, more cruelly, treated, than were their older brothers and sisters, whose youth, of course, was more nearly coincident with the unimpaired and unsympathising strength and active habits of their parents.

In coming to this conclusion above expressed, I have left out of view the vicious extremes on either side. There are such. They abound in most of our great cities and principal towns. Yes; there you may find parents, some of them in the extreme of poverty, others in the extreme of wealth, who seem most earnestly to vie with each other in trying the experiment, how vicious and abominable children can be made. These parents go before their children in the ways of pollution, and as if example were not sufficient, they take pains to instil into their minds pernicious principles, fortifying them at the same time in these principles by a circumvalation of prejudice, which no good influence can surmount or penetrate. Need we wonder that the children of such exhibit, even in their juvenile years, specimens of every thing that is odious and loathesome; that they smoke and chew tobacco and get drunk, curse, swear and lie; cheat and gamble, practice things still more debasing, and which decency forbids me to name; and that they should be so abandoned to all virtuous sensibility, as not to be ashamed of such things, and even so horribly and hediously perverted in their feelings, as to glory in them and boast of them, not only in word but in writing? Shoots and scions from such families—plantations from these nurseries of hell, are multiplying so fast around us, that, before long, one must insulate his family from all intercourse with the world, if he would shun the rank infection of this spreading pestilence. For characters, such as I have just described, education can do nothing. Their cause is hopeless. And let them rot in their own pollution. But let parents, who are themselves not infected, beware how they suffer their children to come near such as have the plague spots upon them; however they may be decorated with jewelry, or essenced with perfumes.

I shall conclude this discourse, already protracted to a wearisome length, by some remarks on the kind of education proper for females. Some improvement here is highly desirable in itself. But I propose to consider it,

not in itself, but only as a means towards the great end we have in view, the advancement of the cause of common education. Without woman's influence the cause can not prosper. Degeneracy begins with woman: the influence that regenerates begins with her also. She stands at the fountain head of moral power, and without her aid in the matter before us nothing effectual can be done. But to come to the point. Our females must be taught in the first place how to keep house. I speak designedly in homely phrase, because it suits my subject, and I want to express myself briefly and yet intelligibly to all. Let those who prefer elegance to comfort, and who can afford the expense of such folly, teach their daughters Languages ancient and modern, Painting and instrumental Music, Poetry and Rhetoric, Oratory and Calisthenics—and they may add if they please Mechanics, Mensuration, Trigonometry, Astronomy, Hydrostatics, Hydraulics, Optics—Natural Philosophy in all its branches—Chemistry, Physiology, Mental and Moral Philosophy, the science of Government, Political Economy, Grammar, Logic, Philology, Sculpture, Architecture and the art of Landscape, Phrenology, and whatever else they please—but since every man who wants a wife and who has not the stomach of an ostrich, can not long be pleased with a woman who, when he comes home hungry and tired, serves him up a dish of biscuit, in color, form and weight resembling long bullets, with other articles of food, good it may be in the material, but miserably spoiled in the preparation; since, I say, this is clear to a demonstration, then it follows that every young female should know how to bake a loaf of bread. O what virtue there is in a well raised, well baked, three days old wheaten loaf! Blessings on the heart and head and hands of those mothers in Israel, who, when young, learned so much of the art of chymistry—and disdained not to add thereto so much of the still more needful art of kneading and baking, as is necessary to the production of the precious article. Ladies, I do not trifle. To be poisoned is a serious matter: and poisoned that man is sure to be, and his children too, whose wife is a slattern and unskilled in the culinary art. I need not insist on what every one must have observed, that indigestion, with those numerous diseases which spring from it, and spread misery and death among so many families, has its origin, chiefly, in their habit of feeding on things which kind nature indeed designed for the use of man, but in regard to which nature has been baffled and her designs frustrated by the cook. But on this I do insist, that much of that intemperance, which has broken the heart of so many females throughout the land, may be traced to the same source. The hungry man eats, but he eats indigestibles. The pain of appetite is indeed stayed, but his stomach feels another pain, from having to act upon that, which to master is a task too hard for stomach of man or dog, and the miserable sufferer goes to the bottle for relief, and is undone.

But further still: the physical condition of man, in every stage of his earthly existence, is not only intimately connected with his comfort and health, but with his moral feelings; so that a child accustomed to roll in filth, like a pig in a sty, can hardly be expected to have afterwards a taste for what is proper in conduct, or comely in manners. As idleness, moreover, is usually the source and companion both of physical and moral impurity, it is of vast importance that every mother should know how to find employment for the subjects of her charge.

These few remarks must suffice to show that those females, who are destined to take upon themselves the labors and cares of a family, should be brought up in such a way as shall best qualify them for the difficult and import-

ant office. And this is the more indispensable with us, because such is the state of our social relations, that each family must perform, without foreign aid, the entire business that belongs to it. Such parents as do not accustom their daughters to the active duties of the domestic circle, and who are not able to give them such dowry as will render them independent, would best consult their happiness and the public good by keeping them single.

But, important as are the arts and habits which go to constitute a good housewife—and when we consider their influence upon the happiness and improvement of our species they can hardly be estimated too highly—there is another branch of female education which is of still higher importance. I refer to the cultivation of the understanding and the heart. On the first of these I have no time to enlarge. After the useful, let our daughters learn as much of the ornamental as circumstances and capacity will admit. And let them take the solid along with the ornamental, that they may become “as stones polished after the similitude of a palace.” But let it be ever remembered, that the noblest, the most indispensable of all accomplishments in a woman, especially in a woman who is a mother, is piety, enlightened piety. Whatever else be present, if this be absent from her character, the defect makes it look monstrous and shocking. For the two first years of its life, the infant can hardly be considered as having a personality of its own. It is an appendage, I had almost said a part of the mother. Its little heart lies in close contact with hers, and throbs with its emotions. Her image fills its fancy. She is its model. It is the wax, she the seal.

The idea of a Supreme Being, the Maker and Lord of all, though incomprehensible even by the wisest philosopher, may be apprehended readily by a child, which, as soon as it looks abroad on the wonders of creation, may be taught to discern manifestations of the Creator's power, wisdom and goodness. The contemplation of these divine attributes naturally awakens the moral feelings. Such is the eagerness of children to know the causes and reason of things, that one can hardly avoid teaching them something on such subjects. The elementary truths of religion are so plain that no great reach of thought is requisite to perceive them. As the child grows up to manhood the manifold influences which come upon his maturer mind from an evil world do more, perhaps, to obscure his view of them, than his increased power of intellect does to render them plain. The alphabet of piety is easier than the alphabet of letters. The one belongs to the language of nature, and has an interpreter in every bosom: the other is conventional and artificial, and a variety of abstractions must be made before it can be understood. The child in the cradle knows the meaning of looks and tones by a kind of intuition which the experience of after life scarcely renders more perfect. And it is by a language of the same kind that the Author of nature speaks to his rational offspring. How important that the Divine voice reach the youthful heart before it becomes hardened and estranged by the vices and cares and pleasures of after life. And how happy would it be for many whose feelings have become alienated from God and religion, by worldly pursuits and a false philosophy, if they could reverse the course of their experience, and become “as little children” again. There is, in the character of every *eminently* good man an affectionate sweetness of temper not to be soured by injury, a simplicity which seeks no disguise, a charity which “thinketh no evil,” and a fearlessness in the discharge of duty. These carry with them the charm of a childlike purity and innocence, and they spring from no other root but piety. Let this then be instilled into the mind before the acetous fermentation takes place among the passions, and it

will preserve the soul in its infantine sweetness. But by no instrumentality can this be so well effected as by that of a mother's love. A mother's love, and the spirit of piety! O, they are the sweetest, purest, brightest, mightiest of those messengers which God commissions and sends to accomplish his purposes of mercy here on earth; and if any thing can, surely their united influence must win the wayward soul of man for that happy world whence they descended. The wretch, who has had their sweet influence, like the breath of Heaven, shed over his childhood, and who has made himself strong enough to overcome it, is a reprobate, abandoned, doomed, accursed of God. I have never yet seen such a man, and I would hope no such instance of depravity can be found. On the other hand I may ask, confident of a favorable answer from a thousand grateful tongues, who has not been reclaimed from the verge of guilt, animated in the midst of danger, and supported in the hour of affliction by a mother's counsel, a mother's example, and a mother's prayers, and who, while bending in sad but fond recollection over a mother's tomb, has not sensibly felt the heavenward attraction of a mother's spirit as his thoughts attempted to trace the path by which it soared away beyond mortal vision when it left the world?

Nor is the influence of sensible and pious women confined to those who are placed by nature under their own particular charge. A deep but unostentatious sense of religion added to the domestic virtues, imparts to the person and conduct of woman a grace and dignity which surpass all her other charms, and repel not merely from her presence, but from the circle of her influence, whatever is unseemly and improper.

We have, all of us, duties to discharge which respect the future. Our circumstances are rapidly changing. As wealth increases our dangers as well as our advantages will increase with it. The follies and vices of what is called fashionable life are migrating along with the tide of wealth and population, from the east towards the west. Should I disguise the fact that in these things the fair sex usually take the lead? Fashion, in some of our eastern cities, has already established her reign of terror; and set up her Juggernaut. She applies instruments of torture to the bodies of her victims, by which they are compressed into the form of a wasp, and thus deformed, heart and lungs, and other vital organs literally crushed within them, they are compelled to drag out a miserable existence, devoid of every comfort. Physicians, moralists, philanthropists and divines have remonstrated and petitioned, and entreated, but in vain. The cruel power is inexorable. Now, I know of no means of preventing her horrible dominion from extending over us, so likely to succeed, as by giving to our young females a pious education. Enlightened piety raises the mind and character of women above the frivolity and inanity, to the prevalence of which fashion, that bloody Moloch to which so many young lives are sacrificed, is indebted for all that influence which support her cruel and remorseless reign. To escape with their rising families from under her dominion was the principal motive which induced some of us to migrate hither. But the attempt to fly was vain. The gilded banner of the fantastic power is borne after us. You may see it unfolded and floating on the breeze. Here we must resist or die. And ladies! in this holy war you must lead the van.

A devotion to the theatre and the ball room, with the frivolities of dress and visiting and gossip and a thousand other excesses which constitute the life and employment of fashionable people, are, on all accounts, to be condemned and deplored, but chiefly on account of their influence on the minds of the young, unsettling their moral principles, rendering them light and

vain, devoid of energy, and open to every temptation. And, as the fair sex are the first to suffer the sad effects of fashionable dissipation; so their influence only can prevent it.

Let them, then, despising the life of a butterfly, aspire to what is great and noble and worthy their rational and immortal nature; let them consider their obligations and responsibilities, as beings entrusted by Heaven with an influence to be exerted in forming the character and consequently deciding the fate of the rising generation; and let them be assured that their own personal happiness and the esteem of those of our sex: whose esteem is worthy their regard, will be secured and augmented in proportion to their fidelity to the high and important trust. Let every mother know that, by teaching her children piety towards God, she lays, in their minds, the surest foundation for another virtue of which she herself is the beloved object—piety to parents: and let every daughter know, that all men, who are not libertine in principle, honor and respect these virtues as the brightest ornaments of the sex. Let these things, I say, be well understood and zealously practiced, and the result, as it respects common education, will be glorious and happy: for then, every household through the land will become a school of virtue and a dwelling place of delight.

There is still another view of the subject which must be hastily taken before closing our remarks on common education; I mean the connexion in which it stands with the continuation of our liberties. So long as the population of a country remains sparse, compared with the extent of its resources, the facilities of gaining a livelihood are great, and, consequently, the temptations to that class of crimes which disturb the public peace are weak and few. Such is the condition of our country generally, and especially of our new States at present. But it is rapidly changing and approaching, every year, nearer to the condition of the countries of Europe. Now, it is as clear as any thing can be, that, in proportion as this approximation increases will increase our need of more powerful restraints upon the principles of disorder. These restraints, every one knows, are either physical, such as jails, penitentiaries, gibbets, bodies of armed men paid by government and of course under its direction, and hordes of police officers, whose business it is to ferret out the guilty in their lurking places; or moral, such as an enlightened regard to interest public or private, honor, integrity, a sense of religion, the hope of future rewards and the fear of future punishments from the hand of the Deity.

To keep in operation the immense machinery of physical restraints costs vast sums to the Government, which of course must be taken from the people in the form of taxes. So that, in most of the countries in the old world, a man has to pay one half, some times three fourths, of what he earns, to government to protect the remainder. But this is not the worst of it; for the machinery of government is so extensive that it becomes annoying and troublesome—aye, and sometimes dangerous to the innocent. Its agents like the frogs of Egypt go every where. This is what we mean, in short, by a government that is not free. And it is the only government that will do for vicious people living close together. Moral restraints will do only for the virtuous; because they only can feel them. These restraints however cost nothing. An honest man needs no jail or gallows to deter him from theft or murder. It is plain, then, if we would continue to be free we must be virtuous; more so than we now are. For if you were to confine the whole population of Indiana within the limits of ten or even twenty counties, moral

restraints or else physical, must be greatly increased, to keep them in order.

In all this every one would agree. But there are some, perhaps many, who think that in order to the maintenance of our free institutions, it is not necessary that religion should mingle its influence with the business of domestic or common education; in other words, that religion is not necessary to the continuance of civil liberty. For I take it for granted, that if a people are not religiously educated they will soon cease to bear the character of a religious people.

Those who entertain the opinion just stated must think so, either, first, because they imagine religion imposes no restraints on the vicious propensities of men, or secondly, that these restraints may be dispensed with and liberty still be retained, or thirdly, that it is better for a people to be without liberty than to have religion.

These points cannot be fully discussed at present, and yet I think it proper to give to each of them a passing remark. First, does religion impose no restraints upon vice? This must be decided from the nature of religion itself and from facts. As to the nature of religion, one would suppose that for a man to believe that he is dependent on, and accountable to his Maker must necessarily restrain him—and this is the vital element of all true religion. And as to fact, every one, of course, will judge according to his own observation. For my own part, having had some opportunity of observation, I do confidently affirm, that I have never yet known a man who had been regularly educated in his father's house who was not decidedly the better for it, nor one who was not manifestly the worse for the want of it. Second: can religion be dispensed with, and yet a people retain their civil liberty? I think not. Hume admits that the British constitution owes whatever of civil liberty it contains to the Puritans, who were decidedly a very religious people, though, I think, their religion was not as pure as it might have been. The experiment was tried near the close of the last century; tried by a people naturally inferior to no other people, both as respects the qualities of the head and the heart; tried in the most favorable circumstances; for those who conducted the French revolution were infidels, and they did every thing for the success of their experiment that men—I had almost said devils—could do—they made thorough work of it; they left nothing of religion undemolished. And yet we know their experiment utterly failed. And we should be slow to repeat it. A man may, indeed, without the influence of religious principle, be restrained by an enlightened regard to his interests and relations as bounded by the visible horizon of this world's materialities, from violating the laws of social order or disturbing the public peace. He may be raised by his condition in society above any temptation to all such violence. But a whole people, many of whom must always, from their very situation, be under strong temptations to violate the laws of social morality, cannot be kept in order, if destitute of religious principle, except by the operation of such legal restraints as are incompatible with civil liberty—at least with such a high degree of it as is enjoyed among us. As to the third point—there may doubtless be some who hate religion so cordially that they would rather submit to civil oppression than the restraints which it imposes. Some may be thus affected through mistake. They know not what genuine religion means. All they know is that they dislike what passes with others for religion. And indeed were that religion which sometimes has passed under its name, it were better to suffer almost any inconvenience than to come under its influence. But what I mean to affirm, and what I do most fully and solemnly believe, is that, in order to secure to our-

selves as a nation that high degree of civil liberty and public order which has with but few and partial interruptions, distinguished our career hitherto, and which has heretofore been unknown in the world—for as to Greece and Rome, so famed in history, they knew nothing by experience or even in theory of the civil liberty and equal rights enjoyed by us—in order, I say, to transmit these high privileges to our posterity we must provide that our posterity be worthy of so rich an inheritance. And this we may rest assured they will not be, unless they be brought up under the influence of that religion whose benignant spirit breathes “peace on earth and good will to men.”

If, then, these views of the subject are correct, we are bound, fellow-citizens, by our love of country, by our devotion to the cause of civil and religious liberty, by our concern for the welfare of posterity, by our regard to the best interests of the human race, as well as by the more awful sanctions of religion, to exert ourselves to the utmost, by example, by exhortation, by every means in our power, in diffusing intelligence, virtue, and piety in every branch and part of common education, that part especially, as it is of the greatest importance, which belongs to the domestic circle. Such a course will procure for us the everlasting respect and gratitude of those who will be benefited by our endeavors: and we shall have the consolation of reflecting, when about to leave the world, that we have made it a purer and happier residence for those who shall come after us, and that they themselves shall through our means possess a better character and larger capacity for enjoying the precious privileges transmitted to them. And, what is most of all to be valued, we shall have the testimony of a good conscience and of His approbation to whom all are accountable.