

# THE MICROCOSM.

The world was made so various that the mind of desultory man, studious of change and pleased with novelty, might be indulged.—COWPER.

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FOR THE MICROCOSM.

## LETTERS ON EDUCATION.

No. IV.

Simple food, regular and moderate meals, good hours, early rising, and abundant exercise in the open air, will seldom fail to give health, vigor and activity to the frames of youth. Sweetmeats, condiments and cakes are injurious to health more from excess than quality; and they tend to the formation of indulgent habits. They pamper appetite, enervate the mind, and pave the way for luxury and debauch. Perhaps entire deprivation may be as dangerous as excessive supply; but I believe that self-acquired experience and well-timed advice are the best correctives of these peccant humours. The natural disgust which a child feels from appetites cloyed by indulgence or excess, in sports and pleasures, is a powerful argument to teach him moderation and self-control, especially when backed by the judicious remarks and authority of a parent. In teaching learners how to swim, it is usual to employ corks or life-preservers. When the virtuous principles of the inexperienced are exposed to trial, lest natural sense or reason fail, or passion prove too strong, let the saving antidote of parental advice, let the love of duty, strengthened by a deep sense of honor and the shame of degradation, be at hand; and let memory suggest the bright examples of fortitude, self-command and real greatness, which illuminate the pages of story. Then may they perhaps steer their barks in security among the haunted rocks of the Sirens, and escape the perils both of Scylla and Charibdis. As the contest is inevitable, let them be well armed. The struggle is for happiness and life; the victory depends on their own choice, and the motto under which they fight is "*virtus unica nobilitas*." We may reasonably hope that no parent will be so unnatural as to indulge his child merely to gratify his own vanity by a pompous display of what he can afford to throw away upon his son's extravagance; and when an enemy's supplies are intercepted the conquest is easily made,

"When youth still loves the school boy's simple fare,  
His temperate rest, and spirits light as air."

The love of manly sports, and the pride of excelling in feats of dexterity, in running, leaping, swimming, riding, fencing and hunting, will be powerful aids in giving strength, and activity to youth. Contempt for games of hazard and their ignoble and base won spoils, is an exalted trait in a boy of magnanimous and independent spirit. He who will scorn to be indebted to chance for a few paltry dollars, will one day be greater than the General of armies whose celebrated victories are the gift of fortune.

To be reared up in the close confinement and sickly atmosphere of cities may refine the mind, but it debilitates the body. The freedom of the woods and hills and the vigorous exercises of the country are not beneath the attention of a parent who has his children's good at heart. The industry of a father's love might substitute the arts,

horticulture or mechanism for idle toys and silly games which commonly engross the leisure of a spoiled child. It is a mistaken notion to suppose that the skill and invention of crafts are beneath the notice of a liberal man. Some States have even required by a law that all their citizens should learn and profess some art or trade. What is useful cannot be degrading. In the middle ages, guilds and craftsmen were as honorable as gaming clubs and sportsmen are at present. Meanness and baseness are intrinsically personal, not professional demerits; and if the Mosaic account of the creation be true, God is the first mechanic.

It is a subject of regret to teachers that the usual method of instruction requires so much confinement; *peripatetic* exercises would be relieving to the limbs and beneficial to the mind. Where boys have suitable and solitary walks they might commit their lessons to memory, and take healthy exercise simultaneously. Although ignorance is the bane of mind, yet sloth is the corrupter of body and spirit. Here I will add a remark which an excellent father used often to his son. "*Do mischief rather than be idle*." This may remind the reader of a maxim recommended in one of Miss Edgeworth's tales. "*It is better to wear out than to rust out*," which I fear is the fate of many disinterested teachers, who benefit their pupils more than themselves, and in whose rank and file might perhaps be enrolled your humble servant.

### AN OLD FIELD TEACHER.

FOR THE MICROCOSM.

Master LEONIDAS—Here I am, ensconced in my corner, with a poor fire upon the hearth, made of two sticks, and a parcel of embers; the bleak winds whistle around my dwelling, and whisper through the crevices of my doors and windows. A kind of death-like chill runs over me, as the icy blast howls through the forest, and rattles the sash of my window; and as it moans and wails among the naked branches of the shade trees that surround my dwelling, I can almost fancy that some infernal spirit, "the prince of the power of the air," has come to haunt me.—The moon peeps through my window, and if it were not so pinching cold, its trembling ray would remind me of 'love songs,' 'fairy tales,' 'rambling lovers,' 'moonlit walks,' 'serenades,' 'plighted vows in rosy bowers,' &c. &c.; but really there is something so chilly and freezing in the sharp winds, and in the appearance of the clear cold moon, that I should have to feel more than an ordinary degree of inspiration to indulge thoughts on such subjects, under "existing circumstances." The last expression, you see, is a quotation; I do not claim it as original. I make this observation in order to avoid the charge of plagiarism. If my fire would only sparkle a little more briskly, and make my almost congealed blood gallop with a little more rapidity through my veins, (a fine metaphor, by the way,) I might possibly write enough of something or other on this coarse sheet to fill up a column in the *Microcosm*.

Well, to begin again, (for I am sure you have forgotten my first sentence, unless your memory is better than mine;) here I am by my poor fire, (it is a *lower* fire, you will recollect—two sticks and a few embers,) here I am, by my fire, my toes in the ashes—my

port-folio on my knee, my wife holding my inkstand; and, I was going to say, a wash-stand for a candle-stand—but I believe I will not, as ink-stand, wash-stand, and candle-stand in the same sentence would sound very much like I was a poet; and that is what I do not profess to be—not having wrote more than two or three pieces of poetry in my life, and I never heard them spoken of in very high terms. But here I am, to return from my digression, with a bad pen in my fingers, black, smutty ink, that smears my paper and bedaubs my hand—in a word, I am in what I have heard called a "*real predicament*"—but, what is worst of all, I have no subject to write upon. You see already that my communication is desultory, and quite defective in point of perspicuity and unity, according to Blair; but the circumstances under which I write must be my apology for a breach of the rules laid down by rhetoricians for the "structure of sentences." Indeed I have wandered until I scarcely know what subject I intended to write upon when I took my seat. I reckon you will think me an *egotist* if you count the *I's* in the last sentence.

But to my subject. Suppose I call up an incident of my "eventful life;" (in quotation, as it should be.) And there is another violation of Blair's rules for the preservation of clearness, unity, and strength in a sentence. I mean a *parenthesis* where it should not be. I began to say, suppose I call up some incident connected with my "eventful life," and make something of it. Ah! but "there's the rub!" as Shakspeare saith. It is, however, some say, not a hard thing to make something out of nothing. The Grecians thought differently. But I am not speaking, or rather writing, about making the *world*, but about making some kind of a story to fill a short space in a newspaper.

Suppose I try some other subject—say *politics*—no, you will not publish it—and that would be exactly right. "The pursuit of happiness," religion, dreaming, hunting, fishing, what not. Indeed all are *threadbare*, and have so often been written upon that I could say nothing new; and some 'smart fellow' would accuse me of *theft* if I did not mark the whole in quotation. And even if I did that, somebody else would say that it was unnecessary to fill up a newspaper with such worn out matter.

Well—here I am, just where I began—not precisely, I have gotten farther down my sheet, writing; and while I write, the gibbous moon is careering in all her beauty and loveliness in mid heaven, and from her lofty elevation flings a quivering sheen of silvery brightness ever our dim world below. Her pale light falls in pensive and mellowed streams upon many a withered flower—upon ruins gray with time—yes, that moon on which I look, gazes upon a diversity of objects. She sees the poor maniac, as he rambles among tombs and mingles his wild laugh with the night-winds that wave the withered grass over the grave of some one who was once dear to his heart. She sees the "tempest-tossed" mariner, as he rides upon the thoughtless billow, and dreams of home and friends. She sees the infamous wretch as he steals away from some scene of debauchery, and at the same time she gazes upon the kneeling Christian who holds sweet converse with his God. Her trembling and dim light enhances the beauty of many a poetic scene.