

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. VI.

By attention I mean the power of applying the mind to the object before it, exclusive of all others. On this depends the success of the whole course of studies. It is the grand hinge on which the portals of knowledge turn. Without it nothing can be done in languages, sciences or arts. The great secret of application is the mastery which we obtain over our wills and ascendant inclinations. Any child who chooses can acquire it. Locke says with great truth in his "conduct of the understanding," "That we are born with faculties and powers capable almost of any thing, such at least as would carry us farther than can be easily imagined: but it is only the exercise of those powers which give us ability and skill in any thing and lead us towards perfection — Most of those excellencies which are looked upon as natural endowments, will be found to be the product of exercise. The difference in men's understandings does not arise so much from the natural faculties as acquired habits." Attention is the foundation of memory, and the basis of correct judgment. If there be any peculiar faculty which can ensure success more than all others in the events of life, it is certainly this, and where Fortune or the decess of Heaven do not thwart our designs, attention must command the success of our labors. What is there which attention cannot accomplish? The Philosopher quoted above elsewhere says "There is scarce any thing more for the improvement of knowledge, for the ease of life, and the despatch of business than for a man to be able to dispose of his own thoughts."

Like the Tortoise in the Fable, application will outstrip genius; though slow in its progress, it is true to its end. "Age quod agis," is a well known proverb similar to one of our own; "an ounce of industry is better than a pound of talent." I have heard the greatest men whom I ever knew ascribe their best actions and success not to their talents but to their industry, and I believe them sincere. Napoleon is said to have dictated to seven secretaries at a time, certainly a vast stretch of attention; but men know not the extent of their powers until they try them. The enemies of attention are sloth and love of amusement. To overcome sloth, when the student is very young, authority may suffice, but sometimes corporal severity is needed for the older pupil, until reason and reflection come to the preceptor's aid.—The love of duty is perhaps the most powerful incitement to attention. It is useful to remove all external causes of interruption, but assiduity and industry may be the result of affection which an instructor's patient and benevolent virtues may awake in the grateful hearts of youth, as he teaches how to quell the storms of infant passion, suppress the wandering desires of childish fancy, or discard the love of boyish sports, bid the tears of emulation glisten in the eyes of aspiring genius, and to

"Make the rough paths of peevish nature even
"And open in each heart a little heaven."

PRIOR.

By participating in the feelings of youth, by sympathising in their little cares, by rejoicing in their harmless glee, by liberally heightening their enjoyments, by contributing to their sports, by descending to their capacities and ideas; by blending their heart in harmony with his own, by speaking a language in unison with theirs, by being accessible to their wants and by winning their artless friendship, an open, frank, kind hearted and generous instructor may easily gain the warm affections of guileless youth, and then would his displeasure become their greatest disgrace, his gratification their delight, and his praise the sweetest reward of their merit. This might be easy if the hand which indicates the paths of virtue and science were never to be the instrument of pain; and if the lips which impart the precepts of wisdom were never to be the channel of sarcastic invective.

To conquer the love of amusement, we must convert studies and exercises into sources of amusement, and excite the interest of emulation by inspiring ambition to excel, and what was once a pain, will soon become a pleasure. To effect such a change may sound like romance, but experience will give it the reality of truth. I have seen inveterate idlers become lovers of learning, and habitual liars changed into truth-tellers, of honor. It is necessary to convince the pupils, however, that their real benefit is the object sought, that it is truly for their good. Then they may be taught to command themselves; "that he who ruleth his spirit is mightier than the taker of cities;" that the fulfilment of duties is the source of real satisfaction; that no reliance can be placed on the instability of human pleasures, and that—

"Virtue alone is happiness below."

AN OLD FIELD TEACHER.

FOR THE MICROCOSM.

NOT TO BE READ!

Dear Leonidas—I offer you for publication, the following document, which no one, as may be seen by the caption, is permitted to read; and how it came into my possession, no one need trouble himself to inquire:

Dear Sir—You wish me to tell you why the people in this part of — are so fond of horse-racing? A few weeks ago, observing in our public prints a good many jockey club advertisements, I proposed to a neighbor of mine, who loves racing, the same question you have proposed to me. His answer was "there is very great pleasure in the business, I assure you; but it is a pleasure which I don't suppose I am able to make you understand." Now, does this answer satisfy you? I dare say, it does not—for it does not satisfy me. Like oil thrown into the fire, it inflamed my curiosity more than ever. Indeed, I have often observed, that when any subject of inquiry assumes an appearance of mystery, the inquirer, instead of giving it up at once, becomes the more eager to get at the bottom of it. Having, therefore, studied the racing system as deeply as I could, and sought information from every quarter within my reach, I will give you, with all simplicity, the result of my lucubrations.

The whole system of horse-racing appears to be built on these two principles, viz: The pleasure of seeing one horse run faster than another horse—and—the profit of taking as much

money as you can out of your neighbor's pocket, BECAUSE one horse runs faster than another horse. If there be any other pillar which helps to support this grand fabric, I confess I have hitherto escaped my knowledge, and I shall rejoice to be better informed.

You must know that the patrons of racing form themselves into societies, called Jockey Clubs, each of which is officered with a President, Treasurer, Secretary, and so on. Each member pays an annual or semi-annual subscription; and the aggregate of these subscriptions becomes the deserved prize of him whose horse runs faster than all the other horses. The clubs meet from time to time to frame its laws and transact its affairs, with all the formality of a Senate. And its records are preserved as carefully as the archives of empires. So that, whosoever chooses, may easily inform himself whether, at any given time since the institution of the club, the bay horse ran faster than the sorrel, or the sorrel than the bay; or whether the gray mare was not the best horse on the field.

For weeks, perhaps months, before the periodical races, there is a mighty bustle in preparing the horses. Beside the grooms who are professionally trained to the business, servants are taken away from the vulgar, insignificant employment of the farm and plantation, and devoted to the stable. Nay, our gentleman-racer himself, becomes in a great degree an inhabitant of the same elegant apartment with the horse.—His eyes by day, and his thoughts by night, are profoundly fixed upon them. And no wonder, for a sublime object is in his view, namely, to ascertain whether his horse can run faster than his neighbor's horse.

Then comes on frequent trials of the horses in running; these you may call the prelude to the grand exhibition, or the preparatory rehearsal of the play. The horses are exercised daily. But the evening of the Sabbath day is accounted a favorite time of these prelusive races. Here you may see, on a wide old field, a large mixed mob of great vulgar and little vulgar men folk and women folk, white and black, promiscuously gathered from the neighborhood around, to see the horses run. It is true, that common decency is prostrated, and the Almighty insulted by this profanation of the sacred day. But these are held to be small sacrifices for the pleasure of seeing one horse run faster than another horse.

The weights of the riders being precisely fixed by law, I have heard some curious hints about reducing a favorite rider to the proper weight, by artificial means; such as copious sweats, destroying the appetite by vinegar, and finally, by powerful cathartics. If the rider be a free boy, I suppose he is paid for these sufferings with money. If he be a slave, he may remunerate himself abundantly with the conscious pleasure of serving so merciful a master. The riders, however, white or black, have one comfortable prospect in common before them; namely, the chance, and it is a chance which has frequently been realized—of getting their limbs broken, or their brains dashed out in the experiment of trying to make one horse run faster than another horse.

But now the grand period arrives—the day of final decision. Besides the honorable Jockies themselves, with their horses and riders, a vast crowd assembles, of every possible description from the whole country, and even from several counties around. Every body takes a lively interest in the event of the day; bets are made; ragged citizens, who cannot give bread to their wives and children must at all events find something to hazard upon bay a