TEACHING, A SCIENCE:

THE

TEACHER AN ARTIST.

BY

REV. BAYNARD R. HALL, A.M.

PRINCIPAL OF THE CLASSICAL AND MATHEMATICAL INSTITUTE, NEWBURGH,
AND AUTHOR OF "SOMETHING FOR EVERY BODY," ETC.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

PREFACE.

This book is not an experiment, but an experience. Facts are here stated rather than theories; yet the former verify the latter as held by the author, in common with numerous educators of the past and the present. The experienced may speak without immodesty, although many have already spoken on the same topic; while it is not a necessary consequence that nothing remains unsaid. Should nothing new remain, the testimony of a person for years conversant with theory and practice, may aid the inquiries of many, and especially of such as are influenced by the number as well as the character of witnesses.

A right to be heard conceded, an author must still consider whether his experience has been sufficiently long and varied in favorable circumstances, to render his mere testimony of value, in case he advances nothing new. Mis-judgment on this point is very possible. For, while men over-rate their talents and under-rate their influence, yet most think that a specialty belongs to their lives which authorizes the obtrusion of themselves upon the world.

CHAPTER III.

THE TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS.

No error is more mischievous than to mistake illustration for argument, and yet no error is more frequent. Illustration does no more than place what is to be considered in a sufficient light; but, when placed in that light, what before was deemed truth, may be discovered to be falsehood. Analogy is thus a fruitful source of error. Often one thing resembles another in but a single respect; in other respects the things may differ greatly; they may even be, in some respects, opposites. But from the strong resemblance in one point, it is hastily concluded the subjects may agree in all; and by applying the same rules to both, the results in practice must, of necessity, disappoint expectation.

The teacher is an artist. As a workman he, therefore, needs tools, and tools must be made for every branch of his business. A skilful artisan, moreover, prefers patent tools—instruments so ingeniously contrived that a boy may do the work of a man, and the daily labor of a man equal the labor of a week. The work, too, by such instruments, is better done. It is done, also, at less cost. How natural the transfer of all that pertains to the

instruments of one workman to the instruments of the other! The teacher must have tools not only suitable, but so ingeniously designed that by their aid he may employ an apprentice, and turn out scholars in a few months, that, by the use of old-fashioned tools, could not, by the master himself, be manufactured in as many years! Nay, his tools judiciously used, and in favorable circumstances, will *per se* work up his raw material into the best fabrics!—and education may be done almost by the yard, and nearly as cheap as domestic cottons!

That school-books differ, and may be classed as good and bad, no man doubts; that a teacher will prefer the better to the worse, is self-evident; but that any book, or series of books, can obviate the necessity of a teacher's direct efforts, and the skilful employment of his genius and talents, is the blunder of many book-makers, and of not a few teachers themselves.

The excellency of a school depends, not mainly, but *wholly*, upon the teacher. One competent and faithful master, with books illy prepared or with no books, is worth many incompetent teachers, aided by the best contrived books and systems. The army of stags, with a lion for general, can chase the army of lions, with a stag at the head! An honest mechanic, with proper instruments, and by implicit obedience to his directions, must when diligent turn out work not a whit inferior to work done by mechanics greatly his superior in talents and ingenuity, who use the same instruments or apparatus: the machinery would, in fact, perform the same with

any attendant; it can but act well, if it move at all! Gunpowder equalizes powers: a dwarf and a giant would fire a cannon equally well—the ball strikes with the same force, whoever may be at the touch-hole!

This is not so with books and boys! *No* school-book has any intrinsic force which will always exert itself in the same direction, as soon as it is opened and read, or even studied. The book does what the master intends, not what the author designs or wishes. And the boy, be well assured, ye theoretical gentlemen, that have never wielded the ruler, nor flourished the birch, and yet teach by book—be assured, the boy is not that pliant, non-resisting material that runs into one grooved aperture a shapeless mass, and, transformed by some hidden power, runs directly from some other smaller aperture, a ready-made man and scholar! No; verily, if like anything mechanically wrought, he is like a mass of rough iron in the potent grasp of a blacksmith's tongs! He needs many a heat in a furnace, and many a twist and twirl, and many a hard knock from a dexterous hand, before he is transmuted, and before he will *remain* changed!

Boys differ in a thousand ways—in age, intellect, temper, industry, health, domestic training, and example and excitement: wind, rain, sunshine, summer, winter—*all* affect them! No classification can possibly comprise individuals alike, save in a very few general features! Children cannot be thrown as one sort of grain into a mill, and ground as the same grist!

Very many either will not, or cannot, perceive the truth on this point. Failure is repeatedly attributed to the want of certain books, and forms, and systems; when almost invariably the failure is owing to the want of the right kind of teachers. But renewed failures only tempt fresh inventors—if such they may be called—to contrive new books, or, more frequently, to alter old ones; and then, with the most adhesive obstinacy, to insist with teachers on a trial! Unworthy motives are not necessarily to be suspected or attributed to all such book-makers; yet it is manifest that many people, neither original authors nor practical teachers, are directly and indirectly interested pecuniarily in the production of school-books. And the enormous prices such can afford to pay for newspaper advertisements and editorials, is presumptive proof that the business is not wholly profitless. The columns of advertisements paid for by the year, in several leading papers at the same time, is a pretty fair index that a nostrum-doctor finds sales for his pills and plasters; and yet, from the frightful increase of panaceists, diseases of the most deadly character, and in spite of the infallible cures, seem to be multiplying! So many of a trade could not make fortunes if the diseases were all stayed or eradicated. Nostrum-book doctors augur badly for the health of learning!

Happy for the world, that the cause of education is prominent among the great causes of the age! As a natural consequence, school-books become objects of intense interest. Scholars, liberal and elegant, moralists the most severe, and philosophers

the most profound, have all lent assistance in the writing and arranging of school-books; and, therefore, it cannot be wonderful that works of great excellence, in every department of elementary education, abound. But, while improvement here may have been needed, and while improvement may have been made, yet improvement in the artist or teacher himself would have done more for education than any improvement in his instruments of teaching. Had many eminent men, instead of *writing* school-books, betaken themselves to *teaching* school-books; or, if they had not, for the sake of writing, abandoned teaching, schools would have been still better.

Of the two sorts of learned men who make school-books, they who have been teachers must be certainly the better qualified for the task. However learned, if the authors have had little practical acquaintance with teaching, and almost invariably, if they have had no acquaintance, their books become mere store-houses of knowledge. But if a school-book contain all the principles and rules of a subject, literary or scientific, that is a good book, although it give no knowledge beyond what is essential for illustration and praxis. Any knowledge beyond is not essential to the purpose of the book. Yet, not very rarely, while the principles are all in the book, they are so inartistically involved with the mass of mere learning as to defy being disentangled. The book is a valuable book; but it is a bad school-book.

We have heard it said of a crabbed and petulant old man, "He forgets that he was ever a boy." So

it is with some authors of school-books. They forget how their soul loathed a text-book overloaded with notes, observations, comments and exceptions. They forget that they never voluntarily read such, and that if the master wished to find exceptions, and learned annotations, he might look for them himself. They forget how, again and again, master and scholar were alike bewildered in a thorny wilderness of endless annotations, laced and tangled with subordinate note and comment and exception to exception, and blackened with daggers, single and double, and paragraphs, sections, parentheses, dashes, brackets, still rule and exception struggled for the guidance, and comment seemed of more importance than the principle it explained! Or, perhaps, an author, remembering all this, determines to be avenged on another generation! perhaps, remembering how, in some idle urchin's dog-eared book, he had turned from page to page, till somewhere near the starting-point he found written, "A fool for your pains!" Thus a malicious author sends boys turning through his whole volume, by means of references, from spot to spot, till he finds what he wants, and *that* a wonderfully small needle in an amazingly large haystack!

Some authors cannot be said to *overlook* the main intention of a school-book, for the books made by them are designed to display their own reading; and a text-book is a convenient nucleus around which to heap all they know. These men cart and wheel whole masses of learning from the great quarries of ponderous folios, and empty load after

load in this and that spot; here and there heaping up piles of unwrought bullion; and every now and then scattering gems of value; in certain stations placing indices to direct one's search to different heaps of the stolen treasures!

Widely and loudly vaunted are books and systems of instruction built on the principle of induction. But, while something may be conceded in favor of arithmetic and algebra, arranged in books on that principle, yet, with due deference to the inductive authors, induction belongs to the man and not to the boy. Boys are made to be directed and governed in an elementary course of education; and it is a matter of very little consequence either in itself, or to the boys, whether the process of induction, on which rules and principles are formde for their, incipient guidance, be understood or not. Rule and authority are admitted by young persons, and generally they are indifferent to their reasons. The attempt to show their foundation is uncalled-for—it not unfrequently unsettles the children's faith! The master who begged the king to remain uncovered in his school, while the master himself retained his own hat, that the pupils might think no one in the kingdom superior to their teacher, well understood the nature of boys; and his boys considered him superior to all inductions—his word was their law. And they knew that whatever he enjoined was founded in reason, and that, in due season, they would fully understand what was now childlike, received in faith.

The application of the inductive method in forming some school-books, such as grammars, rhetorics, and the like, is preposterous. And where less preposterous, the parade of facts before resting down in the rule, is an egregious trifling—an affectation of philosophy, eminently disgustful. And how, pray, do young persons, especially children, better understand by studying examples and illustrations *before* the rule, than *after* the rule? And that is, in most schools, the amount of the inductive method. What is this but the fulfilment of the vulgar proverb—"The cart before the horse?" True—the boy who sees the *cart* may infer the *horse;* but what advantage is this, beyond the natural way of inferring the vehicle from the quadruped? This is unshackling the mind! forsooth. This is breaking away from the tyranny of authority! This is the light of "seven suns" in one day! Courage—ye priest-ridden! modern philosophy will soon publish the ten commandments, with an illuminated page of induction; and then shall ye see the reasonableness of the divine will! And then, when the *reasonableness* of virtue is seen, all rational persons will of necessity become virtuous!

In the rage for induction, old land-marks in school-books are all removed. Nothing is to be taken for granted, except the *assumptions*, often, in the induction itself; even where the rule is as plain as anything else, perhaps plainer. Is "I *think*, therefore, I exist," better than, "I *exist*, therefore, I think?" In which is less assumption—"Twice one is two," or—"Two is one and another one?" To a child

two is two without either formula; and perhaps an extensive induction would start a doubt whether *two* were not something else; as one by a labored proof of his existence will come to have *logical* doubts whether he either thinks or exists! In all things, we need a starting-point—a fulcrum for a lever; and that, in school-books, are rules and principles which the teacher knows are the embodiment of truth. Children confide in his judgment; and that confidence is necessary to their improvement.

In some books the inductive process is by piecemeal! The *disjecta membra* of a little plain rule are scattered over a dozen pages; as if one took delight in tearing the picture of a baby to pieces, to show how skilfully and anatomically it could all be constructed again, somewhere in the middle of a book, as well as if never so ruthlessly torn! True, the boy saw, at first, it was a baby; but how could he be *sure* it was, unless he examined a foot on one page, and a hand on another, and came to the baby again by induction? The first declension, or the first conjugation in the Latin grammar, as either exists in all the ordinary methods, is short, easy, perspicuous, and to almost every child of the usual capacity, so great a novelty, as to be learned with pleasure—sometimes to be devoured with avidity; and yet in Arnold's system, this brief and pleasant unit is cut up and scattered into a dozen little bits!—and each bit is made a bitter pill, coated with sugar; as if it could not be swallowed otherwise without effort! And then, when all the parts

are separately swallowed, the poor child finds, nevertheless, that the whole must yet be swallowed at once!

We are told that such systems are agreeable to the order of nature; and that in a given time more is learned and better than in the usual methods.

The order of nature begins with the memory, and exercises that, almost exclusively, for years. One's own native tongue is simply heard and remembered, as far as words are concerned. A child imitates and remembers any sounds of articulate speech. But his style and the extent of his vocabulary depend upon accident. He talks almost like a parrot, precisely as he hears. He learns sounds, or words, proper or improper; and provided the utterance, in any way, of such sounds answers his expectations, and procures what is needed, and keeps off what he fears, he is satisfied. Of grammar and logic he learns nothing, he cares nothing; and for all the ordinary purposes of life he need neither know nor care anything. The vocabulary of very many adults comprises not more than two or three hundred words! Some men do not use more than a hundred nouns and verbs in all their lives! and these are mis-pronounced, mis-spelled, and constructed according to a syntax of their own—an idiosyncratic grammar, whose figures of speech consist in earnest gesticulation and motions of the face, to render intelligible what it is suspected the words employed have failed to make plain.

If we would teach beyond this, it must be by teaching principles and giving rules. It matters not

whether orally, or otherwise, little of our native tongue, beyond the point just named, is acquired without rules and lessons. Much, indeed, is learned by children without rules and lessons; but it bears only a small proportion compared with what is learned of the true nature and genius of the language, in the same time, with these helps.

But whatever may be learned of the language by imitation and mere memory, here is a very great difference: we learn Latin through the medium of our own language; we learn our own without a medium. To imitate nature fairly, our knowledge of English should be entirely obliterated, and we should then be placed in a Latin atmosphere! And what would even then be gained? Do we wish to talk, and read, and write in Latin, the first thing? And if we did all this from imitation and memory, we should be no better acquainted with the philosophy and logic of the language than myriads of others are with the nature of the English. Notwithstanding assertion to the contrary, *children—English children*—taught to talk, and read, and write Latin, by *English teachers*, in the way recently proposed as the order of nature, will be inferior to other children taught in the usual way, of equal age and capacity, and equal advantages, in the same time. The time should, however, not be less than what is mutually agreed upon as a reasonable period for the mastery of the language; for while superiority does belong to any time, however short, that superiority could not be made apparent to others, in the shortest time. In a race the victorious horse is for one or two rounds, often, apparently beat; the advance at the coming-out determines the victory.

This order of nature, as it is called, does well with pupils who have thoroughly mastered one ancient language. Such carry with them the instruments of mastering almost any other language; and it would be folly, indeed, to forego their advantages for the sake of beginning every time at the beginning. Many things are altogether proper for adults, which would be unsuitable for children; and hence, while we might favor Ollendorff's method for disciplined minds, and especially for such as were versed in the nature of grammar, we should deprecate it for children that need discipline, and particularly in reference to the Latin and Greek.

The sudden popularity of all these often-repeated attempts of changing plans tested by ages, is owing to many accidental circumstances; but in regard to the dead languages, it is, in part, owing to the incompetency of so many teachers of the languages, and the deplorably little depth and accuracy of their pupils. Hence, when comparison of results is made, the new method, having superiority over the old method *misunderstood*, and not properly employed, is at once lauded to the skies! In medicine, quackery often triumphs in places, because professed members of the medical faculty are themselves in those places little better than quacks!

The old, time-honored method pursues the order of nature, by exercising principally, at first, the memory; not by storing it with mere knowledge, but rather with rules and principles. If such are

not learned soon, they cannot easily be learned afterward; partly because the mind is not so capable if undisciplined, and partly because of our impatience at later periods of committing to memory what we do not fully understand, and yet think we understand. Undisciplined minds will not commit *verbatim*; and yet that mode is in many subjects almost indispensable to future success. Children that are not mis-managed, and rendered indolent and pert by vain attempts to make them *philosophical*, care not what they commit to memory; and they commit difficult words and sentences, almost as readily as the opposite kind. Multitudes of English words are as *hard* as Latin ones: it would scarcely be possible to find Latin and Greek words half so hard as thousands of words in geography, botany, physiology, natural history; and which are required, not merely to be pronounced, but to be committed accurately to memory, and, by children little advanced beyond babyhood! The time spent (may it not be said wasted?) in committing geographies would, in many cases, if spent in Latin, have easily and fairly put a child in possession of all the essential forms and rules of that language!

Many writers of school-books aim to delight children by familiarity, sprightliness, anecdote, and the like; bewailing the barbarity that compels to severe and laborious study—when all might be such a pleasure! Why point to a steep hill, with a rugged ascent and thorny path? when the darlings could be so sweetly coaxed up an insensible inclination, pausing here to eat a peach, and there to smell a

rose! and, ever and anon, reposing a few moments on the grassy mounds near moss-crowned fountains! and regaled with the song of beauteous birds, feathered with rain-bow glories! till, in a delirious thrill of dreaminess, the innocents found themselves on the pinnacle of all learning and science!

It may be well enough to amuse in education, as a pastime; but let once amusement become a means of discipline, and children will not study at all. Like all other responsible and moral beings, these must find, if not the whole, yet their chief, their daily pleasures and enjoyments, in duty and obedience; and earn the good of learning, as all other goods, by the labor and sweat of the brow. Any book, or system of books, that obviates, in any degree, that necessity, so far counteracts the law of our nature. They weaken the mind, they unfit for the fierce and endless struggles of life.

How far pictures may go in the way of proper excitement, the author for himself cannot say: his own experience has found them neither good nor evil, except that they are always evil when they give false or exaggerated views. If parents choose to pay a few additional pence for pictures in school-books, for a momentary gratification, or that the urchins may touch and re-touch in their idle moments—be it so. Booksellers have a right to live.—A friend of the author's was principal teacher some years since in a Sabbath school. Once, in his office, he was lecturing a class of three little boys, on the final results of idleness. He held in his hand a penny pamphlet—the dying speeches

and confessions of three murderers. The title-page was very tastefully embellished with three forms something like the human—that distant resemblance Taylor loves, in boys' pictures; and these forms were mournfully dangling from one gallows! My friend marked the deep and solemn hush of the class! The truth was silently sinking into their softened hearts! Why not? there was the picture of punishment—natural consequence before the very eyes! He warmed more with benevolent love—(he was a noble-hearted sailor)—he poured forth his full soul, and looked with moistened eyes! Alas! the *innocent* little darlings peeped into his face—and one, with a comical expression in his laughing eye, and with a finger pointing to the pictured tragedy, said: "Mr. M., don't them look like three dried herrings?"

The effect of the most *solemn* pictures in children's books, is not, always, precisely what the teacher wishes. But pictures and questions are hobbies of the day—we must ride, even if we do it backwards and forwards, without advancing:—and these things do add to the *value* of the books!

Far from us to say, school-books admit no improvement. Improvements have been made. Unnecessary dryness has been relieved by sprightly illustration; the forbidding frown has been relaxed into a smile; the knotty points have, in a measure, been disentangled; needless difficulties removed; roughness and barbarism of style have been smoothed and civilized; and many judicious helps have been furnished, for which laborious and pains-taking

teachers should be thankful. And yet we would gladly have retained in Latin grammar, the barbarous verses! They jingle yet in our ears! The noble linguists of by-gone days owed them much! We would welcome back this exploded method of fixing the rules and exceptions in the mind!—yes! fixing it was! as if all were graved with the point of a diamond on adamantine rock! If boys learned not to write and speak Latin in three months, before they understood the language itself; they did, at the last, come to translate Greek into Latin, to parse in Latin, to recite grammar in Latin, to read annotations in Latin, to translate any English author into Latin! and to commit Latin poets to memory as if they were a native tongue!

Few, in the fervor of improvement, can stop. Because some things in the school-books are wrong, all must be changed. Excellent books, one after another, disappear; and under plea of greater improvements, the latest improved works give place to stronger pretensions. Each roars and flashes like a rocket—and, like a rocket, falls to the earth in dying stars, amidst the gaze and uproar of the crowd, crying for something still more brilliant!

The *mania* for changing prevails even among original authors. These will not allow their school-book to pass to a new edition without essential alterations, and sometimes not for the better. Hence, not rarely teacher, pupil, and parent are thrown into an agony of fume and fret, it being not possible to class pupils for more than a few months with the same book from the same author! Except for the

impolicy of the measure, it is bearable that original authors should change their own works; but when the compiler, the abbreviator, the clarifier, and all other tricksters and plagiarists, seize on works of originators, and after cutting and carving enough for serving up as a first course—that these miserable appropriators should, under this and that pretext, print a new edition every year, with alterations—that is intolerable! What! when the whole subject is before them, all the materials prepared to their very hands, the thinking all done, and the mere arrangement to be made, cannot these geniuses make a book so near perfection, at first, that it may last for some ten or twelve years! Cannot these industrious little ants bring enough from their neighbors' heaps of corn at once! And yet, when so many are swarming and boiling in the pathway to the treasure, all cannot get everything, and each must make a book from what he can grab! And then, when his own book is manufactured, he must labor to show the public that the other booksters did not get the best material from the heap! and whilst all others have drawn from the same storehouses, they, forsooth, have culled error only, and he the "truth!" A difference in spelling a dozen words, or in six definitions, or in a mode of counting time, becomes a sufficient reason for a new book on the same subject, and quarried from the same original authors. Then for the movement of heaven and earth, till the new compend shall displace the old! Editorials pronounce the last the best; learned men and shining lights, hitherto not known and unseen, make

their *debût* in recommendatory notices, flashing forth in graceful periods and studied elegance; and agents, with oily smoothness and the flippancy of a circus-master showing off his beasts and birds, or his monkey rider and stunted pony in the ring, pour out their voluble praises in *ipsissimis verbis;*—till the younger teachers are effectually humbugged; the timid ones compelled to bite at the guzzle; and even the knowing ones either bribed by presents, or yielding to importunity, are silenced and gained. One would think, to hear some agents empty out their lecture of prepared and set phrases, that, prophecy to the contrary notwithstanding, the millennium could not arrive till the universal adoption of some new spelling-book, or some new arithmetic!

Prudence should doubtless restrain the pen in writing, here; and yet one could not exceed the truth, if he wrote with a sharp pen dipped into an ink of wormwood and gall! In a lynching community, some pirates would be flayed alive! And yet, under the protection of the ægis law of libel, these plunderers can carry off in the open face of day; and they are so unblushing as to demand praise, when they should stand in the stocks! Agrarianism is not confined to acres; and white men disguised as red Indians, play the savage in the fields of literature as well as of agriculture.

In some branches of learning, are certain time-honored text-books, whose authors are long passed away; and these books are so intrinsically valuable, that, in all the changes of the day, they nevertheless maintain their place in schools. Such books it is

lawful to correct, and now and then to modernize. Still, it is to be regretted, that many changes in these are from whim; and although such changes do not affect the intrinsic excellence of the works, they prove very perplexing to the teacher, who wishes to drill his pupils as he himself was drilled. In this case the very words of rules, and the former arrangement of the whole subject, are part and parcel of his method. A finical taste pretends to give him more elegant tools; but the master prefers the *feel* of the old articles, that he had long handled with speed and dexterity. Why should he wish better implements? He defies the fanciful modernizer to do, with the tools improved, work any better than before.

But when a change is made in the fabric of these time-honored text-books, it is almost invariably a bad change. It adds raw cloth to the old—it makes worse rents—it destroys old bottles with new wine! The impertinence of working-in our own crudities with the sterling matter of an author's text-book, is surpassed only by that of mending the poetry of the great geniuses—a trick performed every few years with Christian psalms and hymns, under plea that worship will be more acceptable if the poetry be more fashionable!

It may possibly be startling to some, but many know it to be true:—a text-book needs not be perfect! Nor is it at all important that everything belonging to the subject should be crowded into the book. And, spite of the fear about misleading children, one way of wording rules is, in many sub-

jects, just as good as another. The rule cannot be fairly understood till it is repeatedly applied; nor then, without the teacher. And when rules are well understood in all their extent, and with all their exceptions, they may be laid aside, or forgot, or changed by the disciple himself. Ignorance of all this, as well as vanity and presumption, and sometimes "the love of money," have as much to do with the alterations of standard text-books, as a benevolent regard for the pupils, and the wish to promote true learning. Such remarks may be deemed severe; but if such could prevent the conduct complained of, the ill-will they beget could be more cheerfully encountered. Indignation will speak, even when it knows the words will not be heeded.

The inquiry may now be made as to what constitutes a good text-book, specially in regard to schools and academies.

In some subjects it matters little about the plan. They may be variously and yet equally well studied, and commenced in many different ways and places. Of this kind are spelling, reading, and geography. But in other subjects, one mode of beginning is almost indispensable: such are mathematics and languages. Yet, in general, it may be said that elementary text-books should be—

1. Brief. If the end of discipline is to indoctrinate in principles, the text-book should contain little beyond the principles. But many text-books are naked in principles and stuffed with knowledge, or contain the principles diffused and diluted. Some are mere scrap-books, or a kind of school album;

full of opinions and sentiments of many authors collected, but not condensed. Others are mere *nuclei* for the aggregation of the author's learning—a sort of buzzing hornet's nest, with wrapper after wrapper of all sorts of things, real and imaginary, about a small twig. Many are but miniature cyclopedias.

The difficulty in the way of the necessary brevity arises, in part, from the wish to make a text-book for all sorts of schools at once. If primary schools, academies and colleges could be, either by compact or law, kept distinct, honest men could and would make suitable text-books. But the insane spirit of an ultra-democratical and abolition sentiment, is at war with distinctions. It demands inexorably a dead level. It would have lands, houses, education, religion, pleasure, all alike for the mass; and industry, skill, and perseverance, that would naturally place one above another, must be decried and insulted. It says nothing shall be special, private; everything shall be common, public. It allows a community, but not an individual. It is as tyrannical, cruel and despotic as the most absolute and barbarous monarchy; it will bend the individual man to its will, or trample on all his sacred rights, sport with his tenderest feelings, yea! stamp with its iron heel upon a man's very heart! "The people! the people! liberty! liberty!", is its watchword and cry; but it is the people as a mass, as an abstraction, as a soulless body conventional, and liberty to live and act as a crowd! Individuals and individual liberties it abhors and destroys!

Behold the tendency of this spirit as to schools!

Common schools affect to equal academies, and academies to equal colleges! A single teacher in a school with one hundred elementary pupils, professes himself competent and ready to carry the whole from the a, b, c, up to the f, i, n, i, s of the topmost university! For a few shillings, he will do what elsewhere requires many hundred dollars and a dozen masters in literature and science! The hero has caught the spirit of the age! He swells out with the bigness of the conventional man! He is as large as the million! Here is a frog expanded by steam! He teaches by electro-magnetism!—the rich and poor alike—and just as well whether with or without books and breeches!

And then the colleges, in despair or revenge, or in self-defence, step down voluntarily from their places, and with a pitiable, scrambling avidity, gather up the half-fledged younglings of the inferior departments; and, finding them too weak for a flight in upper air, brood over them with motherly wings, and feed them with delicate grubs, till in due time they launch forth their graduates to flap awhile with sheepskin wings, but, alas! soon to fall down undistinguished among the many!

Is it wonderful, then, that money-loving authors and booksellers joyously avail themselves of this state of things, and make books that will do for all schools? And how can the disinterested make a distinction in the text-books, when distinction exists not in schools?

Books for elementary instruction in primary schools and academies, should, as a general rule, contain all

the principles, with important exceptions, and have matter enough for ample illustration and praxis. Books for colleges may differ, because in colleges, in addition to the text-books, lectures are employed as one medium of instruction, and fewer questions are asked than elsewhere. Besides, pupils should be beyond the elements when they enter college; they are now ready for the philosophy of their subjects, and therefore their books may be more difficult and contain more knowledge. The library of the college may furnish what is omitted in the text-book.

As to libraries for primary schools and even academies, they serve more for recreation than study. Not rarely are they pernicious. If the master knows his business, there can be little want of other than the school books. The hours not devoted to rigorous studying, should be *honestly* devoted to playing!—yes—to good, wholesome playing!—to running, jumping, laughing! Play is a *duty* for a hard student; and if he will play, fairly and conscientiously, at the play hours, he *cannot* be hurt by any hard studying. The library may be well enough for the master, but the boy has no business with it. Indeed, libraries in academies are either locked np from one end of the year to another, or more usually are soon torn and scattered. Money spent for them has been wasted. Besides, there are in all places town libraries, and almost every private family has a domestic library; and if books for recreation have to be bought, they can be had, such as they are, for next to nothing.

Let a boy be well prepared for college before he enters, and he may read a little there, and with profit; if not designed for college, let him remain at the academy, and *teach* and *read;* if he goes to a trade, let him *work* and *read;* but if he read before these times, and during the period of severe study and discipline, he becomes almost invariably a pedant, often a mere idler, and very often an insufferable coxcomb.

We are aware that all this and much more in these chapters is deemed heterodoxy; but in a far-off imitation of Patrick Henry, we say—If it be heterodoxy, make the most of it.

2. Elementary text-books should be precise. Whatever else be cultivated, we *must*, in education worth the name, cultivate the memory. Rules and principles should evidently, then, be expressed in short sentences, and with the most appropriate and comprehensive words. What *must* be committed to memory should be wholly detached from inference and exception, and should never be loaded and embarrassed with parenthetical explanation. The page should contain *all* that is to be committed at the time—and nothing more. Boys do not like to leave work behind them; and experienced teachers know the difficulty in bringing back scholars to commit something omitted at the first going over. Better that rules or paradigms not needed at first should follow in natural order, than be placed improperly. We do not like to leave forts occupied by the enemy in the rear of an advance into the hostile territory. We conquer and garrison as we

proceed. And when we make a road, it is folly to leave behind parts unfinished. All this applies to grammars. An error in leaving a portion uncommitted at the outset, is very frequently irreparable.

But precision is of vital importance in expressing rules. Yet how loosely are these often worded! and how entangled with less important matter; as if the author had no clear perceptions, and did not know which was of greater consequence, the rule or the restriction and explanation! Hence, some teachers compel the pupils to learn both text and comment—to swallow the bran with the unbolted meal. But the majority of pupils do commit neither; for where the author has had no accurate sight, others often have misty views through his cloudy medium. And what is dimly perceived here is undervalued. Even experienced teachers are frequently so embarrassed by the clumsy, inartistical text, that in despair they abandon the book, and depend upon a few questions, which they have usually to answer daily themselves, and to make explanation, to be re-repeated with endless iteration at every lesson, till they feel very much like flogging the author, and not the boy. Books are over explained, the ignorance or conceit of authors not allowing them to suppose masters and scholars can understand the plainest thing, without it is made still plainer.

Perhaps the text, properly expressed, should occupy the upper part of the page, with exceptions deemed as indispensable as the rules themselves

while all notes, remarks, observations, and the like, should be placed below a line at the lower part of the page.

A few years ago, some grammars from across the water were in use here, which, in a pre-eminent degree, possessed the essential requisites of a good text-book—brevity and precision, and a distinct visibility for text and comment. But, under some silly pretext or other—perhaps to *democratize* them—they were ruthlessly seized, and so marred by mal-arrangement as soon to destroy their integrity! And then, by degrees, the cunning of a dexterous legerdemain substituted in their room new books! It was equal to a dissolving view—one melted so insensibly into the other! The schoolmaster is indeed abroad in the land—and so is the book-wizard! He touches a good book, and it becomes—*anything else!*

If it be asked, what should be committed to memory; or in other words, what should be put into the text? the answer is, whatever is of daily and hourly application. Different teachers may differ as to what is to be thus used; but no other answer can be given, because the book is a mere tool, and its efficacy depends upon the workman. The book *cannot* make the teacher.

Systems of books, from the foundation to the keystone, have been attempted by several, with what success the author knows not. In some cases, failure may be attributed to uncalled-for changes in long established forms and technical words. Perhaps the authors intended these small changes should

show their originality, or their more extensive reading. Sometimes it arises from a sickly and slavish imitation of German writers—a wish to train the American mind like the German mind!—the one sort of mind being of course composed of *material* different from the other. Or perhaps the ingenuity of the authors intended a snare by the alterations; for if we could once be brought to commit the new forms, we should have an almost insuperable aversion to using others, even if better. But, alas! what is gained in velocity is lost in power; the immoveability of habit makes us reject what causes the perplexity; and as long as we can have old forms we hate the new. Get us to lay aside our prejudices for the old, till you can create them for the new, and then we are caught! But that is a feat beyond ordinary legerdemain.

Vain the hope, however, that any system of books, whatever be the real character, should come into very general use. Not only do authors love change—the people also love it. The extreme and ultra-democratical feeling is adverse to the aristocracy of one dominant system. It will yield to nothing universal, unless a botanical medicine, or an extract of sarsaparilla. The cupidity of many will incessantly strive to displace popular books; and any book or system of books can for a season be *advertised* into use.

Beyond all doubt, very important advantages—indeed, some of them incalculable, would arise if one single system of text-books *could* be adopted for the schools, in their distinctive character as primary,

academical, and collegiate. Such system might not be perfect; but without inconvenient changes in the essence and forms of rules, they would become better and better in time, provided learned persons, sacrificing their individual love of gain, and the small fame of being known as the author of a change in a word or a phrase, would all aid to make that one system perfect. But it is a chimera to expect one system, unless under the authority of a corporate body of colleges and academies; and rather than allow such a body to do good, the spirit of the age would crush every college in the land! It is an aristocracy in literature to which it would never submit. Give us a thousand gods, but not one!

Amidst the countless systems and books, we choose as we best can. To-day we get a good article, to-morrow a bad one. The meteors and stars of the literary firmament bewilder us. True, each particular star has its advocates, and bears on its head or drags at its tail a long flame of recommendation! But, alas! who can examine all? As well go to all the streets and alleys and lanes, in search of folk cured by all the opposite and conflicting systems of quackery and nostrum! If the cold water process boasts its thousands, so does the hot water and steam process! One swears he was cured by a box of pills, another by a bottle of liquid! Hundreds are saved by homœopathy, and hundreds by mesmerism! So every system of education, and each particular book, is sworn to and paraded as the grand desideratum!

Of recommendations, some are from men good

enough as lawyers, physicians, congressmen, and divines, or as military and naval officers, but who of practical teaching are as ignorant as a lord! How indignant would such frown were we to trench on their professions! Some recommendations are from vanity. Small people wish to appear in print—to stand for once in capitals! Not a few recommend, to be rid of importunity! Many sign what others have written, just as we put down our names upon a paper, pledging ourselves to aid in buying a fresh milch cow for some poor fellow, whose former brindle has recently gone dry! Pity will move in favor of a new book! We knew a worthy man that purchased a bottle of a popular carminative, not to save his children from summer disease—for though a husband, he was not a father—but that he might voluntarily furnish the druggist with a recommendation! He had rather be printed, even if destined to be wrapped around a bottle, than to remain in inglorious obscurity! And that person was a clergyman!

Perhaps the best of all recommendations is a book without any. Let recommendation be given to books that need it. It is the fashion to be recommended; but it is nearly the same as a newspaper, in which *all* the advertisements appear in the column reversed. Indeed, we have become suspicious of all contrivance. We laugh with the contrivers as very merry fellows; and we give them their reward—not our custom, but our applause. They wished to be considered quizzes: we class them accordingly.

For some twenty years past, school-books have

been accompanied with questions; but it does not appear that the plan has been productive of any great advantages, even where the questions have referred to the subject, and not to the paragraph and page. No hesitation, surely, can be felt in pronouncing many questions, and for many books, a nuisance. When answers are furnished, the folly is eminently preposterous. Of course, from such censure must be excepted all subjects necessarily studied by questions, and all books composed in the form of dialogues. Questions, too, that become topics or themes for essays, or discussions, on different parts of a subject, are not only excepted, but they are praiseworthy.

But, generally, questions in grammars, histories, botanies, rhetorics, philosophies, and the like, are evils—and that, even if the questions refer to the subject; for while ingenuity and diligence are, possibly, employed to find answers, yet the mind is diverted from studying the subject as a system,—and when well understood as a system, any questions can be answered. The questions are to spare the memory by sharing the labor with the judgment, and are part of the perpetually repeated plan to shorten roads and smooth roughness. Let the pupil master rules and principles; and let not his mind be prevented its proper exercise, by hints furnished from the questions.

Doubtless, many authors print questions contrary to their own judgment. Books must appear in the fashionable style, even if grotesque; and the weak-

ness of parents and indolence of teachers, sometimes reject books that seem to be too hard.

In concluding this subject the author would say, that, while certain books, systems, and authors, have been in his view, some, on the one hand, worthy all praise and thanks, and some, on the other hand, worthy of severe censure; yet, his present object is rather to throw out hints and suggestions, gathering in his mind for years past, and which are to be appropriated or applied where they may be suitable. If no works and systems and authors exist, to which the objections and censure apply, the animadversions may be serviceable in deterring ignorance, cupidity, and conceit, from making and publishing works and systems of the sort condemned.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRANGING AND MANAGING THE MATERIAL.

The author disavows all intention of teaching teachers. Nothing is more abhorrent than an essay or book intended as a model of the art of teaching. A book, indeed, written by any one long practised in any art or profession, may be, in a degree, profitable to the less experienced, provided the author have talents or genius adequate to his task; but if a person be himself destitute of the essential qualities of a teacher, no book can make him a teacher. If the person have the qualities, he has anticipated most that others can say. Or such an one has plans and systems different, and yet not less valuable than others; perhaps, his are superior to anything which may be written and disclosed. He is himself better fitted for the work of an author, than the very author he may be reading.

Men of talents and genius and learning, (and very many such are teachers,) are a law to themselves: they embody all that can be said. Hence it is distasteful to have obtruded the well-meant, but flippant and conceited smartness of some lectures and books, addressed to teachers. Some, self-elected, and others legally appointed, have an ex-officio style in discoursing to "schoolmasters," as if they were