

PEDAGOGUE QUACKERY.

BY L. P. VENEN.

Let nobody be frightened at the severity of the above epithet. So long as it best subserves our purpose and is truthful in its application, we feel altogether innocent in making use of it.

We have no sympathy with quackery in any of the learned professions, and especially do we feel like crying out against it when practiced as one of the new sciences in the instruction of our children and youth.

We are most happy in the consciousness that we are not standing alone in this crusade against a very modern and pernicious innovation. Some of the leading educators in many of the Eastern cities are carrying on a vigorous and determined warfare against the evil in question, and what a cotemporary aptly styles "flummery in the schools."

The ultimate evils resulting from the popular method of imparting instruction in the primary schools of our larger towns and cities are as motley as they are numerous. Like hereditary diseases, these evils are far-reaching. Imbibed, as they are, in early childhood, they are literally dyed in the wool, and it is next to impossible to eradicate them from the delicate, cellular tissue of the young mind. It is a stereotype complaint among college presidents and professors that a large majority of the young ladies and young men presenting themselves as candidates for admission, are shockingly defective and "rusty" in the first principles of what should appertain to a common English education. Susie (there are no Susans now-a-days) might be able to dissect the flower of a house-plant, resolve a chord of the seventh on the piano, define the vanishing point in drawing, or even to have at her tongue's end the nomenclature of chemistry, but if her precious bang were at stake she could not correct the following sentence and give proper reasons for so doing: "It was so wet I dared not wear my dove-colored silk, therefore, choosing the smallest of two evils, I sat the lamp on the table, laid down on the lounge and read in the story of the Ladie's Retreat, to where Bridget yelled to the butler, 'That's me!'" And so Augustus Edward, too, might readily trace an irregular Greek verb through all its intricacies, or pronounce a Latin

oration, while at the same time he could not give three consecutive rules in English syllabication, or calculate the interest on a note with partial payments, to save his father's store from being sold by the sheriff.

Every age of the world has produced its Magi who have left on record the uncompromising declaration that there is no royal road to knowledge; and yet the solemn text continues to go begging for adherents. If the school-houses of our grandfathers were rude and unattractive in their appointments, their memory deserves to be embalmed forever in the annals of the solid literature of our country for the pure, unadulterated "common school educations" which were gleaned within those sacred precincts. For a term of years, the old-fashioned, hard-study, committing-to-memory system has been denounced as arbitrary and barbarous. But we undertake to say, that there is more true backbone in that despised method, to-day, than in all the endless object-teaching appliances and other patent, stuffing apparatuses that so completely glut and cumber our modern school-rooms.

For nearly three decades, our primary teachers have been stuffing our children for examination days as we stuff chickens for the holidays. But thanks to our Eastern friends, the tables are turning, and there is hope that we shall return to first principles in the near future.

We not long since heard a good grandmother in Israel sadly complaining of the rapid deterioration in our evangelical Sunday Schools. "The time was," said she, "when we used to study the *Scriptures*; and the Bible, without note or comment, was the only text-book known or heard of in the best regulated Sunday Schools. It was up-hill business, but at the end of the year, we knew whether to look in the Old or New Testament to find the story of Sampson and the lion, and the parable of the prodigal son. Now-a-days, it is not fashionable for children to have Bibles, so their hands and arms are filled with lesson leaves, library books, Sunday School newspapers, card pictures, rewards of merit, black-board diagrams, Scripture slips and goodness knows what all."

Well, with all her quaintness, we think the old lady was about right, and

in giving vent to her own pent-up feelings, she furnishes us a splendid diagnosis of the incubus that now rests upon the primary departments of our present school system.

In a word, our entire educational system stands in crying need of a thorough overhauling. From the prime mover to the balance wheel, the thing is simply in a state of abject demoralization. Desperate as the case would appear to be, the remedy, which is within reach of all, is no less effectual than simple. Let parents, teachers and school officers return to first principles, and the thing is done in good shape. Let us lay a broad foundation by teaching our children to correctly read and spell in their mother tongue, and the way will be substantially paved for a rapid and effectual forward movement.

Latin, Greek, and the higher mathematics, are bright and shining accomplishments for any young man to aspire after, but he should attain unto them in a thorough and legitimate manner. And we just as readily account it an honor for any young lady to become an adept in the classics and natural sciences; but let her progress, from first to last, be a *homogeneous* one, for there "all the honor lies."

The wily fox denounced the good grapes as sour because he could not reach them by jumping, while all the time his mouth was watering for them.

Should we blame children, then, for conceiving a radical hatred for branches of study beyond their years with which they have been prematurely crammed to utter loathing?

But we have said fully enough to enable the discerning reader to draw a pretty safe conclusion as to how we stand on the modern educational question.

At ten, a child; at twenty, wild;
At thirty, strong if ever;
At forty, wise; at fifty, rich;
At sixty, good, or never.

It is not right to raffle; though of course when a church needs money that's different.

A sole stirring incident—Treading on the point of a tack.

Next to nothing—A girl walking with the average dandy.