

What Education Costs Most?

BY PROF. JOHN DOWEN.

This question admits of a variety of answers, determined largely by the kind of education intended. It is generally supposed, however, that the education for which the largest sum of money is paid, or means expended is the most costly. Let us see how this is. If what we paid for a thing determined its value, then it were easy to come at the truth in the matter. But in affairs of this sort, what a thing costs in money, or labor, or any other commodity, is only one, and in some instances, one of the less important factors in the estimate of cost.

If it were a matter of mere value, as men are accustomed to estimate values, the result could be more readily be preached; but even then, it would often happen that the most costly in money, etc., would be by far the most serviceable, and hence, cheapest in the long run. But our question has another meaning. It looks more to the outcome of education than to any merely intrinsic or extreme present value.

It is not, therefore, our purpose to criticize expensive outlays in the way of money though in a general, a thing ought to cost what it is worth, neither to urge extravagant provisions in books, apparatus, or travel, etc., or even in teachers or tuition. All these may be rendered comparatively valueless in virtue of the considerations connected with this matter. But we do wish, in this connection, to call attention to a practice becoming too prevalent among our American people to get a thing for less than its real value. This leads most persons to indulge in a species of speculation, or to seek the cheapest article in the market, not weighing the probable chances that such articles are usually most expensive in the end.

This tendency has probably had much to do in cheapening education, lessening its value, rather than its cost. But education is one of those things whose value cannot be reduced without damage. The genuine thing is the only article, that should be allowed to remain in the market. Many people, however, go upon the principle that education is education, no matter whence or how it comes. That arithmetic is arithmetic and grammar is grammar, etc., without regard to the means by which obtained.

This is a mistaken idea; and it ministers to the ruin of many minds. The source of knowledge is about as important a thing to be considered as the knowledge itself, or the education learned by its acquisition. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" Can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? "Can the same fountain send forth sweet water and bitter?"

Thoughts born of sin or from a corrupt heart, are impure from contact, however innocent they may seem. There is a subtle poison lurking in every thing evil, and everything associated therewith. Hence thoughts from an evil heart are dangerous, because of former association. Knowledge itself may convey a deadly poison, if conveyed through certain unhealthy channels, and if it is filtered through a mind tainted with infidelity, corrupted by vice, or blasted by debasing passions, it withers and scorches human souls, as the fever-freighted Sirocco blasts the fair fields of vegetation over which it sometimes sweeps.

Oh, there be teachers that I have seen teach, and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely—that, neither having the life of Christian, pagan or man, have so dishonored their holy calling, and so defaced the fair page of infancy, that I have thought that some—cheap normal, or some—county board had made teachers and not made them well, they abused humanity so abominably.

There are teachers to whom I could

no more willingly intrust my child than I could intrust lambs to wolves. There are teachers, and not a few—I say it with shame—whose every breath poisons, and whose every action lies. Is it strange that children also learn to lie? Strange if they didn't. Is it mysterious that they go astray even from birth? What is to hinder them? We place them at a frightful disadvantage, and then expect them to conquer. We place them at the very door of the den of iniquity and then expect them to escape unharmed. We even starve them intellectually, socially, and morally in their hours of greatest need, and then expose them to the questionable supplies of a burglar or a villain. Verily at this rate, we shall perpetuate the doctrine of total depravity to all time and eternity.

There are teachers that I would not suffer even to give lessons in arithmetic or geography to my boy, lest he taint him with the poison, borne on the pinions of thought, from a corrupt mind. To teach is to commune, mind with mind, heart with heart; and as thought is such a living thing, and such a potential thing, that its very entrance into the mind, not only "giveth light," but it also creates a growth of some sort, either of good or bad.

A teaching that taints is too dear at any price, or at no price. Its cost is the sacrifice of many lives of usefulness. Its wrecks strew the entire plain of human history; and its agents have opened wide the gates of evil to flood the world with woe. These are the cheap teachers. The country is overrun by them. Their work is not only worthless, but absolutely damaging. It is withering the fair fields of promise. Their acquisitions are usually limited to the territory of the three R's, with perhaps a taint bordering on the sides—a little geography a little grammar, and now and then a little algebra. Beyond this their untutored minds have never been taught to stray. No literature, no history, no idea of the applications of the sciences to the arts, no sympathy with general progress and social reforms. Their professional stock, of ideas can be formulated into an "order" of parsing a few "rules" for working out problems, and possibly for spelling and flogging. That anything beyond this should demand their attention, or should be called upon to acquaint themselves with the current ideas of the profession, has never yet found a lodgment with them. Not one in fifty of this class of teachers ever takes or reads an educational paper. Not one in one hundred owns a single book on teaching, except, perhaps the most worthless kind.

These are cheap teachers indeed! They can afford to teach cheap. Their own acquisitions are of the cheapest grade; but their teaching is very costly to the people of this country. It costs this nation more than all her army and navy; more than all her legislatures, and Congress thrown in; more than all her jails and penitentiaries, which it feeds and fills. No one can estimate the possible good suppressed, or the possible evil evoked by this kind of teaching. It is costing the best brain of the best men and women of this land. It is robbing the country and its institutions of their inheritance and the people of their best rights; and what renders this evil doubly damaging no one seems to regard it as a very serious evil. Thousands and tens of thousands, of just such teachers as those above described, are to-day directing, or rather misdirecting the minds, hearts and characters of the boys and girls of these United States; and few and faint have been the voices raised against this unequalled waste.

Who is to blame? The teachers themselves, in part, but not wholly. There is a class of influences at work among our teachers, that, under the guise of doing good is doing them incalculable mischief. I allude to the cheap trash—books and papers—palm-

ed off upon them in the shape of guides and helps to a better understanding of their works, etc.

This shabby stuff claims to present the whole subject of education and teaching—a subject requiring a life-long study, under circumstances the most favorable—in a few pages of squibs and platitudes, without the least attempt at system or science. It is absolutely discouraging. As though the whole preparation of a teacher lay in the answer to a few silly questions, that a few silly authors (thank the Lord there are no more of them!) have put forth and puffed as the only necessary preparation of teaching. These not only cheapen the teacher's mind as to its furniture, but actually stand in the way of a more thorough and consistent preparation. They satisfy the indolent, and aid in securing a certificate. Humbug and nonsense seems to possess superior advantages for propagating themselves; for a hundred copies of this trash are sold to one of genuine merit. Take such a work as "Barnard's American Journal of Education," the completest work on education perhaps ever published, and how many teachers know anything about it? How many own a single volume of it? Not one in five hundred or a thousand. This argues a low state of professional pride and preparation. But this superficiality is pandered to, and encouraged by a class of institutions recently sprung into existence in Ohio, and adjoining states, whose chief merits (?) are cheapness and crookedness.

Where is the enemy? This the most difficult question to answer. Ours is a free country, which means (to some) free to make just as big fools of themselves as possible, provided they can make money by it; free to take advantage of the necessities and ignorances of the honest and unwary, provided they can do it under some specious guise of education; and hence the great difficulty of correcting this enormity.

What the State needs, however, is a vigorous system of normal school instruction, under the supervision of a stated Board of Education, composed of leading teachers of acknowledged and unquestioned merit, and whose duties should be to pass upon the qualifications of teachers; and a State Superintendent—not a mere Commissioner—whose duties to the schools of the State should be similar to those of a City Superintendent to his system of schools. These and kindred improvements should be introduced into our State and National systems of schools; for as long as so great a want as the preparation of teachers for the schools of a State, is left to the precarious preparation likely to be secured from a voluntary system, subject to all the abuses arising from unscrupulous competition, just so long we shall have incompetency and waste.

There are other points of kindred interest, which if carefully provided and guarded, would not only relieve us of this abuse, but would go far towards bringing up our country schools to a point of perfection, equalling if not excelling the graded schools in our towns and cities.—*N. Y. School Journal.*

Looking round on the noisy inanity of the world, words with little meaning, actions with little worth, one loves to reflect on the great Empire of Silence. The noble silent men scattered here and there each in his department; silently thinking, silently working, whom no morning newspaper makes mention of! They are the salt of the earth. A country that has none or few of these is in a bad way. Like a forest which has no roots; which has all turned into leaves and boughs; which must soon wither and be no forest. Woe for us if we had nothing but what we can show, or speak. Silence, the great Empire of Silence, higher than the stars; deeper than the kingdoms of death! It alone is great; all else is small.—*Carlyle.*

Select Reading.

—At a public gathering lately in New York, one of the gentlemen present was called upon for a speech, and this is how he responded: "Gentlemen and women:—I ain't no speaker. More'n twenty years back I came here a poor idiot boy, and now what are I?"

—Without earnestness no man is ever great or does really great things. He may be the cleverest of men—he may be brilliant, entertaining, popular; but he will want weight. No soul-moving picture was ever painted that had not in it, depths of shadows.

—Sometimes little vexations and petty cares will fret the mind and drive out all tranquillity. Then it is that larger views are needed, deeper thoughts, higher ideals, broader outlooks. We come back to our daily round of duties and cares refreshed and calmed after dwelling on higher things, and we are surprised we could have been overcome by what is comparatively a trifling thing.

—Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable; for they who aim at it and persevere will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable.

—Do not be older in your feelings than you are in fact. Therefore never withdraw your interest from life. See what is going on. It is a good thing for a man to set his affections on things above, and to have investments in Heaven. There is a time for these things; but they are not inconsistent with the knowledge of what is taking place below. Men should let the heart of the times brood upon their hearts.

—An Oxford student, being examined in sacred history, was asked, "Who was the first King of the Jews?" At a venture he replied, "Saul;" then, encouraged by the assent of the examiner, completed the answer as follows, "Saul of Tarsus, sometimes called Paul."

—Age is not all decay; it is the ripening, the swelling of the fresh life within, that withers and bursts the husk.—*George Macdonald.*

—Jesus is said to have marveled only twice; once at the faith of the centurion, the other time at the unbelief of the people of his own city.—*B. North.*

—Men need wives who are in love with them. Simple tolerance is not enough to stand the strain of married life; and to marry where you cannot freely love is to commit an act of dishonesty and injustice.

—Seek pleasures whenever you can consistently do so. No enjoyment, however inconsiderable, is confined to the present moment. A man is the happier for life from having once made an agreeable tour or enjoyed any considerable interval of innocent pleasure.

THE GOOD ALREADY SAID. We need not ask," says the Rev. F. W. Robertson, "will the true, pure, loving, holy man be saved? for he is saved; he has heaven; it is in him now. He has a part of his inheritance now, and he is soon to possess the whole."

—A weak mind is like a microscope, which magnifies trifling things, but can not receive great ones.—*Chesterfield.*

—Confidence and fear are almost one thing rather than two, when we speak of God. He that fears most trusts most. He that trusts most fears most. To none is death so little of a change as to those whose life has been one long confidence in God.

—In the present day there is no fixed time for sleep. The world roars around us like a torrent of events. Everything is rapid; and we are whirled with velocity in the midst of a vortex as vast as it is incessant. Repose there is none; and instead of sleeping on a pillow of down, we stand continually on the tiptoe of expectation, awaiting the coming on of tomorrow, big as it were with the doom of some great hereafter.

—The Welsh National Eisteddfod for which preparations have been going on for a year past, was held at Scranton, Pennsylvania, on June 23rd and 24th. This consists of a musical and literary tournament (in which about a thousand persons took part) for prizes aggregating \$1200. The chief prize—\$300—was contested for by a dozen choirs from various parts of the State, composed mostly of Welsh miners, who are remarkable for their choral singing. The Welsh are devoted to music, and cultivate their love for it in their Eisteddfodau, which they trace back to the sixth century. The musical contest awakened much enthusiasm among an audience of something like five thousand persons. The first prize was awarded to the Choral Society of Hyde Park, and the second to the Wilkesbarre Choir. The proceeds of the Eisteddfod will be applied by the Welsh Philosophical Society to the founding of a free library in Hyde Park.—*Harper's Weekly.*

—That a husband should forcibly thrust his innocent and clinging wife from the deck of a vessel, seems cruel and inexcusable. But when the curtain is still farther drawn aside, and we see the advancing flames and the swiftly sinking hull, and the raft waiting below the gunwale, the whole aspect of the case is changed; and, if we have prejudged it, we have learned a lesson of modest waiting. But not on the Narragansett alone do such things occur, but in the universe of God, and similar judgments need to be modified. And many a dear spouse of Christ, who has clung and cried and thought hard thoughts when His hand was heavy and His pressure pushing her inexorably from her footing in the present, has returned to acknowledge that touch as a truer and tenderer one than that which placed the wedding ring upon her hand or the bridal kiss upon her brow.—*Christian Intelligencer.*

—A man out West who had been so unfortunate as to lose five excellent wives, desired to erect a head-stone for each, commemorating her virtues, but has been deterred by the expense. The other day a happy thought struck him. The five wives were buried side by side in the same graveyard. He accordingly had the Christian name of each engraved on a small stone—"Emma," "Jane," "Mary," "Margaret," "Elizabeth"—a hand cut on each stone pointing to a large stone in the center of the lot; and under each hand the words, "For epitaph see large stone."

—When Dr. Johnson had completed his dictionary, the delay of which had quite exhausted the patience of Miller, the bookseller, the latter acknowledged the receipt of the last sheet in the following terms: "Andrew Miller sends his compliments to Mr. Samuel Johnson, with the money for the last sheet of the copy of the dictionary, and thanks God he has done with him." To this unceremonious intimation the doctor replied—"Samuel Johnson returns his compliments to Mr. Andrew Miller, and is very glad to find (as he does by his note) that Andrew Miller has the grace to thank God for anything."

—It is believed that the oldest rosebush in the world is one which is trained upon one side of the Cathedral of Hildesheim in Germany. The root is buried under the crypt below the choir. The stem is a foot thick, and half a dozen branches nearly cover the eastern side of the church, bearing countless flowers in summer. Its age is unknown, but documents exist that prove that the Bishop Heso nearly a thousand years ago, protected it by a stone roof, which is still extant.

Nor should we be ever letting
Sympathy befuddle sense,
Nor again be caught forgetting
That throughout the world's expanse,
Those who most our pity waken
For their lack of wit or grace,
Would not happily mistaken
Put themselves in our place.