

**Public-school reforms : a few remarks and suggestions on the mental, moral and physical training of youth / by M.A.B.**

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**Publication/Creation**

London : L. Booth, [1872]

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*With the Compts of the  
Walter*

*Errors and*  
PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.



A Few Remarks and Suggestions

ON

THE MENTAL, MORAL, AND PHYSICAL

TRAINING OF YOUTH.

*See p: 13*

BY

M. A. B.

LONDON:

~~L. BOOTH, 907 REGENT STREET, W.~~

*H. K. Lewis 136 Lower Street*

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

*—W.C.*



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# PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

A few Remarks and Suggestions

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STRANGWAYS AND WALDEN, PRINTERS,  
28 Castle St. Leicester Sq.

## INTRODUCTION.

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It is thought that the suggestions contained in the following letters and articles, which are now reprinted and offered to the public in a collected form with original matter, may be of use, at the present time, when an unusual degree of attention is being given to the subject of public-school training, more particularly in its physical aspects. The 'schools' compete annually for victory in their various games; the UNIVERSITIES' BOAT-RACE attracts a larger concourse of people every year; and the ETON AND HARROW CRICKET-MATCH is witnessed by thousands, who take a personal interest in the players, as well as a keen interest in the game.

These scenes are very pretty and exciting no doubt; and it may be admitted that they are also useful, to some extent; for they stimulate into a genuine, if brief, enthusiasm, torpid natures, that generally find it difficult to be aroused to take a real interest in anything; moreover, the schoolboys become aware, on such occasions, that the enthusiasm is all for them, and that the eyes of England are upon them; the cause might be a more noble one certainly, but still these public occasions do good; they are useful—if for nothing else—as an antidote to indifference.

But let the mothers, sisters, and friends, who display the dark or light blue on those gala days, consider for a moment what valuable bodily and mental energies those youths are sacrificing to physical sports, so all-engrossing as such pursuits have become throughout the school term.

The boy of to-day will be a man in a brief space of time, and with the dominant spirit of the man, he will be making his influence felt in the home and in society; whether that influence will be for good or for evil, will, to a great degree, depend upon the early training he receives while his principles are being formed.

There is much talk at the present time about women's work in the world; but a little work, with prospective great results, is ready for them close at hand: an easy work and a pleasant task, which they should in nowise pass by and leave undone. Let the mothers and daughters of this land look to their duty in the matter, and try what they can do to influence their sons and brothers, who have had almost all home feeling and affection crushed out by the hardening effects of school-life, and require the refining, softening influence which good women can impart to the male character.

Until we can obtain the public-school reforms indicated in these papers, we want *much* good home influence to counteract the evil, which is imbibed during the most important years of a boy's life: indeed, home influence—as it ought to be—can never be safely dispensed with; and it may be kept up, during the intervals between holiday-times, by letters from home: hopeful, encouraging, and sympathising letters from mothers and sisters, who may really expect good to result from the hearty desire and effort to promote the welfare of a fellow-being, even when that 'being' is only a boy!

The matter is now committed to the hands of those who are specially fitted, as parents or instructors, for the task; it is an urgent work, and requires to be set about without delay; it is a great and important work, that of inviting England's sons to nobler objects and pursuits, and winning them from an aimless, useless, if not a vicious, life. Thus we may hope to see the future homes of England what they ought to be—the centres of virtue, honour, and morality, the strongholds of a nation's greatness.

## PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.\*

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WE are not surprised to find that the defective moral discipline maintained at some, if not all, of our great public schools has excited attention. It is obvious that a good deal of unhappy distrust prevails in reference to this question. To that distrust we would not idly or rashly minister; but neither do we consider it our duty to throw a cloak over evils which, if they really exist, are certain to inflict irreparable injuries upon future generations of Englishmen. An intelligent correspondent communicates a series of statements of a character to produce great anxiety in the public mind. Those statements are evidently made in good faith; though we cannot but hope they are slightly exaggerated. It is alleged, for example, that there exists, both at Eton and Harrow, a system of the almost wholesale malappropriation of such articles as umbrellas, rugs, overcoats, &c., and that, in fact, the sanctity of property is primarily among the servants of the households, and thus inevitably among the pupils themselves, an unrecognised sentiment. † Our correspondent says: "If home and the family are really a divine institution, English public schools furnish a wretched model

\* It may be as well to explain that the first six letters, and the brief article which precedes them, all appeared in a weekly paper three years ago. The letters signed 'A Parent' are by the compiler of this pamphlet; the name of the author who signs himself 'Veritas' is in the keeping of the editor of the paper in which the letters appeared. The remainder of the articles, &c., are severally introduced or explained by a heading or note attached to each.

† The same system exists, or existed, at Winchester, known as 'bagging,' a term which is now commonly used in describing theft.



of means to the end desired; why those reverend gentlemen to whom it appertains to keep their houses in order, and the head-master in particular, cannot, or will not, find a remedy for these abuses, I am at a loss to understand, for it is not because the boys are removed from parental control and influence, that no supervision, and no compensation for the loss of home associations, are to be sought after. If these can be supplied in the private boarding-school, as in many instances they really are, why not in the 'homes' connected with the public schools? The energy of body and mind cultivated at these public institutions is, unquestionably, an excellent discipline; but if truth, honesty, soberness, and chastity, are to be sacrificed, though the scholar's strength be as a wall, and his genius as ivy to clothe it, he will have no tenement in which his soul can live, and, therefore, it must inevitably perish. Moreover, although many escape the contamination to which they are so unjustly exposed during three-fourths of their school life, and have learnt to move at ease in the best English society, many a fair name has been branded already; and many more will be irretrievably lost if the axe be not at once applied to the root.'

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I.

PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

SIR,—I am very glad to find that you have taken up this important subject, and I beg to state, in support of your views, that my experience as to the effects of public-school life upon the youths who have come under my observation quite enables me to verify what has been put forward in your columns as needing investigation, with a view to reform in public schools. It is, I believe, scarcely possible to exaggerate the evils that result from the system which is the rule in these institutions. The boys are put upon their honour before they know what 'honour' means. That is one mistake, and it is not surprising that a false code of honour prevails amongst them. They band themselves together in

mischievous, and are true to each other at any cost; that is all that can be said in their favour. If they would only endure as much in a good cause as they bear cheerfully in wrongdoing, what noble characters they would be! The absence of proper control, instead of promoting a wholesome kind of self-reliance which leads to a true independence of character, only tends to weaken good resolutions, by affording continuous opportunities to deceive. Thus truth, honour, and honesty are, as a rule, at a discount amongst them; and this is the material out of which our English gentlemen are expected to be produced—these the youths who are specimens of our boasted public-school system, which is, perhaps, for nothing more be-praised than for its so-called ‘public-school honour!’ If my remarks prove acceptable to your readers, I may, with your permission, resume the subject on some future occasion, for the purpose of enlarging upon some points which I have been able only to glance at in this letter.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

A PARENT.

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## II.

### PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

SIR,—Your correspondent, who subscribes himself ‘A Parent’ has just hit the right nail on the head. He says, ‘The boys are put upon their honour before they know what “honour” means.’ In fact, they give *honour* a higher place than *truth*. But schoolboys are not supposed to be proficient in ethics, otherwise they would know that the obligation of a promise may be superseded by an obligation which is higher. John Stuart Mill says, ‘The principle which demands uncontrolled freedom of action in all that concerns only the agents themselves, requires that those who have become bound to one another in things which concern no third party should be able to release one another from the engagement; and even without such voluntary release there are, perhaps, no contracts or engagements, except those

which relate to money or money's worth, of which one can venture to say that there ought to be no liberty whatever of retraction.' Now, 'banding themselves together, and being true to each other at any cost,' is, as your correspondent very justly remarks, according to 'a very false code of honour,' being neither more nor less than an infringement of the first principles of morality; for the well-being of others—to say nothing of their own future welfare—may thus be sacrificed to their own personal honour. That such a conventional code should be even winked at by those guardians of the public morals, the instructors of the very youths, who, in the course of a few years, may themselves become teachers of the rising generation in theology, law, jurisprudence, &c.—those men who have taken holy orders, and whose vocation it is to preach the gospel, whether in the pulpit or the schoolroom, thus curbing licentiousness and wrong; those masters in our public schools to whose names, for the most part, is prefixed the title of reverend—is not merely an anomaly, but a rampant evil calling loudly for reform; and I earnestly hope that such hints as have been already thrown out through the medium of your valuable and wide-circulating journal may have dropped some seed into the field of legislation that may one of these days spring up and bear fruit abundantly.

VERITAS.

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### III.

#### PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

SIR,—It was not my intention to trouble you so soon again, but I think it is as well to keep up the interest which has been awakened towards this subject by means of the protest which you have admitted from more pens than one; moreover, I am encouraged to proceed in consequence of the support which my views have so well received at the hands of your correspondent 'Veritas,' in your last number; indeed, I do hope that this important subject will be thoroughly ventilated through the medium of the press,

and that many able pens will be engaged in the discussion of the various interesting questions which are included in a consideration of the subject. Pressure from without is needful, and if the public attention and interest can be engaged in the matter, the desired reforms may be hopefully looked for. There has been too much apathy hitherto, both on the part of heads of houses and of parents; in one or two instances masters have been spoken to privately respecting some of the abuses referred to in your columns; and although the evils are, in a great measure, admitted by them, yet the remedy is said to lie in the hands of parents, rather than of the masters. If that be the case, then parents must meet the matter as they find it; and it is time to unite in some decided revolutionary action, by which the public-school system may be remodelled more in accordance with the requirements of a progressive and 'thorough-going' people. But, although parents may take the first step on the road to school reform by demanding what they desire, they have a right to look for co-operation in effecting the necessary changes on the part of those who have been chiefly instrumental, by their indifference and bad government, in bringing about the evils complained of.

It was my purpose to speak less of the intellectual aspect of the question than of the moral and the sanitary errors of school life; but I cannot help referring here briefly to the shortcomings of the 'education' of youth at these schools. I refer merely to book learning; and here I will say, in parenthesis, how seldom is true *education* properly understood by those who undertake that onerous and vital task of educating the young. To 'educate' is to cultivate, train, and literally to bring out, to 'educer' *all* the faculties—the moral, intellectual, and physical attributes—of man's whole being. Can it be said that the reverend and non-reverend gentlemen who are engaged upon this high and holy duty set about it, as a rule, in an earnest, disinterested, and Godlike spirit? If it were so, would the results be so meagre as they are acknowledged on all sides to be? The

Public Schools' Commissioners undertook to inquire into the subject, and their report will soon be before Parliament. I will merely venture to express an opinion that parents will not much longer be found willing to spend hundreds of pounds on their sons' schooling, occupying as it does so many precious years of the life of the boys themselves, without some better result than the acquisition of a little Greek and Latin.

However, my object was more to point out the bad effects upon the morals consequent upon the tone which prevails amongst the boys, and of the 'little code' of laws which they set up for their own guidance. Honourable studious fellows have every kind of discouragement placed in their way: terms of reproach are applied to such boys,\* and it requires rare moral courage on their part to keep in the way which they have marked out for themselves. Then I would say something about the system which has already been hinted at in your columns; viz., the 'malappropriation of the property of pupils.' The practice of allowing 'perquisites' in schools, as elsewhere, leads to a great deal that is objectionable. Hence, it becomes a duty on the part of the school authorities to prohibit such transactions between the pupils and the domestics; viz., the gift, sale, or exchange of any wearing apparel or other property; the parents, on their part, should require their boys to take home every article, in whatever condition.

If such an understanding could be generally acted upon, the practices, of which it appears there is too much reason to complain, would receive a wholesome check, and many abuses which grow out of them would be avoided. It must be remembered that the mere loss of the goods so disposed of forms a very small part of the considerations involved in the system which is the subject of animadversion; underhand dealings are practised, expensive habits are fostered,

\* In one school the studious boys are derisively called 'saps;' in another, 'swots;' and in a third, 'mugs.'

and when once a career of deceit and self-indulgence is entered upon, the downward course is only too easy and rapid; thus the loss of moral rectitude is the greatest loss of all. I must leave for another occasion any remarks which I have to make upon the 'sanitary aspect' of public school life; scarcely less important to the future of England's sons than the questions which have already come under notice.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

A PARENT.

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#### IV.

#### PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

SIR,—It is undoubtedly some consolation to the parents of boys at our public schools to feel that the better portion of the press is favourable to their interests and just demands for an amelioration of existing customs, whether the defectibility be in the system pursued or in the abuse of it; but of this be assured, that, until the tyrant 'tradition' be expelled from our time-honoured seminaries, no supplementary regulations recommended by the Public Schools' Commissioners will avail as reform so much needed and clamoured for. An excrescence here and there may probably be removed, but the faculties, whether moral or intellectual, now stunted and cheated of their growth, may wither rather than the system be changed, although the beneficial results of such change were as manifest as the sun at noon. In the first place, who would have the boldness to affirm that so many scores of men of approved character and scholarship were conducting the education of England's most promising sons on a plan injurious at once to their morals and intellects? Secondly, though such scholastic theorists could be found whose effrontery might pass for wisdom and philanthropy among a certain class, how could they move the wills and affections of the Education Commissioners to bring an evil report of their own fondly-remembered haunts and half-obsolete system of

learning, and commit themselves to some new-fangled Continental notions on education? And, thirdly, where are the masters to come from who would consent to teach in accordance with the dynamic as opposed to the mechanical view of education, whereby the latent powers of thought during boyhood might be evoked evenly and without prejudice to any, whereby also good English prose would be preferred to bad Latin and Greek verse? All that can be done is to go on protesting from year to year, and from generation to generation, until a new life-blood be gradually infused into an old favourite institution, revered more on account of historical associations than of the benefits conferred by it on the rising generation.

VERITAS.

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V.

PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

SIR,—In my last letter I stated that on a future occasion I might have something to say on the ‘sanitary aspect’ of public school life; a subject scarcely less important to the future of England’s sons than the questions which have already been discussed in your columns with reference to school reform. Those of your readers who are aware of the intimate relation that exists between body and mind, and of the extent to which they act and react upon each other, will not deem that I ascribe too much importance to physical training when I estimate it thus highly. It is a positive duty on the part of those who have the care of the young to promote and preserve the bodily health by all possible means; not only for its own sake, but on account of the dependence of the mental powers upon the physical condition. This is a matter of the highest importance during school life, when body and mind are growing, and ought to gain strength at this period of existence: for if they do not acquire vigour year by year, they must certainly deteriorate; considering, therefore, the grave duty

which devolves upon the guardians *pro tem.* of these 'promising,' but often disappointing, sons of our hope, it is not too much to demand that some better care be taken at public schools to secure greater attention to sanitary regulations. At present, I believe, the boys are, as a rule, permitted to follow their own inclinations with regard to many matters in which such liberty is carried out at the risk of health and safety; for instance, the bathing, the games, and so forth, are regulated—if at all—rather to suit the convenience of masters in other matters, than with a view to the requirements of health; indeed, in some public schools—I do not pretend to speak of all—the most unsanitary practices prevail: for example, in one case there were no regulations whatever as to the hours of bathing; the boys were permitted to use the bath at any time, and it was their custom to bathe immediately after meals.\* This extremely dangerous practice was remarked upon in one of the leading medical journals; the result was that the baths at that school were closed for an hour after each of the principal meals; two hours would have been better; but it is satisfactory that some concession in the cause of health was gained by means of the protest; it would, however, have been more creditable to the judgment of the school authorities if the precaution had originated with themselves.

The vigilance of a resident inspector of health, or medical officer, might be very useful in superintending many matters which affect the health of the pupils; the governing bodies would do well to appoint such an officer forthwith. Even the games require some regulation; at present they are overdone. Bodily exercise is a good thing in moderation; but when the exertion is excessive, instead of strengthening, it exhausts the physical energies: the blood and the surface become overheated, chills follow, and thus the seeds are sown of many an ailment, which by repetition may weaken

\* See Appendix (A).



the constitution for life. Then the subject of 'dietetics' is an important one, and should be under some wise control; it may not be generally known beyond those who are directly concerned in these school matters, that the pupils are allowed to purchase any kind of food, and consume it, in addition to the viands provided by the masters; in cases where boys are so inclined, a taste for variety of foods may be indulged in to a very great extent, and many an attack of dyspepsia might be referred to this cause; but there is no one whose business it is to regulate this sort of thing. It is said that the boys must gain their own experience; that is all very well in some things, but in matters of this kind health is sacrificed as the penalty for the knowledge acquired. A remedy for the unsanitary feeding is obvious. The tables at the various houses should be more liberally supplied; some little extras at breakfast, for instance, such as eggs, bacon, marmalade, and so forth, might satisfy the boys with what is wholesome, and remove the temptation to treat themselves with trash. It is rather hard upon the boys that they should have to spend a large proportion of their pocket-money upon so-called 'extras,' which really should form part of the regular fare; and it ought to be remembered that the sons of gentlemen, whose board is paid for as liberally as their education, are entitled to expect the table of the masters not inferior—omitting dainties and luxuries—to those of their own homes.

Before concluding, I will just say a few words upon a subject which I omitted to notice before,—I refer to a practice which is very general in some schools: a custom among the pupils of giving books to boys who are about to leave the school. It must be admitted, to the credit of the masters, that they are doing what they can to put down the practice, which is very much abused. It arose out of a very natural desire on the part of the boys to give their schoolfellows, with whom they are parting, a memento of their school friendship, and so far there was nothing objectionable. But the practice, innocently commenced, has been

made the opportunity for much extravagance and wrong; indeed, it is well known that some bookselling firms have established themselves in the vicinity of the public schools for the purpose of profiting by the orders for 'leaving books.' Boys are induced to write home for money or permission to give orders for these presents, which in many cases are costly. Unfortunately remittances received from home for this purpose are sometimes misappropriated; it is sufficient to hint at the mode in which the system is worked, and the possible evils mixed up with it, in order to prove to parents the necessity of their co-operating with the masters in the matter, and this they can do by refusing to give the order when asked for it by their sons. The masters have no power of themselves to prohibit the presentation of 'leaving books.'

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

A PARENT.

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VI.

PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

SIR,—I hope you will not think me too exacting if I ask for a little more space, for the purpose of remarking on one or two matters which I omitted to notice in the preceding communications on this subject. I have been reminded that no reference was made in those letters to the 'fagging system.' The truth is, that I considered it unnecessary for me to have anything to say on that subject, as it has been well investigated and reported on by means of the Public Schools Commission; moreover, when I commenced the series of letters which you have favoured with insertion, it was my intention to confine myself entirely to the discussion of those evils of whose nature and existence I have had ample opportunities of judging. Of the 'fagging system' I know little. It exists in a very mild form at the schools which have furnished me with data for my remarks; but I believe fagging, like other evils that have been commented upon, may be checked and controlled by the masters;

and certainly wherever it is practised to a degree approaching to cruelty, or even severity, it should be put down, as suggested, 'with a high hand.'\*

At one time—not so long ago but that there may be living witnesses to the fact—the 'fags' had to perform the most menial and degrading offices, so much so that the wonder is such a system was tolerated in a community of gentlemen. Any sign of rebellion on the part of the fags was visited with acts of cruelty, which in these days would bring the 'bullies' under the strong arm of the law. And this brutal system found advocates for the reason that it was considered 'good drilling.' Even very recently a writer upholds fagging, because—as he avers—it gives a boy a kind of anticipated experience of life; and, again, because he believes it produces some of the qualities that make the soldier! But, with all deference, I must beg to differ. In the first place, there is no reason why the result desired may not be obtained by less objectionable means; and it is difficult to imagine that anything better than brute force can be developed by such a system, for it is most likely that the temporary endurance, the tolerance of hardship inflicted under an oppressive rule, which is the inevitable condition of a school fag, instead of resulting in true courage, will degenerate into the worst kind of tyranny. The fag of to-day will be the bully when his turn comes to be emancipated, and so the evil is perpetuated. It is all very well to say, as it has been said—for to a certain extent it may be true—that 'Waterloo was won in the playing-fields of Eton;' but it is very questionable whether any hero has ever been produced, or any victory won, by means of the practice in those ignoble battles fought with gridiron and frying-pan in the sculleries used by the school fags. However, it is to be hoped that the day is for ever gone by when such doings could be not only tolerated, but approved.

I wish to say a few words upon 'school diet,' as the remarks which I ventured to make in my last letter seem to

\* The 'Lancet,' March 9th.

have been somewhat misunderstood. When I spoke of the boys spending their money upon trash, I did not refer to the 'sweetstuff,' which all 'small boys' are addicted to, whether at school or at home; but in suggesting that the breakfast-tables should be supplied with something more than bread and butter—that is to say, with bacon, eggs, and so forth—it was my wish to point out that such a stretch of liberality on the part of the masters might prevent the boys making themselves ill with bad herrings, rank sardines, stale sausages, and such poison which they purchase for themselves, and consume in their own rooms.\* It is the practice of the boys at some of the schools to take their breakfast at the 'tuck shops,' where they regale themselves on grilled kidneys, hot rolls, and who knows what else of the same description? Then, probably, by way of improving their digestion, they finish up with a visit to the plunge bath! Now, sir, I do not think that my proposal for a resident sanitary inspector has been made a day too soon. There are many other matters which might come usefully under such supervision and direction—as, for instance, the condition of the dormitories, the heating and ventilation of school-rooms, and the clothing of the pupils—not an unimportant matter the last-named, as the peculiar style of dress required according to the rules of some of the schools, while it is inelegant, is at the same time not sanitary. I will now bring my remarks upon this subject to a close, and leave it in the various aspects in other and abler hands. My object from the first, in addressing you, was to point out, rather than discuss, the evils which have grown out of the public school system, and which so urgently call for reform.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

A PARENT.

\* The hampers of 'grub' sent from home are a great source of dyspepsia. A sensible schoolmaster recently issued a circular to the parents of his pupils, requesting them not to send dainties in such abundance.

SOME of the foregoing letters having been reprinted in the 'Harrow Gazette,' they elicited two very angry epistles from correspondents, who appeared to feel themselves aggrieved by the disclosures as to the practices pursued, which are referred to more particularly in a circular which will be found in the Appendix (B).

The feeling which was aroused will be understood by the following letter, in which the writers of the angry epistles are well answered.

#### PUBLIC-SCHOOL REFORMS.

*To the Editor of 'The Harrow Gazette.'*

SIR,—Seeing that one of my letters, which appeared in a contemporary journal on the subject above named, has found its way into your columns, accompanied by two letters from 'A Parent,' corroborative of my views, I have to request you will allow me to offer a few observations that concern the first opponents to these reforms, who have presented themselves as your correspondents. That everybody in this our free country should be at liberty to repel, if possible, any attack upon his or her character, is a principle not only allowable, but even commendable, I freely grant; but, sir, I am sure you will agree with me, that inasmuch as the attacks referred to by your correspondents were directed against a system and the abuses to which that system is frequently subject, rather than against any individuals engaged in conformity thereto, whether in the capacity of housekeeper or servant, they cannot be met—much less repelled—by the mere assertions or denials of such individuals who choose to regard them in the light of aspersions on their own characters. For suppose it possible that fifty righteous persons could be found among their number, whilst there were fifty more entirely destitute of all principle whatever, the honesty and integrity of the former

would be no set off against the unscrupulous venality of the latter, and of course the corrupt portion, whether few or many, would naturally side with the incorrupt in endeavouring to ward off the arrows of scrutiny, which might be merely an annoyance to the one, whilst they would prove fatal to the other; so that the indignation expressed wants point in order to make itself felt. Moreover, the 'monstrous shame' imputed to the author of the ~~strictness~~ referred to belongs of right to the system, and those whose duty it is to watch it in operation whilst it is allowed to exist. The circumstances brought to light by the correspondence are incontrovertible, many members of both Houses of Parliament having borne testimony to their existence in their own school-days at Harrow, Eton, &c., and to their existence still, much to the detriment of their own sons,—abuses they would fain see extirpated by the governing bodies, so as to spare them the painful necessity of taking up the cudgels in their own defence, and that of the public, against their pet institutions, which have so long given *prestige* to their scholars.

*strictum*

Yours obediently,

VERITAS.

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#### THE EDUCATION OF THE HIGHER CLASSES.\*

That something is radically wrong in the system that has been pursued of late years in public schools and elsewhere, there is sufficient evidence around us to prove. Education has been a name and not a reality, or if it has achieved anything, it has done evil instead of good; briars have been planted and watered instead of fruit-trees; weeds instead of flowers have grown up apace. Do we not see the effects of all this in the numerous social evils that meet us at every

\* This article appeared, in the first instance, in the 'Morning Post,' and has since been reprinted in the 'London Mirror,' and the 'Public Schools' Chronicle.'

step? Can we not trace most of these evils to the low tone of morality at home—the mistaken standard of honour at school? The education of girls deserves an equal share of censure, but we will confine our remarks here to the home-training and school-discipline of boys.

We will begin with the nursery, for the seeds of mischief are sown early. Little Master Tom, of five years old, snubs his sister, a baby of three—tyrannises over her, denies her the right or the privilege of joining in his games or sharing his toys. ‘Why,’ (mamma asks,) ‘is Tommy so cross with little sister?’ ‘Oh,’ rejoins the incipient tyrant, ‘because girls are so silly!’ The little affronted pet, inwardly indignant, swelling with contending emotions, silently meditates on revenge. Here lies the secret of many an unhappy home; this spirit of tyranny on the one side, and this feeling of unjust oppression on the other, produce the germ of many a family tree bearing bitter fruit, and thus in the Divorce Court there is not a little work to do.

Mothers may learn a lesson from the foregoing; if they wish their daughters and their granddaughters, the future wives and mothers of England, to enjoy more domestic happiness than themselves, they will teach their sons better things than to bully their little sisters in the nursery ‘because they are girls.’ Let not a governess or a nurse give boys a false idea of what is manly by applauding and encouraging tyranny towards their gentler playmates; a really manly spirit will show itself in protecting and upholding, instead of oppressing the—so-called—weaker sex.

Young men of the present day are effeminating into nothingness, enervating the mind and body by all sorts of degrading influences. The term ‘weaker sex’ will cease to distinguish women; ‘gentler’ would be a more appropriate and fitting title. Their weakness has been made a handle of to their disadvantage long enough.

But to return to the history of our hero. We will suppose a few years passed by, and Master Tom is taking leave of his home, for the first time, to enter a new life at a public

school. Mamma gently whispers with her parting kiss her oft-repeated lesson, to 'speak the truth always.' Papa, in a blunt, off-hand way, says, 'Now mind, Tom, never be a sneak, for a sneak is a despicable fellow, hated and avoided by everybody.'

Which lesson, think you, lives longer in Tom's mind? Oh, I fear there is everything at school to banish the one and to strengthen the other.

The fact is, that the amount of Latin and Greek that a boy gets crammed with at school is of little consequence to his future career in comparison with the cultivation of moral principles. The low tone of those now prevalent in public schools will keep any boy from rising in the world as long as such influences last upon him; and few have the power to shake them off when they have 'grown with their growth.' Some bright examples there are of men who have braved all outward and conflicting circumstances, and become ornaments and examples to the world.

It is a pity that such are so rare. Teach a boy to stand up for the truth—and fight for it if need be—he will lack neither physical power nor moral energy, and the mental faculties will suffer nothing in the exercise. If he can despise 'bullies' and dare to be called a 'sneak,' he will conquer all things needful to render him an enlightened member of society, and an honourable citizen of the world.

One help to a better state of things would be a new dictionary of school terms, whereby a few words now in common use and abuse might have their proper value. Those I have already alluded to mean really exactly the opposite of what they are made to stand for. The 'sneaks' are the truly courageous, who would speak out the truth if the bullies would let them. The latter have no moral principle, and intimidate into silence by bringing truth-tellers into contempt, because truth would tell against themselves. The bullies are the real cowards. A boy who is well trained at home has little to fear in this way at school—*young Valiant-for-the-Truth* will command respect even from those who



affect to contemn and shun him. Having passed through the ordeal of school life victoriously, he becomes a man, builds his castle, and takes up his abode in it. Not a trumpery, ridiculous castle, such as we see now—the boast of a false pride, a bit of pasteboard and frippery, all tinsel, and trickery, and outside show—but a true-hearted Englishman's castle, where he will fight his battles with the outer world if need be; for he hath truth for his shield, and honour for his breastplate. But if peace be his portion he can enjoy it in security; for he has built his house upon a rock; that house is his home; his wife is his joy and his pride; their children their delight. It is such homes as these that England wants—they would prove a stronghold of the nation's morality. A new race of Englishmen would spring up, a thorough reform would take place in public schools through their influence, and bullies and sneaks would be exterminated from the face of the earth.

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The following letter was suggested by an admirable article in the *Times* on the subject of 'Athletics:—

#### EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL TRAINING.

SIR,—A protest was urgently needed against the present prevailing error in giving to athletic sports an undue place in the education of youth, and the thanks of all true philanthropists are due to you for having taken the initiative in the matter; especially will you receive the gratitude of those of your numerous readers who are parents of 'public schoolboys.' My experience enables me to endorse every word you say on the subject; but I would go still further than you do in condemning the present system of school training, for I see in its results not only the neglect of intellectual culture—a serious evil enough—but a deterioration of the whole character. Over-development of the physical organization, besides not conducing to a healthy condition, is achieved at a

sacrifice of the mental and moral faculties. It is a mistake to call these sports 'manly' when they are pursued to the neglect of the higher and more important attributes of a sentient being. The whole nature should be so developed as to be in harmonious keeping; *i. e.*, the mental, moral, and physical parts well balanced, and then we have 'manliness' worthy of the name. The present system produces deformed specimens of humanity or monstrosities—the giant and the pigmy combined—abnormal muscular tissue and dwarfed minds. It is not very difficult to trace the listless, do-nothing habits of our youth to the exhausting effects of their athletic games. The school sports are all very well in their proper place; that is, subordinate to the more serious occupations of school life; cricket, football, fives, and so forth, according to the place and season, are admirable, and there could not be any objection to them if followed as pastimes for mental recreation and bodily relaxation.

But, sir, when we reflect upon the fact that the Church and the State of the future, not to speak of numerous other important positions in life, will be represented by men who are now boys going through their educational training, it becomes a very serious question indeed, to inquire how far the system pursued at our public schools and the universities is calculated to produce good and useful men, fitted to perform onerous public duties, or even—which is not unimportant to the welfare of the community—likely to act well their part in private life as heads of households and fathers of families in their turn.

This question, which your article has suggested, ought to be answered. I am afraid that parents, beyond protesting against the pernicious system, are allowed no voice in the matter. If the authorities of the Universities and public schools fail to alter the system by making play subordinate to work, it may become the duty of the Legislature to interfere. We should look for some practical result from the deliberations of the Public-school Commissioners, and the next Session of Parliament may probably bring forth a mea-

sure worthy of the subject and of the vast interests involved in its satisfactory solution.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

M. A. B.

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The same important subject is still further discussed in the subjoined letter, which has not before been published.

‘UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS.’

The advocates of athleticism must employ better arguments in its favour than those which have yet been put forward, ere they can prove that physical sports ought to absorb so much time and attention as they have hitherto done. It has been said, ‘that a great deal may be forgiven to athletics on the score of their irrationality, if they promote morality.’ What sort of morality it is intended to promote by such means does not seem very clear: it must be a negative kind of virtue, as ‘irrational’ as the means employed to produce it.

There is an old-fashioned notion which ought to be obsolete in these days; viz., that hard exercise is the only method of getting rid of an excess of physical energy, which is apt to run riot in various directions; if that were really the case, the remedy, so called, would promote a condition almost as defective as that which it is intended to cure; for to correct a man of his bad propensities in one direction, it is proposed to develop his physical or animal nature—his muscles and sinews—to the injury of his brains. That is certainly a primitive and very clumsy way of dealing with a rational being, and is not true ‘education.’ Why not endeavour to counteract the baseness of the lower nature by cultivating the higher faculties? Moral strength is the backbone of character, and with refined intellectual pursuits, would far more effectually keep in subjection the coarser appetites of whatever kind, and would tend to produce a nobler manhood than the ‘hard,

self-denying process of athletic training,' which has such very poor results.\*

As to the plea that first-class men are members of the 'University Eights,' they are exceptional men; and they are what they are, intellectually, not in consequence of their physical training, but in spite of it; some men are born to be great, and will succeed under any circumstances, however adverse. Once let them feel the true spirit stirring within them, and nothing will daunt or frustrate them; indeed obstacles and impediments, before which ordinary minds would be discouraged, seem to supply a true genius with fresh energies by which to do battle with, and to conquer his foes.

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The following remarks from the *Lancet* are so appropriate, so much in accordance with the views set forth in these pages, that the paragraph is given *verbatim*. It is the introduction to a report on the sanitary condition of one of the Colleges, in which an outbreak of scarlet-fever had occurred:—

'The sanitary condition of our public schools has not attracted the attention its importance deserves. It is a source of constant anxiety to all concerned in their management; it is a question of the deepest interest to parents and guardians, and it involves the lives and welfare of the boys themselves. Nor is it altogether surprising that, as compared with education, which is, of course, the primary object of these schools, the knowledge and practice of sanitary laws should hold a secondary place. So much reliance is, indeed, placed upon cricket, rowing, gymnastics, and other occupations which tend to develop the body and maintain the health, that the value of other sanitary conditions is apt to be underrated; and it is only when a school has been subjected to a series of epidemics that the question assumes its just importance, and

\* See Appendix (C).

the inefficacy of arrangements, though fully adequate a few years ago, is felt.'

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TRUE 'MANLINESS.'

The following extract is given from a pamphlet now out of print; the subject is woman's right place in the social scale, but the training of boys is incidentally referred to:—

'The end and aim of all educational training should be to render men and women better members of society, as well as mutual helps to each other's happiness.

'Boys are trained and taught from their earliest infancy to be selfish and exacting; they are little tyrants to their sisters in the nursery; they learn at school to check all home yearnings, and to efface all the better influence of their nature; in sight of their schoolfellows they are ashamed, at parting, of a mother's tear and of a sister's kind good-bye; a towering self-love grows out of the ruins of home affections, which are ruthlessly crushed on the threshold of public life; and all this is encouraged and applauded—for what? that the urchin may be "manly." What a type of manliness is set before him! But so it is; truly the boy is father to the man, for the little tyrant of the nursery soon becomes the autocrat of a home of his own; and then the loving, long-patient, devoted nature of woman is put to a severe test indeed: a picture beautiful to behold if it had not a reverse side, which I will not dwell upon.

'If the moral nature of man could be cultivated and trained in the direction which I have indicated, if woman could be regarded by him as a companion and a friend, instead of a toy or a slave, she would not be found deficient in the higher qualities of mind to fit her for her new and more exalted vocation—a position which is her natural right, but from which she has been debased to serve the temporary dominion of her so-called lord and master.

‘Depend upon it, that the reform must commence with the other sex, before the majority of women will be encouraged to become different from what they are.

‘It is to be feared that the masculine element has been carried out in these days to an extent bordering on the brutal in the one case, as the feminine character has been attenuated into excessive weakness in the other. Now, there is no reason why the musculosity which belongs to the physical frame of the man should form any part of his mental being, beyond endowing him with firmness and courage, which are his proper attributes. Neither is it needful, on the other hand, for the “weaker sex” to be feeble, morally and mentally, because not physically strong. That is a mistake which is made on both sides.

‘Women should be more *self-reliant*, not approaching to that odious “strong-mindedness” which is very unwomanly indeed, and concerning which the good Archbishop of York, in his address at the Social Science Meeting in his own diocese, expressed a decidedly unfavourable opinion. “Man-ish women” are scarcely less contemptible than “woman-ish men.” At the same time, a little of the feminine element infused into the character of men, need not make them a whit less “manly” in its best sense; and would render them (I say it with all reverence) more in conformity with the image of their Maker, “after whose adorable likeness man was created.”’

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#### LONG HOLIDAYS.

It may be thought that amongst the other complaints against public schools, ‘long holidays’ should not be omitted; the evil is certainly an increasing one, and demands attention, which it will no doubt receive from the Public Schools’ Enquiry Commission; it is sufficient to say in this place, from the parents’ point of view, that it seems scarcely fair that boys should lose three or four weeks’ schooling during the year (not to speak of such a consideration as their

'grub') in consequence of an extra week being added to the usual holidays—which are already too long—on the most trivial excuse; as for instance—with due deference be it said—the birth of a royal baby, the marriage of a master, and so forth, interesting and important as these events may be to the persons immediately concerned.

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#### TEACHING PHYSIOLOGY.

A few words must be devoted to a somewhat serious subject, which has been left to the last, and, like a lady's postscript to her letter, these concluding lines perhaps contain the most important point of the whole; it is neither more nor less than the question of teaching physiology in schools. It must be regretted, that it still remains a 'question' as to the expediency, or rather the propriety, of introducing such subjects to the young in their educational course of study; but really is it not a false delicacy that can object to the knowledge which teaches the laws that regulate our being? a science which is calculated to enlarge and ennoble the mind of the student! By revealing to us the marvellous machinery which is daily and hourly, nay, momentarily, at work within us, the wonderful processes and changes that are continually going on in nature's laboratory, such knowledge enables us to admire the harmony and perfection of God's work, which it is at our peril that we trifle with, and put out of order through ignorance or wilfulness.

There can be no doubt that boys and girls would be more healthy, morally and physically, if they were not kept so much in the dark concerning the physiology and pathology of the human frame, its various organs and their respective functions: children hear that we are all 'fearfully and wonderfully made;' but it would be better if some of the 'mystery' with which these subjects are invested, could be removed from the minds of youth by judicious physiological teaching. It would create a greater degree of reverence for

the Almighty, whose divine and beneficent intentions, if more clearly understood, might be more religiously observed and more conscientiously carried out in all the actions and relations of life.

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#### CONCERNING TRADESMEN'S BILLS.

JUST before going to press, the writer has been reminded that the above important subject claims that a few words be devoted to it among 'Hints on School Reforms;' and although left to the last, it is hoped the suggestions under this head will not be overlooked.

The system practised by money-lenders, and touters of that description, who draw their thoughtless victims into their snares, gains exposure every now and then, when some fresh case comes to light, and is commented on in the public journals; but a very reprehensible practice not so well known, which parents should be made acquainted with, is carried on by some of the tradespeople who take up their quarters in the neighbourhood of large schools, and who induce boys to give orders on credit, often to large amounts, in the expectation that the bills will ultimately be paid by the parents.

The practice leads to extravagant habits, to say the least, and it ought to be checked, if even the items and charges put down represented, either in kind or value, goods supplied. But it will be seen to what an extent fraud may be carried on, demoralising to all parties concerned, when it is known that sums of money advanced to boys are sometimes entered in the accounts under the description of various kinds of goods, which, in fact, play no other than a 'figurative' part in these transactions. The surest way by which to stop all such proceedings, is for parents to make it known that they will not be responsible for any charges by tradesmen, excepting those which are authorised or endorsed by the heads of houses: thus, when a boy writes home for an



order for this or that, to one or other of the tradespeople in the vicinity of his school, the order should be signed by the master or his wife, who makes a note of every such order, and compares notes when the bills are sent in at the end of each term.

A little co-operation between parents and masters in this and similar matters might prevent many abuses that arise from want of proper supervision, which should be exercised in a manner to act as a check upon deception and fraud, without offending the 'honour' even of a public-school boy, or interfering with any one's 'rights,' excepting, indeed, the liberty of the wrong-doer.

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# APPENDIX.

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## A.

### ADVICE TO BATHERS.

THE following precautionary 'rules' were issued by the Royal Humane Society two years ago at the suggestion of the writer; and under the sanction of Drs. Sieveking and Christian, the medical officers of the Society, the 'advice' was posted up near all the bathing-places. The press has done good service in reprinting the rules, by which means they have become widely circulated; and it is hoped that the present publicity given to the suggestions will render them of use where they were not previously known.

1. Avoid bathing within two hours after a meal. Avoid bathing when exhausted by fatigue or from any other cause.
2. Avoid bathing when the body is cooling after perspiration; but bathe when the body is warm, provided no time is lost in getting into the water.
3. Avoid chilling the body by sitting or standing naked on the banks or in boats after having been in the water.
4. Avoid remaining too long in the water: leave the water immediately there is the slightest feeling of chilliness.
5. Avoid bathing altogether in the open air if, after having been a short time in the water, there is a sense of chilliness, with numbness of the hands and feet.
6. The vigorous and strong may bathe early in the morning on an empty stomach.
7. The young, and those that are weak, had better bathe three hours after a meal; the best time for such is from two to three hours after breakfast.
8. Those who are subject to attacks of giddiness and faintness, and those who suffer from palpitation and other sense of discomfort at the heart, should not bathe without first consulting their medical adviser.

## B.

## PERQUISITES AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

*To Head Masters and Principals.*

Allow me to call your attention to the existence of a practice, of which you may not be aware, but which there is reason to believe prevails very generally in Public Schools, and in other Educational Establishments.

I allude to presents of clothes to housekeepers and other subordinates. It is a most objectionable practice, not only because it induces extravagant habits in the pupils, but for the reason that it is capable of great abuse in various directions: tending to establish a system which, while it is prejudicial to the principles of all parties concerned, must interfere insidiously with the discipline and good order of the school; offering temptation to practise subterfuge and evasion, and affecting injuriously the comfort of homes, and the character of the boys in after life.

The evils of allowing 'gratuities' to servants in private families were, some time ago, exposed in a correspondence opened by the Duke of Sutherland, but the abuses to which the practice is liable in schools, are not less serious in their nature and extent.

As a social reformer, and in the name of all who are interested in the youth of England, I make this appeal, in order that, by an improved arrangement being carried out, the facilities that are now afforded for the disposal of property may be removed. A strict order should be issued prohibiting the gift, sale, or exchange, of any article by the scholars to any person or persons employed regularly or occasionally at the houses; each Master should be requested to see this rule carried out in his own house; the penalty of dismissal should follow an infringement of the order on the one hand, and a severe punishment should be visited upon any boy detected in transgressing the rule. At the end of each 'term' the clothes should be returned (in whatever condition), according to the numbers on the lists. The advantage of this plan is, that all opportunity for underhand dealings would be removed; moreover, the needy and deserving might benefit by such an arrangement, and left-off clothes would be available for the ragged schools, or the poor with which every neighbourhood abounds. I submit these suggestions to your thoughtful

consideration, and invoke your co-operation in this matter ; which, although apparently of minor importance in school discipline, is yet in its effects of grave significance to a large section of the community.

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## C.

The following letter is reproduced here as it refers to self-education, the most important end of all educational training. The power of using and controlling the faculties with which the individual is endowed, of cultivating the good and repressing the evil, is, above all, the right end and aim of school training ; for education does not end with the study of school-books, but perhaps really begins when school-time ends ; often boys do not see the value of the opportunities which they have had till they lose them, and then they set to work to repair, as best they can, the loss of which they at length feel sensible. This ought not to be such a common result of public-school training as it is ; and anything that can assist in forming individual character should be brought under the notice of the young by parents and teachers. For these reasons the subjoined letter may be useful in a little work of this kind.

## ATTENTION.

*To the Editor of the 'Times.'*

SIR,—Just now, when the remarks of Mr. Charles Dickens on 'attention' are very widely quoted and commented on, a few words upon the subject in your columns from an unpretending pen may not be ill-timed or out of place.

Mr. Dickens has hit the right nail on the head, a mark which the majority of parents and teachers miss. The children, in whose education they are interested in one way or the other, may be endowed with bright faculties, have quick perceptions, and pick up readily objective knowledge ; but too often they make little progress in what is termed 'book-learning' or 'subjective study, just because they are deficient in the faculty of attention or application. I must say here, by way of parenthesis, that this is a fault to be found more commonly with boys than with girls ; but the power of attention may be cultivated, it is very much under the control of the will ; and as it is such an important, indeed necessary, aid to study, Mr.

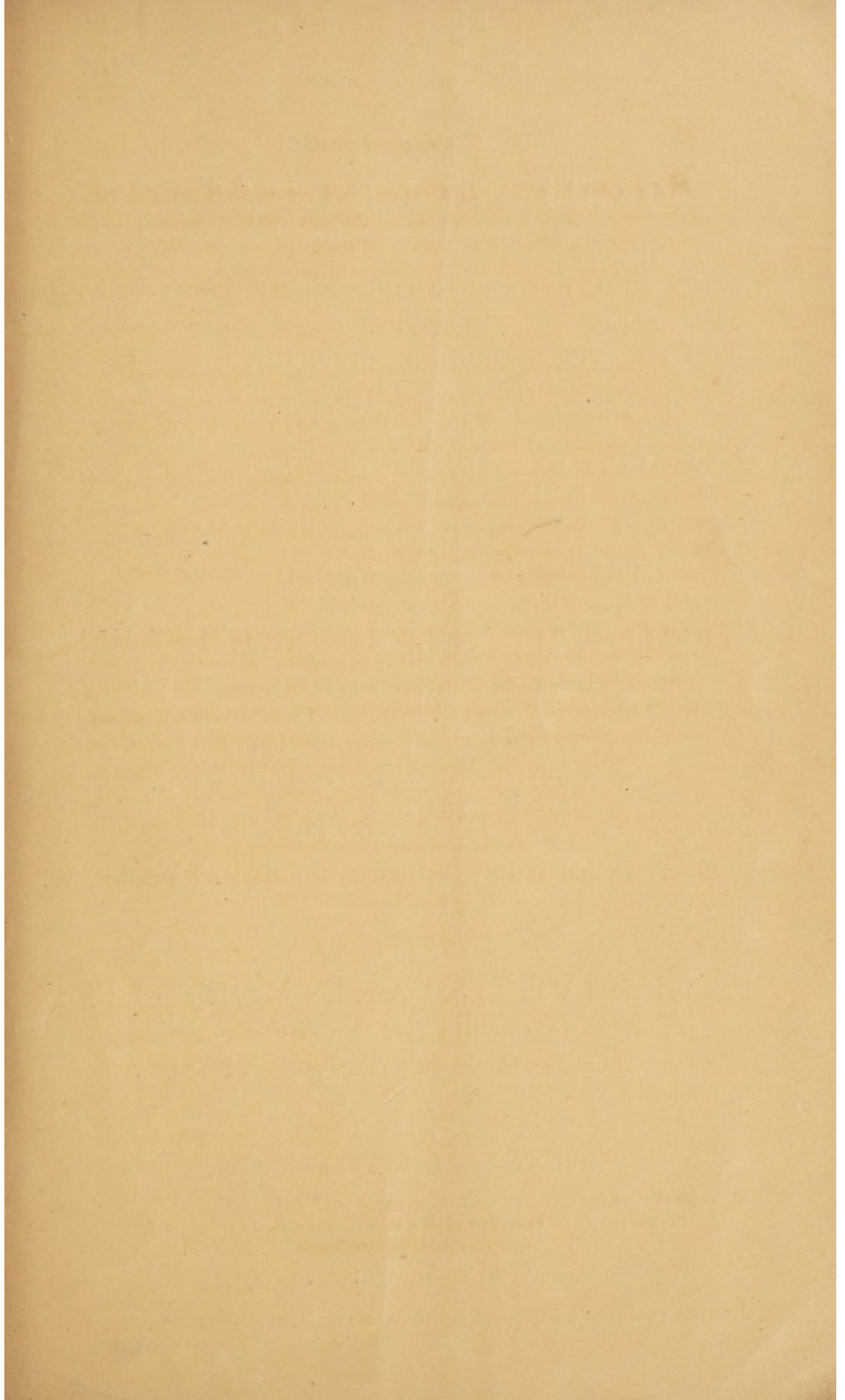
Dickens has done good service to the cause of education in giving prominence to the subject in his inaugural address at an educational institute.

I would, however, wish to carry the subject further, and venture to point out the value of 'attention' in the domain of ethics; it is a faculty of far more importance when employed as a mentor than as a mere intellectual agent or 'coach.' The following extract from a work on 'Moral and Mental Philosophy' explains my meaning so well that I will conclude my letter with the quotation:—

'Attention forms the great link between the intellectual and moral departments of our nature, or between the percipient and the pathemic departments. It is the control which the will has over this faculty that makes man responsible for the emotions which pathologically result from them. The mind can be weaned, as it were, from the influence of evil affections by the withdrawal of its thoughts from those objects which both excite and supply the means of their gratification, and by wooing the attention to other objects by which good emotions are awakened, to occupy the whole man and displace those hurtful sensibilities which war against the soul. It is thus that "attention" becomes the great instrument in moral discipline, and it is because of the command which the will possesses over this faculty that man becomes responsible for the government of his thoughts not less than of his actions. It is by the attention shifting its object that the heart shifteth its emotions; it is by looking outwardly rather than inwardly, as it were, that the mind can be set to the right object, and thus the cultivation of the dispositions to good or evil is manifestly a more simple and intelligible process than many are in the habit of conceiving it.'

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

M. A. B.



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