THE PARENTS' REVIEW:
A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.
"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

Editorial.

Is it true that the charming art of letter writing has gone out with the introduction of the half-penny post card? "There is a great deal to be said on both sides" would, doubtless, be Sir Roger de Coverley's decision; anyway, if we do not write letters, the useful little post card is not to blame. But do we not? Have we not all correspondents whose epistles are delightful in their rippling, sparkling flow of talk, with just the little touches of tenderness and confidence which make a letter a personal thing? Do we not know what it is to open an envelope with the certainty that we shall take pure delight in every line of its enclosure? Because we love the writer? Not necessarily. The morning's post may bring you an epistle from an unknown correspondent which shall captivate you, fill you with a sense of well-being for a whole day: and this, not because of the contents, but simply because the gracious courtesy of it puts you on good terms with yourself and the world. One man may refuse a favour and another grant it; and the way in which the refusal is couched may give you more pleasure than the concession.

Possibly, sincere deference is the ingredient which gives flavour to a gracious letter; and, if we do not write epistles as
charming as those of our grandfathers and grandmothers, is it because we do not think enough of one another to make a spontaneous outpouring worth while? We have become the fortunate possessors of a delightful illustration of our point. A grandmother thinks it "worth while" to pour out the happy memories of her youth solely for the delectation of her grand-daughter—the letters have come to us indirectly: our readers will, doubtless, thank us for their publication, because it rests with us to cultivate this, as all the other graces of life, with parents to cultivate this, as all the other graces of life. The children of parents living in India usually write and receive interesting letters, and this, because they are glad to make the most of the only means of knowing each other. Perhaps no opportunity of writing detailed animated letters to children should be omitted. Let them grow up with the idea that it is worth while to write good letters. That schoolboy whose correspondence for a term was comprised in two postcards, "All right." "Which train?" is not a good model, except as brevity is the soul of wit.

Does the Parents' Review incline with lingering fondness rather to the things of the past than to the eager stir of the present, the promise of the future? Not so; we appreciate to the full the joy of living in days characterised by child-like frankness, openness to conviction, readiness to try all things and choose that which is good. We have our faults—grave and depressing enough—but we are ready for better things, ready, indeed, for any great crusade if some modern Luther or Savanarola should arise and tell us the thing to do. To endeavour ourselves to the daily effort of education, to live and act, think and speak before the children so that they shall be hourly the better for all that we are, is harder, no doubt, than to make one enormous sacrifice. But even for this we shall be enabled in these inspiring days, when it seems to some of us that the people are being made willing in the day of His power. The outlook is very cheering: we begin to see that education is the elected handmaid of religion, and get stimulating glimpses of the stature of the perfect man possible to redeemed humanity.

What is possible to us, is, perhaps, most fully discerned by those in the van of educational work, whether the science or the practice of education engage them; and, it may be, that the first function of the Parents' Review is to keep parents in touch, month by month, with the opinions and discoveries of such educational leaders. But the past offers us its accumulated treasures of wisdom and experience—

"And (we) could wish (our) days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

Few things could be more disastrous (as alas, few are more imminent), than a sudden break with the traditions of the past; wherefore, a second function of the Parents' Review is, gently to knit the bonds that bind us to the generation all too rapidly dying out. Without a thought of disloyalty towards our own most earnest days, perhaps some of us feel that the cultivated men and women of the early decades of the century had more breadth and sweetness—even more delightful humour—than we perceive in our contemporaries. It is well that we gather up, with tender reverence, such fragments of their insight and experience as come in our way. The Parents' Review would fain be as an householder, bringing forth out of his treasures things new and old.

"Lose this day loitering, and 'twill be the same story
To-morrow; and the next, more dilatory;
The indecision brings its own delays,
And days are lost, lamenting of lost days."

says Goethe, who, like many of us, knew the misery of the intellectual indolence which cannot brace itself to do the next thing. Our correspondent who writes of the dilatory little girl brings a very grave question before us. No question concerning the bringing up of children can, conceivably, be trivial, but this is very important. The effort of decision, somebody says, is the greatest effort of life: not the doing of or the making up of one's mind as to which thing to the thing, but the making up of one's mind as to which thing to the thing, and the making up of one's mind as to which thing to the thing. In this, the education of the mind and person, which leads to dawdling habits. How is the dilatory child to be cured? Time? She will know better as she grows older? Not a bit of it: "And the next, more dilatory" will be

* Fante (Author's translation).
the story of her days, except for occasional spouts. Punish,
ments? No; your dilatory person is a fatalist; What can’t he
cured must be endured; he says, but he will endure without any
reward, an effort to cure. Rewards? No; to him a reward is a punishment
effectual. That panorama of the educationist,—"One
custom overcometh another." This ineravan dawdling is a
habit to be supplanted only by the contrary habit, and the
mother must devote herself for a few weeks to this cure as
steadily and unstringly as she would to the nursing of her child
through measles. Having in a few—the fewer the better—
earest words pointed out the miseries that must arise from this
fault, and the duty of overcoming it, and having so got the
(sadly feeble) will of the child on the side of right doing, she
simply sees that for weeks together the fault does not recur.
The child goes to dress for a walk; she dreams over the lacing
of her boots—the tag in her fingers poised in mid air—but her
conscience is awake; she is constrained to look up, and her
mother’s eye is upon her, hopeful and expectant. She answers to
the rein and goes on; midway, in the lacing of the second boot,
there is another pause, shorter this time; again she looks up,
and again she goes on. The pauses become fewer day by
day, the efforts steadier, the immature will is being
strengthened, the habit of prompt action acquired. After that
first talk, the mother would do well to refrain from one more
word on the subject; the eye (expectant, not reproachful), and,
where the child is far gone in a dream, the lightest possible
touch, are the only effectual instruments. By and bye, "Do you
think you can get ready in five minutes to-day without me?"
"Oh, yes, mother." "Do not say ‘yes’ unless you are quite
sure." "I will try." And she tries and succeeds. Now, the
mother will be tempted to relax her efforts—to overlook a little
dawdling because the dear child has been trying so hard. This
is absolutely fatal. The fact is, that the dawdling habit has worn
an appreciable track in the very substance of the child’s brain.
During the weeks of cure new growth has been obliterating
the old track; and the track of a new habit is being formed. To
permit any reversion to the old bad habit is to let go all this

gain. To form a good habit is the work of a few weeks; to
guard it, is a work of incessant, but by no means anxious care.
One word more,—prompt action on the child’s part should have
the reward of absolute leisure, time in which to do exactly as
she pleases, not granted as a favour, but accruing (without any
words) as a right.

Another correspondent gratifies us by taking seriously our
remarks, in the February number, about story-telling. We
do not recommend the six or the “hundred” best stories; but
hope to get a good list from various correspondents in answer
to this query; meantime, we give such a story as we think
worth studying to tell to the nestling listeners in many a sweet
“Children’s Hour.” Seeing that we owe only the pleasing
translation to our contributor, we venture to touch on some of
the points which make a tale like this worth the telling. Here
we have many graceful and artistic details; moral impulse of a
very high order, conveyed with a strong and delicate touch; 
sweet human affections, the more attractive for the slight veil of
the “Roses”; a tender, fanciful link between the children and the
flower-world; humour, pathos, righteous satire, and, last, but not
least, the fact that the story does not turn on children, and does
not foster that self-consciousness, the dawn of which in the
child is, perhaps, the individual “Fall of Man.” But children
will not take in all this? No; but let it be a canon that no
story, nor part of a story, is ever to be explained. You have
sown the seed; leave it to germinate.

“But I can’t stop thinking. I can’t make my mind sit
down!” Poor little girl! All children owe you thanks for
giving voice to their dumb woes. And we grown-up people
have so little imagination that we send a little boy with an
over-active brain to play by himself in the garden in order to
escape the fog of lessons. Little we know how the brain-people
swarm in and out and rush about!

“The human (brain) is like a millstone, turning ever round and round;
If it have nothing else to grind, it must itself be ground.”

Set the child to definite work by all means, and give him
something to grind. But, pray, let him work with things
and not with signs—the things of nature in their own place, meadow and hedgerow, woods and shore.

* * *

To cater for the intellectual food of a people is not ignoble work, and it is a good sign of the times that the publishing trade is falling more and more into the hands of men of the highest culture. But if it is well that our books should be supplied by persons of trained mind, what about the production of our newspapers—the daily bread of, shall we say, five-sixths of us? "The thing best worth living for is to be of use"; and the journalist has, practically, the education of many of us in his hands. Journalism offers a noble career to those who rank amongst the learned professions—and demands our very best and most highly-trained men. The work must, no doubt, be always arduous, but we are glad to be told that it may be entered upon without the unpleasant preliminary struggles which are likely to deter the best men from taking it up.

Art for Children.

In 1883 a society was founded in London mainly through the efforts of Miss Christie, named the Art for Schools Association. The executive committee describe their objects to be

(1) To negotiate with Art Publishers for the purchase of Engravings, Photographs, Etchings, Chromo-lithographs, &c., on advantageous terms, and to supply them at reduced prices to Schools.

(2) To reproduce Works of Art especially suitable for Schools, and to publish the same at the lowest prices possible.

(3) To lend, and occasionally give, groups of framed Engravings, Photographs, Etchings, &c., to poor Schools.

(4) To assist in, or otherwise promote, Oral instruction, such as may explain the Works of Art in our National Collections, and those supplied to Schools by the help of the Association.

Among those who patronised the Society from the commencement were Sir F. Leighton, Mr. W. Morris, Mr. Robert Browning, Mr. Matthew Arnold, Bishop Temple, and Mr. Mundella. Many schools in London, both Voluntary and Board, lost no time in availing themselves of the advantages of the Association, and before long branches were started in other towns, so that its pictures are now hanging on the walls of many class-rooms in Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham, and elsewhere.

Not a few people, who are justly reputed to possess common sense, receive a mental shock when they examine the character and quality of the works described in the Association's catalogue. It is very commonly supposed that a little child