

ARTICLE VIII.

WHAT IS IT TO BE EDUCATED?

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THERE are few words, except those relating to the ordinary affairs of life, that are more frequently used than "educated," "education," "educator," and their more or less exact equivalents. Education is one of the most vital interests,—in its best sense, the most vital interest,—with which a civilized people has to deal. Everybody who thinks at all has reflected upon it, while many more who can hardly be said to think repeat what they hear said by others. It has been a favorite theme for discussion by philosophers almost from the beginning of recorded history; it is to-day talked about by persons who have little time to consider anything but where the next meal is to come from.

Some years ago an old ex-slave came to my office to consult me about some trifling affair of business. He informed me that he could neither read nor write, and gratuitously offered the opinion that these qualifications were of no use. He had got along without them, he said, and would not send his children to school if he had his way about it. I soon learned that his opposition to what he called "eddycation" did not arise from a desire to exploit the labor of his children, since they, one after another, had left him to shift for himself, but from sheer stupidity. Notwithstanding his indifference, and apparently without being aware of the inconsistency, he informed me, in the further course of our conversation, that years ago he had accumulated a little property, but in his ignorance he had been induced to

sign papers he could not read, an act that eventually caused him the loss of all his possessions. This self-satisfied devotee at the shrine of Apathy clung to his dictum that he had got along without education, in spite of his unfortunate experience. But even he had given some thought to the subject, and reached a conclusion that coincided exactly with that of persons of whom one might expect better things.

How many men have formulated in their own minds a consistent answer to the question, What is it to be educated? or, What ought to be the end of education? All men are agreed that "we must educate"; yet, the more I listen to discussions on the subject, the more firmly I am convinced that there is a surprising lack of clearness of vision. Ten times as much thought and effort are expended on the consideration of methods of imparting knowledge as on instructing the young upon the proper use to make of knowledge. Let us examine some of the most important characteristics of the educated man.

In the first place, the educated man must be equipped with a certain amount of knowledge. This amount it is, in the nature of the case, impossible to define; but it can hardly be less than the thorough mastery of at least one subject. I cannot conceive of an educated man as knowing less than any one else in some one department. If he falls short in any considerable degree, he is pretty sure to be a mere sciolist. On the other hand, if he is thoroughly versed in one branch, he is provided with a standard for judging the relation of formulated knowledge to the whole realm of the unknown. There is very little connection between chemistry and linguistics, or between biology and law; but I am quite sure that a thorough chemist or biologist is much better able to judge what a thorough linguist or juriconsult ought to know than the man who has superficially read a hundred books on a score of different subjects. Shallowness

and education are irreconcilable contradictories. On the other hand, a specialist is not necessarily an educated man. It is often, perhaps generally, the case that men who have acquired extensive information in one or two directions by sheer force of talent, but who either, from a certain narrowness or from stress of circumstances, have hardly looked beyond the matters with which they were immediately concerned, have gained an amount of knowledge that is amazing. Yet we cannot properly call such men educated. However, there is a difference.

Some men are endowed by nature with a largeness of vision which the most careful education will not impart to others. There is a good deal of similarity between the early difficulties against which Faraday and Edison had to contend, yet I do not believe that any one would say that the latter is an educated man or that the former was not. When we look into the lives of such men as Porson and Dindorf and Westphal, men who attained the highest eminence as scholars, but whose characters were utterly despicable, we are prompted to exclaim, If such men were educated, the fewer we have of them the better.

The educated man must be able to appreciate the infiniteness of knowledge and the limitations of the human intellect. This is something quite different from the stupid amazement of the Turk or the Arab when he is shown or told anything that is beyond his comprehension. Wonder, according to Aristotle, is the first cause of philosophy. But if wonder ends where it begins, or almost where it begins, as it does with most persons, it never leads to any change of mental attitude. Wonder, curiosity, inquiry and research, knowledge,—this is the order in which the mental states follow each other, though there are few who pass through them all to that which is the highest of all.

In the next place, the educated man must recognize that edu-

education is a life-process. If it can be truly said of a person that he received his education at some particular school, you may be quite sure that he is not educated. This is to put education on a level with handicraft. When an artisan has acquired a certain amount of skill, it may be said that he has learned his trade; but it cannot be said of a young man, after he has put a certain number of elementary facts and simple relations in his mind, that he has been educated. Unfortunately this erroneous view is held by the great majority of people. The truth of the position that education is a life-process has been recognized by thinkers for twenty-five hundred years. If it were not for the extraordinary imperviousness to new ideas and the inherent averseness to the labor of thinking, that has characterized the human race from time immemorial, this doctrine would long ago have become the common property of mankind, instead of the conviction of the chosen few. When Socrates, at the age of seventy, was in prison, and had but one day more to live, his friend Crito besought him to do certain things that were in conflict with principles both of them had professed for many years because they had reached the conclusion that they were founded on truth. To this suggestion the old man replied: "For more than half a lifetime I have held to these principles, and have lived in accordance therewith. But if you have any new facts or arguments to present, I shall gladly listen to them, and shall not hesitate to change my views in accordance with them." Here we have the supreme type of the educated man, the man who is just as eager to learn in old age and on the last day of his life as at any former time. Such a man may sometimes be in the wrong, but he can never turn his face permanently from the right.

The man who reaches a point in his mental development where he thinks his education complete, where he knows

enough, belongs to the same type with the old ex-slave of whom I have spoken above. The prime characteristic of the educated man is not the amount of knowledge; it is his attitude toward all knowledge. Another characteristic of the educated man is persistence in magnanimous aims. No matter what a man's religious belief may be, he must recognize the existence and force of a moral law; and, further, that he is one of the agencies through which it is to be made effective. I do not see how any one can have read sufficient history to have penetrated into the underlying spirit that manifests itself in human actions, without becoming convinced that three-fourths of all the sorrows, of all the losses, of all the woes, of all the pains, bodily and mentally, that men have suffered and still suffer, are due to infringements of this law. Many men recognize this who are not educated, but it does not often influence their conduct. They reason thus: "The world is bad, and men are supremely selfish; hence so much misery. But why concern ourselves about it? Let us slip through as easily as we can. One person is, after all, able to do very little." The educated man, though he recognizes the evil, takes no such nonchalant attitude. He knows that he can diminish the world's misfortunes appreciably. I quote here an appropriate passage from Masterman's "Tennyson as a Religious Teacher": "Recognize that evil possesses a real existence, and we can assail it, and pass our lives in conflict with it; but for support in this combat, and for a motive in the long day's struggle, we must also maintain our faith in the reality of goodness, and the unity of the world, and the ultimate triumph of righteousness. And although, intellectually, we may have no glimmerings of a possible harmony; yet if we are faithful to our belief we may find other reasons for adhering to it. Doubts will still trouble us, but deep in the human heart there will arise a conviction which no logical

argument can destroy, a confident apprehension that 'all is well.'"

This is very good and very encouraging. But it may well be doubted that the intellect has no glimmerings of a possible harmony. If such be the case, modern education, which is becoming more and more intellectual, is moving in the wrong direction. The study of history and biography, the records of the human race, is a purely intellectual process. If there is one lesson that we meet at every turn, it is that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that righteousness exalteth a nation, small as the scale is on which it has been tried. The saddest feature of this lesson is that the way of those who do not transgress is made hard by the base and unrighteous.

I cannot understand how an educated man can seek to carry a point by falsehood, or by half-truths, or by a trick, or repudiate a promise, or pretend to be what he is not, or profess not to be what he is. To this, some one may reply: But you are not asking more of the educated man than you have a right to ask of everybody else. True; yet I suppose most of us know men of extensive information who are as dishonest as pickpockets, though in a different way. If education does not make this world a more desirable place to live in by a constantly increasing ratio, I know nothing else that will do so. If this earth is to be a huge athletic field, in which is to be played, without ceasing, a colossal game of grab; and if education is only to sharpen men's wits so that each one may carry off the largest share of booty,—the less we have of it the better. When we remember that the material good things, as they are called, which we can enjoy in this life, are limited in quantity, and that the intellectual, spiritual, and moral blessings within the reach of every one are unlimited, it ought not to take an enlightened person very long to decide which of the two he will choose.

If I were asked whom I consider the best-educated man of recent times, I should of course have to name some one whose career was well known, and whose life was passed in the full glare of publicity. To make one's judgment in such a case worth considering, it must be passed upon a man whose life was sufficiently conspicuous to enable every intelligent person to test its correctness. It would be hard to recall the name of any man who more nearly fulfills ideal requirements than the late W. E. Gladstone. Though he began life with strong inherited convictions, he never hesitated to change his opinions after further inquiry. I know it has been said, by his detractors, that he was on all sides of every question. Not only is this not true, but his career was consistent from first to last. If he changed his views, it was always for good and sufficient reasons. He was in no sense a trimmer, since he never changed sides merely for the purpose to be with the winners. He was indifferent to public applause as the word is usually understood. Such was his prescience and such the depth of his convictions, so forceful his way of stating them, that he carried public opinion whither he wished. To some persons his ultra-orthodox creed was an anachronism. Such persons do well to remember that this creed had to do with transcendental problems,—problems for which there is no final solution in sight. Mr. Gladstone was no bigot. He willingly accorded to those who differed with him the same right that he claimed for himself. While his native land was always first in his affections, he never sought her aggrandizement by the sacrifice of justice and right. He was a firm believer in the doctrine that what is ethically wrong cannot be politically advantageous. Notwithstanding his intense and untiring activity in behalf of the public welfare, he ranked high as a man of letters and as a scholar. As an orator no man of his day surpassed him;

indeed, it is doubtful whether any one equaled him. Notwithstanding his sixty years in public life, and in spite of the temptations to which his probity was exposed, no breath of mercenary motives ever attached to his name. The same is true of his private life, for it was, from first to last, untouched by a whisper of a scandal. No doubt many of his contemporaries in all civilized lands were as genuinely patriotic, just, honorable, large-hearted, and altruistic as he; all that is here claimed for him is that he was the highest type of what the educated class ought to stand for. No man could be more untiring in the quest for truth or more valiant in its defense. No man of his day so happily blended the scholar and the citizen.

In marked contrast with this notable and noble Englishman was his German contemporary, Bismarck. Both men were equally able; but how different the principles according to which they regulated their public acts! A statesman of supreme ability whose career is shaped by the maxim, "My country, right or wrong," may for a time accomplish great results; but history is a standing witness to the transitoriness, relatively speaking, of such greatness. Few thinking men will deny that the policy of brute force put into effect by the Iron Chancellor has already brought untold ills on Germany, and has done much to demoralize the politics of the world. Who will have to pay the heaviest penalty? The educated man ought to take part in politics, or, perhaps it is better to say, in government. It is evident that, with the strongly marked tendency of all governments to increase the sum of intelligence in its citizens, political morality can be promoted only in case the educated take an interest in civic affairs. The importance of this position is clearly seen in the results that flowed from the attitude taken by Socrates and his disciples, the attitude of total abstinence. He was guilty of holding what, at least in our time,

must be considered a fundamental error, that morals and politics, or government and morality, can always be kept apart, and are necessarily at variance. The fate of ancient Greece was so lamentable, because almost all of her philosophers stood aloof, and permitted her affairs to be managed by unscrupulous self-seekers. To some extent the Romans were wiser; at least they discriminated more clearly the connection intelligence had with the welfare of the community. But too many of her best men were office-seekers, and the office-seeker must almost always cater to the ignorant or unscrupulous. Moreover, the ignorant in Rome so largely outnumbered the intelligent, that the influence of those who were both enlightened and patriotic kept constantly growing smaller. The government took no interest in promoting popular intelligence. The result was inevitable.

It is especially true of democracies, that where political morality is at a low ebb it is due to men who sacrifice morals for political preferment. The saying is both trite, and confirmed by experience, that the private morality of the office-seeker and the office-holder is generally higher than his public morality. He must have some virtues in order to win. By the very constitution of his being, man must live in society. He cannot be merely gregarious; he must be social. So, too, every upright citizen must contribute more to the state than he receives from it. Wherever he comes in contact with its functions, he must improve and elevate. The educated man not only comes in touch with a larger number of activities than his fellow whose intellectual equipment is less complete, but his influence is greater. As the educated man will recognize the active relation which he occupies to the government, he will not be content to be the mere passive scholar or thinker; he will not be content to know what has happened or is happening, or to

fathom men's motives; he will also try to influence their conduct. He will not be a recluse either by his own choice or that of his fellow-citizens. He will not be like the scientist, who has a mere academic interest in disease; he will be the physician, whose chief aim is to prevent or cure.

Samuel Johnson was unquestionably the most learned Englishman of the eighteenth century. He had a larger stock of information well in hand than any other man of his time. But his whimsicalities, his rude tongue, his disgusting personal habits, his utter inability to comprehend the other point of view, preclude his admission into the rank of the educated in the best sense of the word. Yet, on the whole, Dr. Johnson's influence was good. His most disagreeable traits were personal, while his words and his moral example were wholesome. It has recently been asserted by several competent judges, that to one of three men, or to the trio combined, it was due that the iconoclastic spirit which found such violent expression in the French Revolution never gained a foothold in England. These three men were Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, and John Wesley.

In our generation we have seen two men of fine literary tastes, extensive information though in a different domain, whose influence upon society was almost zero. These men were Thoreau and Ruskin: the former dominated by the most radical individualism, the latter by an unpractical mediævalism. Such men are a misfit everywhere; and while the authority of their writings may be elevating within a limited sphere, personal contact with them could profit but little. If a state is at all conceivable in which such men constituted a majority, there could be no progress, because no coöperation. On the other hand, if those in authority were passive, anarchists like Tolstoi, unquestionably the greatest literary man of our

time, the result would be different. By his endeavor to carry out in practice the categorical imperative, or, to express it more simply, the Golden Rule, he is merely acting on a principle every upright citizen observes so far as he can; though perhaps Tolstoi has reached a goal which for most men is yet a long way off, possibly forever unattainable.

What attitude towards his constituents the genuinely educated man who is a candidate for an elective office should take is not easy to define. The writer has in mind an instance where such a man was defeated for an important office by another who is every way his inferior, because he emphatically refused to have anything to do with a pot-house politician who could be ignored only at the price of defeat. We must live under some sort of government, and too often we are compelled to choose between an unfit candidate and one who is more unfit. No one will deny that there are now among us, as there have always been, men holding high elective offices who were chosen solely because of popular confidence in their ability and integrity; but unfortunately such men are few.

Worse than government by unfit men is the vicious methods often employed in the management of educational institutions from the country school to the university. Men are made presidents and superintendents and principals who are fit neither by education nor character nor aims. Some of these persons would probably not commend their methods, but they justify their actions by the plea that success is above everything else; and so they make use of the means that will insure what they call success. Besides, it is easy to find teachers in plenty who take the position that it is not their business to look after the morals of those who come to them for instruction, but only to impart knowledge.

If it be objected that the standard here set up for education

is so high as to be forever unattainable, except for a small minority, I admit its validity so far as we are able to divine the future. The same objection has been made against Christianity for nearly two thousand years; yet the church does not despair or relax its efforts. If the object of all instruction, of all the energy put forth for the enlightenment of the world, is to promote the largest good for the greatest number, education can aim at nothing less than is here proposed. Such a goal can be reached, or even more or less closely approached, only by combining the widest knowledge with the will to use it for the good of those about us. We cannot do better than to keep constantly before our minds some wise words of the late Thomas H. Huxley: "We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner we can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than when we entered it. To do this effectually it is necessary to be possessed of only two beliefs: The first, that the order of nature is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited; the second, that our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events."