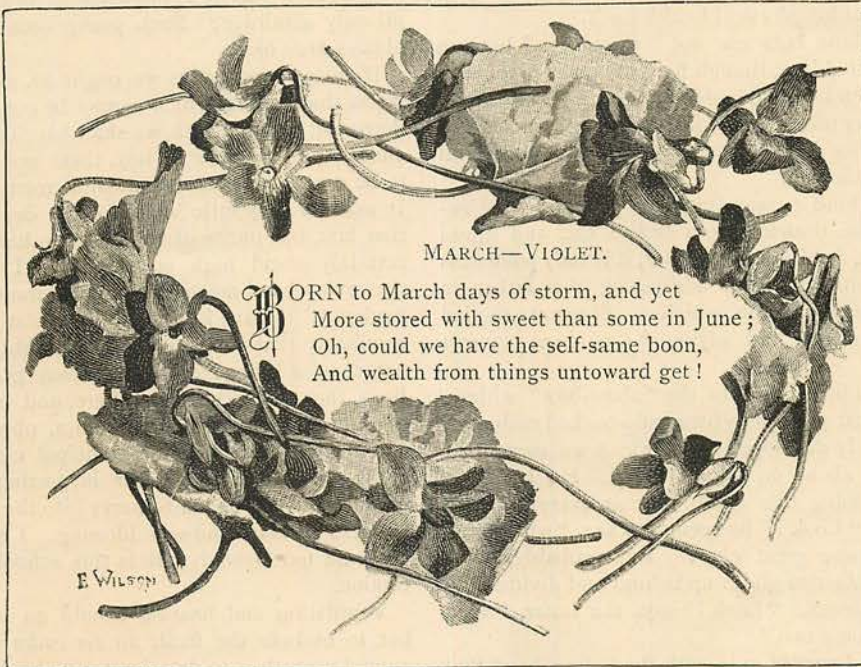


FLOWERS OF THE MONTHS.



IS THE SCHOOL HEALTHY?

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



PARENTS in middle-class society—and to them this paper is chiefly addressed—most naturally, and almost invariably, desire to give their children not only the best education possible, but one which shall best fit them for entering the arena of life with a fair chance of doing well. They are pleased when their boys give proof that they are intelligent, and stand in the foremost ranks of their class-mates. And there are few, indeed, who can afford to

forget the advantages bestowed on youth by a liberal education, for most of us work-a-day people have had struggles in life ourselves, which we are not likely to forget.

It would be well if all parents would look upon education as a mental and physical training for a campaign not very far distant and upon which their children must embark. If we would not have them soon lose heart and sink in the struggle, we ought to train and arm them well for the conflict. At school they are like youthful soldiers who have never seen a shot fired in anger, and who are apt to despise because they do not understand many of the technicalities they have to master; but who, whether

well or ill-trained, must go forward to fight when the enemy appears. As commanders, therefore, have to think for their young soldiers, so must we think for our children. We are neglecting our duty if we do not, and our thinking must have reference to the possible future that is before the lads. What are they fit for? What had they best be? are questions on which no one, whether writer or teacher, can give advice in the aggregate.

I feel tempted here to drift into a consideration of some of the various educational systems of our country. To do so, however, is not my province. Let me only say that nearly all have their faults, nearly all aim at too much and lose firm grip of the little that is needful, and that all should be supplemented by home training and well-planned parental guidance.

It is a teacher's chief object at most schools to bring his pupils well forward in the branches of education which form the chief features of the seminary. He loves to see them shine, and if any are more earnest and clever than others, he will take a pride in those, and hurry them on, to the delight as often as not of the parents themselves. The boy himself will become enamoured of display, he will enter into the fun of being considered "a fine scholar," and will probably end in imagining himself a genius.

Is there a career for such a boy? It is doubtful. I know of no sadder spectacle than that of a show school-boy, who has had one part of his brains educated not only at the expense of all the other parts, but at the expense of his physical health itself.

Parents whose lads are not "show-boys," but are steady and plodding, though fond of a fair amount of play, yet given to wonder sometimes what they would like to be, may take comfort in remembering that there once was a race between a hare and a tortoise, and we know which won.

When the fond parent drags the pale-faced "show-boy" into the drawing-room before me, and draws him out a bit, I assure you, reader, it is only politeness which prevents me from addressing the father in *Dominie Sampson Latin*, which at all events the lad would understand, and saying "*Cui bono, amicus meus?*"

I never am introduced to the "show-boy" without thinking of that poor puny little pale-backed crab, with one enormously developed claw, which we sometimes see crawling about on the wet sand. He keeps on defiantly snapping this great claw at everybody and everything. "Look!" he seems to say, "what I can do with my one great claw." But probably, some warty old crustacean glides up behind and divides him into several pieces. "Look!" says the latter, "what I can do with my two."

And the sad part of it is with the "show-boy" that as often as not, before he can make his way in life, he has to throw off his one great claw, and grow another that will balance his other powers more equally.

Well, then, I should advise that all boys should be educated with a view, and that no attempt should be made to force a growth of brain at the expense of physical power.

It must not, however, be imagined that I affect to despise the ground-work of a good education. No, for we *must* till the field, we *must* plough and harrow before we sow the seed, keeping at the same time the "*Cui bono?*" well before our eyes.

Few parents, I suppose, will be surprised to know that the stomach has a deal to do with a young man's success in life. He may be very clever, he may have had the very best of starts on his voyage through life; but if he has no physical ballast, if his blood-making process is at fault, he is but a fine-weather sailor after all, the first rough-and-tumble sea he enters will stop his head-way, and discourage, if it doesn't demoralise him. The veriest old Dutch lugger, with less bow than a bum-boat, may carry more good cargo, fight heavier weather, and get into harbour sooner than a badly-ballasted barque of clipper-build, carrying everything new in the shape of rigging that modern science can devise.

Parents are often too ambitious for their boys, and like to see their boys ambitious for themselves. Indeed, ambition is often the only kind of home education a lad receives. But there are two kinds of ambition; one is noble, the other is but a species of discontent. Can the life of that young man be envied

who rushes on through it, elbowing every one around him, despising everything near him, his eyes and thoughts fixed immutably on some bright "to be," which recedes as he approaches it, and turns out after all only a mirage? Such young men never *are* but always *to be* blest.

If now we regard, as we ought to, all education as worse than useless which cannot be conducted without detriment to the health, we shall have to admit that, in choosing a school for a boy, there are several things to be considered besides possible mental attainments. It matters very little which of the desiderata I mention first, but purity of air in the school-room should certainly stand high on the list. I think, indeed, that every head-master should be more or less of a hygienist. I have in my mind's eye at this moment a seminary, that has a good and probably well-merited name as a village or rather town grammar-school. Boys, they say, get on well there, and certainly plenty of time is devoted to calisthenics, play-ground drill, and field games; but the principal class-room is so badly ventilated, that after inspecting it for three minutes, I was obliged to hurry into the open air, and felt glad an east wind was blowing. I am not putting the case too strongly, nor is this school a solitary exception.

Ventilation and heating should go hand in hand, but to exclude the fresh air for sake of conserving animal warmth is to deteriorate the health of the children. I do not wonder at pupils who have to sit in such class-rooms being prone to catch colds when they come out for the day, or suffering from dyspepsia, lassitude, and general weariness. Nor do I wonder that infection if once introduced should spread therein like wild-fire.

"My boy is worked too hard, he is not thriving," I heard a parent say the other day. The boy certainly was not thriving, but the work had nothing whatever to do with it. What boy, I wonder, can feel fit for work, or otherwise than drowsy and stupid, who has to sit in a class-room all day from which pure air is all but excluded, breathing carbonic acid gas mixed with exhalations?

There should be in all schools a proper system of ventilation, conducted on scientific principles, and regulated according to the temperature of the out-door air. No boy need sit in a draught for his own sake, nor should he be allowed to enter a school-room with damp or steaming clothes, for the sake of his neighbours as well as himself.

The situation or site of the school is most important. Wherever new schools are being built this is now-a-days never lost sight of; but before sending their children to old schools, parents should make inquiry, not only as regards the site, but the drainage and sewerage, and the *water*.

I put the last word in italics to show its importance. The hardness or softness of the water is of course to be considered; but the distance of the well from a cesspool is a matter of far greater moment. *Verbum sap.* A word and a half to the wise.

The bed-rooms, or dormitories, should be large,

bright and airy; there ought to be a window for each bed, and ventilation of these places is not second in importance to even that of the school-room itself. And I feel quite certain if class-rooms and dormitories were more hygienically pure than the generality of them are, we should hear far less about boys suffering from ill-health through over-work. We ought to put the saddle on the right horse.

As to over-work itself, I am one of those who believe it is far more rare than parents imagine, still we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are children who make a drudgery of their tasks, and allow their school duties to interfere with and dominate all their waking hours, and disturb or even banish sound refreshing sleep. The reasons for this may be of different kinds; the child himself may be of a highly nervous disposition; he may be clever, and yet not appear to be so, while possessing at the same time a mental dread of being thought a dunce. In such a case a change of study often acts like a charm. Find out what particular branch is detestable to him and hurts him most, and if not essential to his future well-being, let it be avoided by all means. There are many things taught at school which are useful only as a kind of mental drill, and if distasteful to a boy they can only act injuriously.

On the other hand, the teacher himself may be a hard task-master, not intentionally unkind, but the system of stimulating boys' minds to work by the offer of prizes, &c., is sometimes quite as injurious to them as the old-fashioned use of the cane was. In

fact the result is about the same; thirty years ago the teachers said to their pupils "Go!" now they say "Come!"

But if there be any particular branch of study which gives a boy pleasure, remember that this should be looked upon as pastime and encouraged. Music, for instance, natural history, mathematics.

Long hours in school fatigue, worry, and debilitate children; they not only do not learn much when so confined, but the health is actually injured, and that too just at the time nature needs all the resources she can muster for growth of body and mind.

Exercise in the fresh air is most important. School-drill is good in its way; but quite independent of this a boy or girl either should have several hours of the day to call his or her own, and in which unfettered freedom can really be enjoyed. For no exercise that is exacting in its requirements is healthful in the true sense of the word.

Rest, however, is as necessary as exercise. Do not imagine that a boy sitting in a chair or lying in bed is resting. He may be, but it is very unlikely; I would rather say he was resting while running after butterflies or picking wild-flowers in a wood.

Great attention should be paid to the eye-sight. On this subject I must crave the Editor's permission to speak another day; meanwhile, let me close the present paper by urging on parents the necessity of wholesome, strengthening, easily-digested food, and a due allowance of sleep. Early to bed may be a good rule, but I really have serious doubts about the much-vaunted benefits of early rising in boyhood.

HOW WE GIRLS EARNED OUR LIVING.

A MATTER-OF-FACT ROMANCE.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

ELLEN had always had the knack of hitting off the general outline of anybody's figure and dress with a pencil, and had often amused us by it. If she met a friend or acquaintance in a new mantle and bonnet, and wanted to tell Auntie Puss about it, she always illustrated her description with the point of a pencil on the back of an envelope or any odd scrap of paper, and she really could give exactly the *pose* of the head or any peculiarity of figure, so that her queer sketches were quite recognisable.

As Mr. Wilson had taken such a kind interest in me, it was quite natural that he should, from time to time, hear and see something of Ellen's talent, such as it was, but he had not much sympathy with it. He pointed out to her that the arms she drew were out of all proportion with the heads, that her figures did not stand straight on their feet, and that she gave what were, comparatively speaking, inches of bodice to yards of skirt. These were egregious faults, and besides, there was no art at all in that kind of drawing. He

very kindly lent her studies of ears and eyes, heads and arms, but Nellie could do nothing with them, or perhaps I ought to say she did not really try; for the older I get the more I believe that what is called genius is an infinite capacity for hard work, and a vast amount of the quality for which true-born Britons are famed—never knowing when they are beaten.

I really was beginning to earn a nice little sum, a pound or twenty-five shillings a week, as far as I remember, and Ellen and the twins had not advanced a single step. They mended my clothes as well as their own, and helped auntie in the house, and they all did their best to be cheerful, but it was rather difficult. Winter boots and stockings were wanted, and the dear aunt's kind face was troubled when she thought of the impending Christmas rent and taxes, and how little cash she should have left after paying them.

The flowers I painted at Mrs. Mason's became more and more easy to me, and she liked the way I arranged them, and often consulted me more than others when we had to consider the decoration of a room