FLOWERS OF THE MONTHS.

MARCH—VIOLET.

ORN to March days of storm, and yet
More stored with sweet than some in June;
Oh, could we have the self-same boon,
And wealth from things untoward get!

IS THE SCHOOL HEALTHY?

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.

AREN'TS 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, ambicus
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
despire 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
demoralize 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, carry-
ing 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 ex-
ception.

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 chil-
dren. 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,
hussitude, 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 steamy clothes, for the sake of his neigh-
bours 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,
How we Girls Earned Our Living.

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 Pass 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 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.