

ASPECTS OF EDUCATION.

HUMANISM.—II.

HUMANISM, in the hands of Sturm and his followers, was at least intelligible and masculine. Although it was founded upon a narrow basis, its aims were clear and honest. In the next two hundred years, humanistic teaching was to undergo an influence of a very different character, which, maintaining the outward show, changed the substance and turned what was a modified blessing into a decided curse. The Jesuit schools founded in the sixteenth century obtained so much vogue in the seventeenth and eighteenth, that they influenced the whole of European education, Protestant as well as Catholic. They had one title to respect, and one only. They were the first to bring the individual teacher face to face with the individual pupil. Whatever their objects may have been, and whatever were the ends for which they intended to use their influence, there can be no doubt that they did from the first what they still do,—attempt to study the workings of each individual mind and the beat of each single heart. Here their merit ends. They desired that the hearts of their pupils should be devoted to them, and not to humanity, and that their minds should never move out of the limits which they themselves should fix. Humanism lay ready to their hand. Here was a subject on which infinite ingenuity might be expended and endless time wasted. To become a complete master of the style of Cicero, Horace, or Ovid, might take a lifetime; yet the result was showy: few could understand its merit or the processes by which it was reached. To declaim on speech-day a long *alcaic* ode on the immaculate Virgin, or to turn the Song of Solomon into the language of Ovid's 'Art of love,' was an achievement which all might admire. The Jesuits were the inventors of that bane of humanistic education, the exaggerated reverence paid to Latin verse composition. What can be a worse training for the human mind? A mind is called well trained in language when it can conceive accurately the idea which it wishes to express, and can express that idea in language which no one can misunderstand. The whole theory of original Latin verse composition is opposed to this. The pupil is set to write a copy of verses on a set subject, be it spring or winter, autumn or summer. His notion of what he should say is very hazy, but under pressure he will write down twenty so-called ideas for twenty lines of Latin verse. To expand these he will have recourse to his *gradus*, a book which the Jesuits have the credit of inventing. He will there find so-called synonymes of the Latin words he has chosen, which cannot really express the same

sense, for in any language very few pairs of words are to be found with precisely the same meaning. If his synonymes are insufficient for the purpose, he will fill up the line with epithets chosen from the *gradus*, not because they are just, or appropriate, or needful, but because they scan. If these are not enough, his handbook will furnish him with phrases of greater length, bearing more or less upon the subject, and even with entire verses which he may introduce, so far as he can do so without fear of detection. To spend much time on this process is to play and juggle with the human mind, to make pretence at thought when there is no thought at all, to mark time instead of marching, to work a treadmill that grinds no corn, to weave a web which must be perpetually unravelled; yet in the latter half of the eighteenth century we see original Latin verses the chosen task of school-boys and a too frequent pastime for statesmen.

Let us not condemn all composition in dead languages. To turn the masterpieces of modern poetry into an exact Greek or Latin equivalent may be the worthy occupation of the best-trained scholars. It has more than once happened that the copy has been more poetical, more musical, more worthy, than the original itself. Nor is imitation of any literature which we are studying to be despised. The Italian sonnets of Arthur Hallam, the French lyrics of Swinburne, if not genuine poetry, are at least precious fruits of the poetical mind. But if these fruits are to be produced at all, it is necessary that they should be produced without compulsion. Train your scholar in the best examples of Greek and Latin, let him study Virgil, Homer, and the Greek tragedians night and day, show him all the poetry they contain, let him compare them with the best productions of his native tongue, and the probability is, that, if he has any creative faculty, he will begin to imitate and will write Greek and Latin verses without coercion. But set him down on a form with fifty other boys, and bid him write poetry on a subject for which he does not care, in a language which he does not understand and which is often unfitted to the thoughts which he has to express, guide him by mechanical rules, and assist him with mechanical handbooks: you will then find that what ought to have been a pleasure has been a barren toil, and that his mind is dulled by the effort. Even at the present day, after all that has been written against Latin verses by those who are most fit to judge, they hold an inordinate place in English classical education, and give us good reason to pass the strongest condemnation on the sect which introduced them.

The falseness of Jesuit principles of education

goes further than this. They can best be judged on the great annual festival when the parents are invited to see the triumphs of their children. Speeches in different languages are delivered by children of various ages, often with a pathos that draws tears from those who hear them: this is a good part of their training. The head boy reads out the list of those who have gained prizes. After reciting a string of names, he suddenly pauses, thus attracting the attention of all present. The prefect of studies, who stands behind him, comes to his rescue, and utters the boy's own name, which he has been too modest to pronounce himself. Had he repeated it among the others, it would have attracted no attention, but the modesty which avoided the appearance of self-laudation was used to extort the applause of the multitude.

The boys are examined *viva voce*. Nothing can be more fair. Any one at random is asked to take a Virgil or Sophocles, to submit any passage for translation, and to ask any questions he pleases. If the examiner does his work honestly, he soon finds what a mistake he has made. He submits a passage for translation. The boy makes a mistake; the examiner stops him. The boy blunders; the examiner insists upon a correct translation, which takes a long time in coming. There is general discomfort and confusion. The whole sympathy of the audience is with the good-looking ingenuous youth on the platform, and not with the bald-headed pedant who is examining him. The examiner asks a question; the boy answers it wrong. As often as the examiner rejects the answer given to him, so often does the impatience of the audience arise against the stupid man who does not know how to ask questions that the boys can answer.

If the Jesuits had no faults of their own, they at least deserve the condemnation of posterity for suppressing their rivals the Jansenists, who offered to France the best opportunity of receiving a humanistic education devoted to the noblest ends. The object of the distinguished men who founded the little schools of Port Royal was exactly the opposite to that of their Jesuit rivals. They desired to make the moral character of their pupils strong and independent, and to train their intellects from the first in the severe studies of close and logical reasoning. In the individual attention they gave to their pupils, they were superior even to the Jesuits. The whole number of children that passed through their schools was small; and no teacher was allowed to have charge of more than five or six, while the masters were thus able to study the characters and capacities of their pupils in the minutest details. Pains were always

taken to avoid undue familiarity. Between the pupils themselves, as between their professors, there was to reign a dignified and temperate courtesy, removed equally from sickly sentimentality and from rough and boisterous good-fellowship. The grammar of Port Royal was not a collection of rules to be learned by heart, but a treatise on logic, which forms the basis of all grammar. Where rules or examples had, of necessity, to be learned, they were, in disregard of precedent, placed in such a form as to be most easily remembered. The Jansenists were guilty of another innovation which gave a great handle to their opponents. They taught the dead languages of antiquity from the living tongue of their own France. What impiety, said the Jesuits, thus to vulgarize studies which ought never to be presented to us without solemn and even sacred associations! We hear little or nothing in the Port Royal schools of the cultivation of Latin verses. The air which they breathed was too bracing for that trivial exercise. On the other hand, they did great service to the study of Greek. It is true that the Jesuits maintained Greek as a prominent study in their schools, which the University of Paris had been compelled to surrender by the clamor of parents. Yet the 'Garden of Greek roots,' an attempt to popularize the study by imparting the most necessary knowledge of Greek in French verses, remained for a long time a standard school-book, and was used for that purpose by so careful and exact a scholar as the historian Gibbon. If the Jansenist schools had been suffered to exist, they might have profoundly affected not only the course of study in France, but the minds and characters of Frenchmen. European nations, in following the French models of excellence which reigned without dispute before the French revolution, might have had a more masculine type held up for their admiration. This, however, was not to be; and French literature, impregnated with Ciceronianism, had been but slightly touched with the chastening influences of Hellenic studies or of logical precision.

Humanism has undergone many changes in the last generation, and it is difficult to forecast its future. The position which it held in education after the revival of learning was due to two opinions about it, which were believed very generally, but not always very consistently. On the one hand, it was thought to be the best gymnastic for the mind, the best mechanical exercise which the human faculties could be put through. On the other hand, the literatures of Greece and Rome, which were the subject-matter of humanism, were regarded as absolutely the things best worth study, not only from their intrinsic merit,

but from their forming the best introduction to all modern studies. Not many years ago modern geography was taught in the most distinguished of English schools by what was called a comparative atlas and a comparative geography-book. Ancient geography was taught first as the thing most needful, and modern names were only dealt with as the correlatives of ancient ones. A good English style was supposed to be acquired from the study of classics. Latin verses formed the best introduction to English poetry; Latin themes were the best method of learning all general information. Even now at our universities many people would maintain that the science of modern statesmanship could not be better learned than from Aristotle's 'Politics.' Both these points of view have suffered rude shocks. Undoubtedly from considerations which were indicated above, Greek and Latin, and Greek especially, do form an admirable training for the mind. Latin grammar is more precise, more logical, and in these respects harder, than the grammars of modern languages. The Greeks were probably the most gifted people who ever lived, and their language was adapted in a wonderful manner to express most perfectly their most subtle thoughts. To a mature scholar, who recognizes every shade of his meaning, Thucydides will appear untranslatable. The words as he puts them down, whether grammatical or not, express precisely what he intends to say, with a vividness and a directness which cannot be surpassed. To express all that he would tell us in English would require long clumsy paraphrases, and even these would not express it altogether. The effort made by a modern mind to follow in its subtlest folds every sinuosity of the thought of Plato or Aristotle is in itself a very valuable training; but to profit by this training, a considerable standard in the languages must have been reached, and as years go on, the number who reach this standard is fewer and fewer. The foundations have been undermined, boys and parents avoid the trouble of learning dead languages, and teachers are ready to escape the trouble of teaching them. The result is, that only the chosen minority are in the position of profiting by a training which was once universal; and these have such distinguished and apprehensive intellects that they would almost always make a training for themselves.

If humanism has suffered by the growth of a disbelief in its powers as a gymnastic, there is no sign that its intrinsic worth is rated less highly than it was. Indeed, as we begin to appreciate more exactly the necessary elements of culture, our respect for humanism grows greater. We are told that there are two great elements in modern civilization, — Hebraism and Hellenism. There is

no fear at present that the first will not be well looked after. No Christian country is without an efficient church establishment; and the training of the clergy in all their several degrees, who are the chosen guardians of Hebraism, is more extensive and more satisfactory than in previous generations. Take away Hebraism, and the most valuable part of our intellectual furniture which remains is Hellenism. That can only be preserved by the combined efforts of all those who are indebted to it, and who have learned its value. This is the special function of schools and universities. It is remarkable that each attack made on the study of Greek has produced some new effort to make the study of Hellenism more general. The establishment of the English Hellenic society was the direct result of an attempt to exclude Greek from the entrance examinations of the university. The growth of science has been coincident with the revival of acted Greek plays, both in England and America. The dead languages which were once revered as a training are now valued for what they can teach us; and scholarship is defined, not as the art of interchanging in the most ingenious manner the idioms of the Greek, Latin, and English languages, but as the calling-back to life of the Hellenic world in all its branches. Hellenism need not always mean the study of Greek life and thought. Egyptian culture preceded Hellenic culture. The Greeks went to study in the schools of Egypt, as the Romans frequented the universities of Greece, and as the English visit those of Germany. As the learning of the Egyptians, whatever it may have been, has been absorbed for our purposes partly by Hellenism and partly by Hebraism, so Hellenism itself may be absorbed, so far as it deserves to be, by modern literature. One who knew Milton by heart would be no poor Hebraist, and he who possessed the whole of Goethe would be no mean Hellenist. But this time has not yet arrived, if humanism suffers now from a slight obscuration, due to its unfortunate attempt to claim too much mastery over the human mind; yet there is no fear of its being materially obscured, and the assistance which it may yet render the human race, in her search after the good, the beautiful, and the true, should command the sympathy, and stimulate the efforts, of every man to whom those objects are dear.

OSCAR BROWNING.

SCHOOLS IN EGYPT.

THE report of the minister of public instruction for 1875 shows a total of 4,817 schools in Egypt, with 6,045 teachers and 140,977 students. Of these, 4,685 schools and 3 so-called universities