

## THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENTS.

## A SECOND EPISTLE TO DOLOROSUS.

So you are already mending, my dear fellow? Can it be that my modest epistle has done so much service? Are you like those invalids in Central Africa, who, when the medicine itself is not accessible, straightway swallow the written prescription as a substitute, inwardly digest it, and recover? No,—I think you have tested the actual *materia medica* recommended. I hear of you from all directions, walking up hills in the mornings and down hills in the afternoons, skimming round in wherries like a rather unsteady water-spider, blistering your hands upon gymnastic bars, receiving severe contusions on your nose from cricket-balls, shaking up and down on hard-trotting horses, and making the most startling innovations in respect to eating, sleeping, and bathing. Like all our countrymen, you are plunging from one extreme to the other. Undoubtedly, you will soon make yourself sick again; but your present extreme is the safer of the two. Time works many miracles; it has made Louis Napoleon espouse the cause of liberty, and it may yet make you reasonable.

After all, that advice of mine, which is thought to have benefited you so greatly, was simply that which Dr. Abernethy used to give his patients: "Don't come to me,—go buy a skipping-rope." If you can only guard against excesses, and keep the skipping-rope in operation, there are yet hopes for you. Only remember that it is equally important to preserve health as to attain it, and it needs much the same regimen. Do not be like that Lord Russell in Spence's Anecdotes, who only went hunting for the sake of an appetite, and who, the moment he felt any sensation of vitality in the epigastrium, used to turn short round, exclaiming, "I have found it!" and ride home from the finest chase. It

was the same Lord Russell, by the way, who, when he met a beggar and was implored to give him something, because he was almost famished with hunger, called him a happy dog, and envied him too much to relieve him. From some recent remarks of your boarding-house hostess, my friend, I am led to suppose that you are now almost as well off, in point of appetite, as if you were a beggar; and I wish to keep you so.

How much the spirits rise with health! A family of children is a very different sight to a healthy man and to a dyspeptic. What pleasure you now take in yours! You are going to live more in their manner and for their sakes, henceforward, you tell me. You are to enter upon business again, but in a more moderate way; you are to live in a pleasant little suburban cottage, with fresh air, a horse-railroad, and good schools. For I am startled to find that your interest in your offspring, like that of most American parents, culminates in the school-room. This important matter you have neglected long enough, you think, foolishly absorbed in making money for them. Now they shall have money enough, to be sure, but wisdom in plenty. Angelina shall walk in silk attire, and knowledge have to spare. To which school shall you send her? you ask me, with something of the old careworn expression, pulling six different prospectuses from your pocket. Put them away, Dolorosus; I know the needs of Angelina, and I can answer instantly. Send the girl, for the present at least, to that school whose daily hours of session are the shortest, and whose recess-times and vacations are of the most formidable length.

No, anxious parent, I am not joking. I am more anxious for your children than you are. On the faith of an ex-teacher and ex-school-committee-man,—for what

respectable middle-aged American man but has passed through both these spheres of uncomfortable usefulness?—I am terribly in earnest. Upon this point asserted,—that the merit of an American school, at least so far as Angelina is concerned, is in inverse ratio to the time given to study,—I will lay down incontrovertible propositions.

Sir Walter Scott, according to Carlyle, was the only perfectly healthy literary man who ever lived,—in fact, the one suitable text, he says, for a sermon on health. You may wonder, Dolorous, what Sir Walter Scott has to do with Angelina, except to supply her with novel-reading, and with passages for impassioned recitation, at the twilight hour, from the “*Lady of the Lake*.” But that same Scott has left one remark on record which may yet save the lives and reasons of greater men than himself, more gifted women (if that were possible) than Angelina, if we can only accept it with the deference to which that same healthiness of his entitles it. He gave it as his deliberate opinion, in conversation with Basil Hall, that five and a half hours form the limit of healthful mental labor for a mature person. “This I reckon very good work for a man,” he said,—adding, “I can very seldom reach six hours a day; and I reckon that what is written after five or six hours’ hard mental labor is not good for much.” This he said in the fulness of his magnificent strength, and when he was producing, with astounding rapidity, those pages of delight over which every new generation still hangs enchanted.

He did not mean, of course, that this was the maximum of possible mental labor, but only of wise and desirable labor. In later life, driven by terrible pecuniary involvements, he himself worked far more than this. Southey, his contemporary, worked far more,—writing, in 1814, “I cannot get through more than at present, unless I give up sleep, or the little exercise I take (walking a mile and back, after breakfast); and, that hour excepted, and my meals, (barely the meals, for

I remain not one minute after them,) the pen or the book is always in my hand.” Our own time and country afford a yet more astonishing instance. Theodore Parker, to my certain knowledge, has often spent in his study from twelve to seventeen hours daily, for weeks together. But the result in all these cases has sadly proved the supremacy of the laws which were defied; and the nobler the victim, the more tremendous the warning retribution.

Let us return, then, from the practice of Scott’s ruined days to the principles of his sound ones. Supposing his estimate to be correct, and five and a half hours to be a reasonable limit for the day’s work of a mature brain, it is evident that even this must be altogether too much for an immature one. “To suppose the youthful brain,” says the recent admirable report by Dr. Ray, of the Providence Insane Hospital, “to be capable of an amount of work which is considered an ample allowance to an adult brain is simply absurd, and the attempt to carry this fully into effect must necessarily be dangerous to the health and efficacy of the organ.” It would be wrong, therefore, to deduct less than a half-hour from Scott’s estimate, for even the oldest pupils in our highest schools; leaving five hours as the limit of real mental effort for them, and reducing this, for all younger pupils, very much farther.

It is vain to suggest, at this point, that the application of Scott’s estimate is not fair, because the mental labor of our schools is different in quality from his, and therefore less exhausting. It differs only in being more exhausting. To the robust and affluent mind of the novelist, composition was not, of itself, exceedingly fatiguing; we know this from his own testimony; he was able, moreover, to select his own subject, keep his own hours, and arrange all his own conditions of labor. And on the other hand, when we consider what energy and genius have for years been brought to bear upon the perfecting of our educational methods,—how thoroughly our best schools are now

graded and systematized, until each day's lessons become a Procrustes-bed to which all must fit themselves,—how stimulating the apparatus of prizes and applauses, how crushing the penalties of reproof and degradation,—when we reflect, that it is the ideal of every school, that the whole faculties of every scholar should be concentrated upon every lesson and every recitation from beginning to end, and that anything short of this is considered partial failure,—it is not exaggeration to say, that the daily tension of brain demanded of children in our best schools is altogether severer, while it lasts, than that upon which Scott based his estimate. But Scott is not the only authority in the case; let us ask the physiologists.

So said Horace Mann, before us, in the days when the Massachusetts school system was in process of formation. *He* asked the physiologists, in 1840, and in his next Report printed the answers of three of the most eminent. The late Dr. Woodward, of Worcester, promptly said, that children under eight should never be confined more than one hour at a time, nor more than four hours a day; and that, if any child showed alarming symptoms of precocity, it should be taken from school altogether. Dr. James Jackson, of Boston, allowed the children four hours' schooling in winter and five in summer, but only one hour at a time, and heartily expressed his "detestation of the practice of giving young children lessons to learn at home." Dr. S. G. Howe, reasoning elaborately on the whole subject, said, that children under eight should not be confined more than half an hour at a time,—“by following which rule, with long recesses, they can study four hours daily”; children between eight and fourteen should not be confined more than three-quarters of an hour at a time, having the last quarter of each hour for exercise in the playground,—and he allowed six hours of school in winter, or seven in summer, solely on condition of this deduction of twenty-five per cent. for recesses.

Indeed, the one thing about which doc-

tors do *not* disagree is the destructive effect of premature or excessive mental labor. I can quote you medical authority for and against every maxim of dietetics beyond the very simplest; but I defy you to find one man who ever begged, borrowed, or stole the title of M.D., and yet abused those two honorary letters by asserting, under their cover, that a child could safely study as much as a man, or that a man could safely study more than six hours a day. Most of the intelligent men in the profession would probably admit, with Scott, that even that is too large an allowance in maturity for vigorous work of the brain.

Taking, then, five hours as the reasonable daily limit of mental effort for children of eight to fourteen years, and one hour as the longest time of continuous confinement, (it was a standing rule of the Jesuits, by the way, that no pupil should study more than two hours without relaxation,) the important question now recurs, To what school shall we send Angelina?

Shall we send her, for instance, to Dothegirls' Hall? At that seminary of useful knowledge, I find by careful inquiry that the daily performance is as follows, at least in summer. The pupils rise at or before five, A. M.; at any rate, they study from five to seven, two hours. From seven to eight they breakfast. From eight to two they are in the school-room, six consecutive hours. From two to three they dine. From three to five they are “allowed” to walk or take other exercise,—that is, if it is pleasant weather, and if they feel the spirit for it, and if the time is not all used up in sewing, writing letters, school politics, and all the small miscellaneous duties of existence, for which no other moment is provided during day or night. From five to six they study; from six to seven comes the tea-table; from seven to nine study again; then bed and (at least for the stupid ones) sleep.

Eleven solid hours of study each day, Dolorous! Eight for sleep, three for meals, two during which out-door exer-

cise is "allowed." There is no mistake about this statement; I wish there were. I have not imagined it; who could have done so, short of Milton and Dante, who were versed in the exploration of kindred regions of torment? But as I cannot expect the general public to believe the statement, even if you do,—and as this letter, like my previous one, may accidentally find its way into print,—and as I cannot refer to those who have personally attended the school, since they probably die off too fast to be summoned as witnesses,—I will come down to a rather milder statement, and see if you will believe that.

Shall we send her, then, to the famous New York school of Mrs. Destructive? This is recently noticed as follows in the "Household Journal":—"Of this most admirable school, for faithful and well-bred system of education, we have long intended to speak approvingly; but in the following extract from the circular the truth is more expressively given:—From September to April the time of rising is a quarter before seven o'clock, and from April to July half an hour earlier; then breakfast; after which, from eight to nine o'clock, study,—the school opening at nine o'clock, with reading the Scriptures and prayer. From nine until half past twelve, the recitations succeed one another, with occasional short intervals of rest. From half past twelve to one, recreation and lunch. From one to three o'clock, at which hour the school closes, the studies are exclusively in the French language. . . . From three to four o'clock in the winter, but later in the summer, exercise in the open air. There are also opportunities for exercise several times in the day, at short intervals, which cannot easily be explained. From a quarter past four to five o'clock, study; then dinner, and soon after, tea. From seven to nine, two hours of study; immediately after which all retire for the night, and lights in the sleeping apartments must be extinguished at half past nine.'" You have summed up the total already, Dolorosus; I see it on your lips;—nine—hours—

and—a quarter of study, and one solitary hour for exercise, not counting those inexplicable "short intervals which cannot easily be explained!"

You will be pleased to hear that I have had an opportunity of witnessing the brilliant results of Mrs. Destructive's system, in the case of my charming little neighbor, Fanny Carroll. She has lately returned from a stay of one year under that fashionable roof. In most respects, I was assured, the results of the school were all that could be desired; the mother informed me, with delight, that the child now spoke French like an angel from Paris, and handled her silver fork like a seraph from the skies. You may well suppose that I hastened to call upon her; for the gay little creature was always a great pet of mine, and I always quoted her with delight, as a proof that bloom and strength were not monopolized by English girls. In the parlor I found the mother closeted with the family physician. Soon, Fanny, aged sixteen, glided in,—a pale spectre, exquisite in costume, unexceptionable in manners, looking in all respects like an exceedingly used-up belle of five-and-twenty. "What were you just saying that some of my Fanny's symptoms were, Doctor?" asked the languid mother, as if longing for a second taste of some dainty morsel. The courteous physician dropped them into her eager palm, like sugar-plums, one by one: "Vertigo, headache, neuralgic pains, and general debility." The mother sighed once genteelly at me, and then again, quite sincerely, to herself;—but I never yet saw an habitual invalid who did not seem to take a secret satisfaction in finding her child to be a chip of the old block, though block and chip were both wofully decayed. However, nothing is now said of Miss Carroll's returning to school; and the other day I actually saw her dashing through the lane on the family pony, with a tinge of the old brightness in her cheeks. I ventured to inquire of her, soon after, if she had finished her education; and she replied, with a slight tinge of satire, that she studied regularly every day, at

various "short intervals, which could not easily be explained."

Five hours a day the safe limit for study, *Dolorosus*, and these terrible schools quietly put into their programmes nine, ten, eleven hours; and the deluded parents think they have out-manœuvred the laws of Nature, and made a better bargain with Time. But these are private, exclusive schools, you may say, for especially favored children. We cannot afford to have most of the rising generation murdered so expensively; and in our public schools, at least, one thinks there may be some relaxation of this tremendous strain. Besides, physiological reformers had the making of our public system. "A man without high health," said Horace Mann, "is as much at war with Nature as a guilty soul is at war with the spirit of God." Look first at our Normal Schools, therefore, and see how finely their theory, also, presents this same lofty view.

"Those who have had much to do with students, especially with the female portion," said a Normal School Report a few years since, "well know the sort of martyr-spirit that extensively prevails,—how ready they often are to sacrifice everything for the sake of a good lesson,—how false are their notions of true economy in mental labor, . . . . sacrificing their physical natures most unscrupulously to their intellectual. Indeed, so strong had this passion for abuse become [in this institution], that no study of the laws of the physical organization, no warning, no painful experiences of their own or of their associates, were sufficient to overcome their readiness for self-sacrifice." And it appears, that, in consequence of this state of things, circulars were sent to all boarding-houses in the village, laying down stringent rules to prevent the young ladies from exceeding the prescribed amount of study.

Now turn from theory to practice. What was this "prescribed amount of study" which these desperate young females persisted in exceeding in this model school? It began with an hour's study

before daylight (in winter),—a thing most dangerous to eyesight, as multitudes have found to their cost. Then from eight to half past two, from four to half past five, from seven to nine,—with one or two slight recesses. Ten hours and three quarters daily, *Dolorosus*! as surely as you are a living sinner, and as surely as the Board of Education who framed that programme were sinners likewise. I believe that some Normal Schools have learned more moderation now; but I know also what forlorn wrecks of womanhood have been strewn along their melancholy history, thus far; and at what incalculable cost their successes have been purchased.

But it is premature to contemplate this form of martyrdom for Angelina, who has to run the gantlet of our common schools and high schools first. Let us consider her prospects in these, carrying with us that blessed maxim, five hours' study a day,—"*Nature loves the number five*," as Emerson judiciously remarks,—for our ægis against the wiles of schoolmasters.

The year 1854 is memorable for a bomb-shell then thrown into the midst of the triumphant school-system of Boston, in the form of a solemn protest by the city physician against the ruinous manner in which the children were overworked. Fact, feeling, and physiology were brought to bear, with much tact and energy, and the one special point of assault was the practice of imposing out-of-school studies, beyond the habitual six hours of session. A committee of inquiry was appointed. They interrogated the grammar-school teachers. The innocent and unsuspecting teachers were amazed at the suggestion of any excess. Most of them promptly replied, in writing, that "they had never heard of any complaints on this subject from parents or guardians"; that "most of the masters were watchful upon the matter"; that "none of them pressed out-of-school studies"; while "the general opinion appeared to be, that a moderate amount of out-of-school study was both necessary for the prescribed course of study and wholesome in its in-

fluence on character and habits." They suggested that "commonly the ill health that might exist arose from other causes than excessive study"; one attributed it to the use of confectionery, another to fashionable parties, another to the practice of "chewing pitch,"—anything, everything, rather than admit that American children of fourteen could possibly be damaged by working only two hours a day *more* than Walter Scott.

However, the committee thought differently. At any rate, they fancied that they had more immediate control over the school-hours than they could exercise over the propensity of young girls for confectionery, or over the improprieties of small boys who, yet immature for tobacco, touched pitch and were defiled. So by their influence was passed that immortal Section 7 of Chapter V. of the School Regulations,—the Magna Charta of childish liberty, so far as it goes, and the only safeguard which renders it prudent to rear a family within the limits of Boston:—

"In assigning lessons to boys to be studied out of school-hours, the instructors shall not assign a longer lesson than a boy of good capacity can acquire by an hour's study; but no out-of-school lessons shall be assigned to girls, nor shall the lessons to be studied in school be so long as to require a scholar of ordinary capacity to study out of school in order to learn them."

It appears that since that epoch this rule has "generally" been observed, "though many of the teachers would prefer a different practice." "The rule is regarded by some as an uncomfortable restriction, which without adequate reason (!) retards the progress of pupils." "A majority of our teachers would consider the permission to assign lessons for study at home to be a decided advantage and privilege." So say the later reports of the committee.

Fortunately for Angelina and the junior members of the house of Dolorosus, you are not now directly dependent upon Boston regulations. I mention them on-

ly because they represent a contest which is inevitable in every large town in the United States where the public-school system is sufficiently perfected to be dangerous. It is simply the question, whether children can bear more brain-work than men can. Physiology, speaking through my humble voice, (the personification may remind you of the days when men began poems with "Inoculation, heavenly maid!") shrieks loudly for five hours as the utmost limit, and four hours as far more reasonable than six. But even the comparatively moderate "friends of education" still claim the contrary. Mr. Bishop, the worthy Superintendent of Schools in Boston, says, (Report, 1855,) "The time daily allotted to studies may very properly be extended to seven hours a day for young persons over fifteen years of age"; and the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, in his recent volume, seems to think it a great concession to limit the period for younger pupils to six.

And we must not forget, that, frame regulations as we may, the tendency will always be to overrun them. In the report of the Boston sub-committee to which I have referred, it was expressly admitted that the restrictions recommended "would not alone remedy the evil, or do much toward it; there would still be much, and with the ambitious too much, studying out of school." They ascribed the real difficulty "to the general arrangements of our schools, and to the strong pressure from various causes urging the pupils to intense application and the masters to encourage it," and said that this "could only be met by some general changes introduced by general legislation." Some few of the masters had previously admitted the same thing: "The pressure from without, the expectations of the committee, the wishes of the parents, the ambition of the pupils, and an exacting public sentiment, do tend to stimulate many to excessive application, both in and out of school."

This admits the same fact, in a different form. If these children have half



their vitality taken out of them for life by premature and excessive brain-work, it makes no difference whether it is done in the form of direct taxation or of indirect,—whether they are compelled to it by authority or allured into it by excitement and emulation. If a horse breaks a blood-vessel by running too hard, it is no matter whether he was goaded by whip and spur, or ingeniously coaxed by the Hibernian method of a lock of hay tied six inches before his nose. The method is nothing,—it is the pace which kills. Probably the fact is, that for every extra hour directly required by the teacher, another is indirectly extorted in addition by the general stimulus of the school. The best scholars put on the added hour, because they are the best,—and the inferior scholars, because they are not the best. In either case the excess is destructive in its tendency, and the only refuge for individuals is to be found in a combination of fortunate dulness with happy indifference to shame. But is it desirable, my friend, to construct our school-system on such a basis that safety and health shall be monopolized by the stupid and the shameless?

Is this magnificent system of public instruction, the glory of the world, to turn out merely a vast machine for grinding down Young America, just as the system of middle-men, similarly organized, has ground down the Irish peasantry? Look at it! as now arranged, committees are responsible to the public, teachers to committees, pupils to teachers,—all pledged to extract a maximum crop from childish brains. Each is responsible to the authority next above him for a certain amount, and must get it out of the victim next below him. Constant improvements in machinery perfect and expedite the work; improved gauges and metres (in the form of examinations) compute the comparative yield to a nicety, and allow no evasion. The child cannot spare an hour, for he must keep up with the other children; the teacher dares not relax, for he must keep up with the other schools; the committees must only stimulate, not

check, for the eyes of the editors are upon them, and the municipal glory is at stake: every one of these, from highest to lowest, has his appointed place in the tread-mill and must keep step with the rest; and only once a year, at the summer vacation, the vast machine stops, and the poor remains of childish brain and body are taken out and handed to anxious parents (like you, Dolorosus): —“Here, most worthy tax-payer, is the dilapidated residue of your beloved Angelina; take her to the sea-shore for a few weeks, and make the most of her.”

Do not you know that foreigners, coming from the contemplation of races less precociously intellectual, see the danger we are in, if we do not? I was struck by the sudden disappointment of an enthusiastic English teacher, (Mr. Calthrop,) who visited the New York schools the other day and got a little behind the scenes. “If I wanted a stranger to believe that the Millennium was not far off,” he said, “I would take him to some of those grand ward-schools in New York, where able heads are trained by the thousand. I spent four or five days in doing little else than going through these truly wonderful schools. I staid more than three hours in one of them, wondering at all I saw, admiring the stately order, the unbroken discipline of the whole arrangements, and the wonderful quickness and intelligence of the scholars. That same evening I went to see a friend, whose daughter, a child of thirteen, was at one of these schools. I examined her, and found that the little girl could hold her own with many of larger growth. ‘Did she go to school to-day?’ asked I. ‘No,’ was the answer, ‘she has not been for some time, as she was beginning to get quite a serious curvature of the spine; so now she goes regularly to a gymnastic doctor!’”

I am sure that we have all had the same experience. How exciting it was, last year, to be sure, to see Angelina at the grammar-school examination, multiplying mentally 351,426 by 236,145, and announcing the result in two minutes and

thirteen seconds as 82,987,492,770! I remember how you stood trembling as she staggered under the monstrous load, and how your cheek hung out the red flag of parental exultation when she came out safe. But when I looked at her colorless visage, sharp features, and shiny consumptive skin, I groaned inwardly. It seemed as if that crop of figures, like the innumerable florets of the whiteweed, now overspreading your paternal farm, were exhausting the last vitality from a shallow soil. What a pity it is that the Deity gave to these children of ours bodies as well as brains! How it interferes with thorough instruction in the languages and the sciences! You remember the negro-trader in "Uncle Tom," who sighs for a lot of negroes specially constructed for his convenience, with the souls left out? Could not some of our school-committees take measures to secure the companion set, possessing merely the brains, and with the troublesome bodies conveniently omitted?

The truth is, that we Americans, having overcome all other obstacles to the universal education of the people, have thought to overcome even the limitations imposed by the laws of Nature; and so we were going triumphantly on, when the ruined health of our children suddenly brought us to a stand. Now we suddenly discover, that, in the absence of Inquisitions, and other unpleasant Old-World tortures, our school-houses have taken their place. We have outgrown war, we think; and yet we have not outgrown a form of contest which is undeniably more sanguinary, since one-half the community actually die, under present arrangements, before they are old enough to see a battle-field,—that is, before the age of eighteen. It is an actual fact, that, if you can only keep Angelina alive up to that birthday, even if she be an ignoramus, she will at least have accomplished the feat of surviving half her contemporaries. Can there be no Peace Society to check this terrific carnage? Dolorous, rather than have a child of mine die, as I have recently heard of a

child's dying, insane from sheer overwork, and raving of algebra, I would have her come no nearer to the splendors of science than the man in the French play, who brings away from school only the general impression that two and two make five for a creditor and three for a debtor.

De Quincey wrote a treatise on "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts," and it is certainly the fine art which receives most attention in our schools. "So far as the body is concerned," said Horace Mann of these institutions, "they provide for all the natural tendencies to physical ease and inactivity as carefully as though paleness and languor, muscular enervation and debility, were held to be constituent elements in national beauty." With this denial of the body on one side, with this tremendous stimulus of brain on the other, and with a delicate and nervous national organization to begin with, the result is inevitable. Boys hold out better than girls, partly because they are not so docile in school, partly because they are allowed to be more active out of it, and so have more recuperative power. But who has not seen some delicate girl, after five consecutive hours spent over French and Latin and Algebra, come home to swallow an indigestible dinner, and straightway settle down again to spend literally every waking hour out of the twenty-four in study, save those scanty meal-times,—protracting the labor, it may be, far into the night, till the weary eyes close unwillingly over the slate or the lexicon,—then to bed, to be vexed by troubled dreams, instead of being wrapt in the sunny slumber of childhood,—waking unrefreshed, to be reproached by parents and friends with the nervous irritability which this detestable routine has created?

For I aver that parents are more exacting than even teachers. It is outrageous to heap it all upon the pedagogues, as if they were the only apostolical successors of him whom Charles Lamb lauded, "the much calumniated good King Herod." Indeed, teachers have no objec-



tion to educating the bodies of their small subjects, if they can only be as well paid for it as for educating their intellects. But, until recently, they have never been allowed to put the bodies into the bill. And as charity begins at home, even in a physiological sense,—and as their own children's bodies required bread and butter,—they naturally postponed all regard for the physical education of their pupils until the thing acquired a marketable value. Now that the change is taking place, every schoolmaster in the land gladly adapts himself to it, and hastens to insert in his advertisement, "Especial attention given to physical education." But what good does this do, so long as parents are not willing that time enough should be deducted from the ordinary tasks to make the athletic apparatus available,—so long as it is regarded as a merit in pupils to take time from their plays and give it to extra studies,—so long as we exult over an inactive and studious child, as Dr. Beattie did over his, that "exploits of strength, dexterity, and speed" "to him no vanity or joy could bring," and then almost die of despair, like Dr. Beattie, because such a child dies before us? With girls it is far worse. "Girls, during childhood, are liable to no diseases distinct from those of boys," says Salzmann, "except the disease of education." What mother in decent society, I ask you, who is not delighted to have her little girl devote even Wednesday and Saturday afternoons to additional tasks in drawing or music, rather than run the risk of having her make a noise somewhere, or possibly even soil her dress? Papa himself will far more readily appropriate ten dollars to this additional confinement than five to the gymnasium or the riding-school. And so, beset with snares on every hand, the poor little well-educated thing can only pray the prayer recorded of a despairing child, brought up in the best society,—that she might "die and go to heaven and play with the Irish children on Saturday afternoons."

And the Sunday Schools coöperate

with the week-day seminaries in the pious work of destruction. Dolorous, are all your small neighbors hard at work in committing to memory Scripture texts for a wager,—I have an impression, however, that they call it a prize,—consisting of one Bible? In my circle of society the excitement runs high. At any tea-drinking, you may hear the ladies discussing the comparative points and prospects of their various little Ellens and Harriets, with shrill eagerness; while their husbands, on the other side of the room, are debating the merits of Ethian Allen and Flora Temple, the famous trotting-horses, who are soon expected to try their speed on our "Agricultural Ground." Each horse, and each girl, appears to have enthusiastic backers, though the Sunday-School excitement has the advantage of lasting longer. From inquiry, I find the state of the field to be about as follows:—Fanny Hastings, who won the prize last year, is not to be entered for it again; she damaged her memory by the process, her teacher tells me, so that she can now scarcely fix the simplest lesson in her mind. Carry Blake had got up to five thousand verses, but had such terrible headaches that her mother compelled her to stop, some weeks ago; the texts have all vanished from her brain, but the headache unfortunately still lingers. Nelly Sanborn has reached six thousand, although her anxious father long since tried to buy her off by offering her a new Bible twice as handsome as the prize one: but what did she care for that? she said; she had handsome Bibles already, but she had no intention of being beaten by Ella Prentiss. Poor child, we see no chance for her; for Ella has it all her own way; she has made up a score of seven thousand one hundred texts, and it is only three days to the fatal Sunday. Between ourselves, I think Nelly does her work more fairly; for Ella has a marvellous ingenuity in picking out easy verses, like Jack Horner's plums, and valuing every sacred sentence, not by its subject, but by its shortness. Still, she is bound to win.

"How is her health this summer?" I asked her mother, the other day.

"Well, her verses weigh on her," said the good woman, solemnly.

And here I pledge you my word, Dolorousus, that to every one of these statements I might append, as Miss Edgeworth does to every particularly tough story,—"*N. B. This is a fact.*" I will only add that our Sunday-School Superintendent, who is a physician, told me that he had as strong objections to the whole thing as I could have; but that it was no use talking; all the other schools did it, and ours must; emulation was the order of the day. "Besides," he added, with that sort of cheerful hopelessness peculiar to his profession, "the boys are not trying for the prize much, this year; and as for the girls, they would probably lose their health very soon, at any rate, and may as well devote it to a sacred cause."

Do not misunderstand me. The supposed object in this case is a good one, just as the object in week-day schools is a good one,—to communicate valuable knowledge and develop the powers of the mind. The defect in policy, in both cases, appears to be, that it totally defeats its own aim, renders the employments hateful that should be delightful, and sacrifices the whole powers, so far as its influence goes, without any equivalent. All excess defeats itself. As a grown man can work more in ten hours than in fifteen, taking a series of days together, so a child can make more substantial mental progress in five hours daily than in ten. Your child's mind is not an earthen jar, to be filled by pouring into it; it is a delicate plant, to be wisely and healthfully reared; and your wife might as well attempt to enrich her mignonette-bed by laying a Greek Lexicon upon it as try to cultivate that young nature by a top-dressing of Encyclopædias. I use the word on high authority. "Courage, my boy!" wrote Lord Chatham to his son, "only the Encyclopædia to learn!"—and the cruel diseases of a lifetime repaid Pitt for the forcing. I do not object to

the severest *quality* of study for boys or girls;—while their brains work, let them work in earnest. But I do object to this immoderate and terrific *quantity*. Cut down every school, public and private, to five hours' total work *per diem* for the oldest children, and four for the younger ones, and they will accomplish more in the end than you ever saw them do in six or seven. Only give little enough at a time, and some freshness to do it with, and you may, if you like, send Angelina to any school, and put her through the whole programme of the last educational prospectus sent to me,—"*Philology, Pantomology, Orthology, Aristology, and Linguistics.*"

For what is the end to be desired? Is it to exhibit a prodigy, or to rear a noble and symmetrical specimen of a human being? Because Socrates taught that a boy who has learned to speak is not too small for the sciences,—because Tiberius delivered his father's funeral oration at the age of nine, and Marcus Aurelius put on the philosophic gown at twelve, and Cicero wrote a treatise on the art of speaking at thirteen,—because Lipsius is said to have composed a work the day he was born, meaning, say the commentators, that he began a new life at the age of ten,—because the learned Licetus, who was brought into the world so feeble as to be baked up to maturity in an oven, sent forth from that receptacle, like a loaf of bread, a treatise called "*Gonopsychanthropologia*,"—is it, therefore, indispensably necessary, Dolorousus, that all your pale little offspring shall imitate these? Spare these innocents! it is not their fault that they are your children,—so do not visit it upon them so severely. Turn, Angelina, ever dear, and out of a little childish recreation we will yet extract a great deal of maturer wisdom for you, if we can only bring this deluded parent to his senses.

To change the sweet privilege of childhood into weary days and restless nights,—to darken its pure associations, which for many are the sole light that ever brings them back from sin and despair to

the heaven of their infancy,—to banish those reveries of innocent fancy which even noisy boyhood knows, and which are the appointed guardians of its purity before conscience wakes,—to abolish its moments of priceless idleness, saturated with sunshine, blissful, aimless moments, when every angel is near,—to bring insanity, once the terrible prerogative of maturer life, down into the summer region of childhood, with blight and ruin;—all this is the work of our folly, Dolorous, of our miserable ambition to have our unconscious little ones begin, in their very infancy, the race of desperate ambition, which has, we admit, exhausted prematurely the lives of their parents.

The worst danger of it is, that the moral is written at the end of the fable, not the beginning. The organization in youth is so dangerously elastic, that the result of these intellectual excesses is not seen until years after. When some young girl incurs spinal disease for life from some slight fall which she ought not to have felt for an hour, or some businessman breaks down in the prime of his years from some trifling over-anxiety which should have left no trace behind, the popular verdict may be, “Mysterious Providence”; but the wiser observer sees the retribution for the folly of those mispent days which enfeebled the childish constitution, instead of ripening it. One of the most admirable passages in the Report of Dr. Ray, already mentioned, is that in which he explains, that, though hard study at school is rarely the immediate cause of insanity, it is the most frequent of its ulterior causes, except hereditary tendencies. “It diminishes the conservative power of the animal economy to such a degree, that attacks of disease, which otherwise would have passed off safely, destroy life almost before danger is anticipated. Every intelligent physician understands, that, other things being equal, the chances of recovery are far less in the studious, highly intellectual child than in one of an opposite description. The immediate mischief may have seemed slight, but the brain is left in a

condition of peculiar impressibility, which renders it morbidly sensitive to every adverse influence.”

Indeed, here is precisely the weakness of our whole national training thus far,—brilliant immediate results, instead of wise delays. The life of the average American is a very hasty breakfast, a magnificent luncheon, a dyspeptic dinner, and no supper. Our masculine energy is like our feminine beauty, bright and evanescent. As enthusiastic travellers inform us that there are in every American village a dozen girls of sixteen who are prettier than any English hamlet of the same size can produce, so the same village undoubtedly possesses a dozen very young men who, tried by the same standard, are “smarter” than their English peers. Come again fifteen years after, when the Englishmen and Englishwomen are reported to be just in their prime, and, lo! those lovely girls are sallow old women, and the boys are worn-out men,—with fire left in them, it may be, but fuel gone,—retired from active business, very likely, and just waiting for consumption to carry them off, as one waits for the omnibus.

To say that this should be amended is to say little. Either it must be amended, or the American race fails;—there is no middle ground. If we fail, (which I do not expect, I assure you.) we fail disastrously. If we succeed, if we bring up our vital and muscular developments into due proportion with our nervous energy, we shall have a race of men and women such as the world never saw. Dolorous, when in the course of human events you are next invited to give a Fourth-of-July Oration, grasp at the opportunity, and take for your subject “Health.” Tell your audience, when you rise to the accustomed flowers of rhetoric as the day wears on, that Health is the central luminary, of which all the stars that spangle the proud flag of our common country are but satellites; and close with a hint to the plumed emblem of our nation, (pointing to the stuffed one which will probably be exhibited on the platform,)

that she should not henceforward confine her energies to the hatching of short-lived eaglets, but endeavor rather to educate a few full-grown birds.

As I take it, Nature said, some years since,—“Thus far the English is my best race ; but we have had Englishmen enough ; now for another turning of the globe, and a step farther. We need something with a little more buoyancy than the Englishman ; let us lighten the ship, even at the risk of a little peril in the process. Put in one drop more of nervous fluid and make the American.” With that drop, a new range of promise opened on the human race, and a lighter, finer, more highly organized type of man-

kind was born. But the promise must be fulfilled through unequalled dangers. With the new drop came new intoxication, new ardors, passions, ambitions, hopes, reactions, and despairs,—more daring, more invention, more disease, more insanity,—forgetfulness, at first, of the old, wholesome traditions of living, recklessness of sin and saleratus, loss of refreshing sleep and of the power of play. To surmount all this, we have got to fight the good fight, I assure you, Dolorosus. Nature is yet pledged to produce that finer type, and if we miss it, she will leave us to decay, like our predecessors,—whirl the globe over once more, and choose a new place for a new experiment.

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### MY DOUBLE ; AND HOW HE UNDID ME.

It is not often that I trouble the readers of the “Atlantic Monthly.” I should not trouble them now, but for the importunities of my wife, who “feels to insist” that a duty to society is unfulfilled, till I have told why I had to have a double, and how he undid me. She is sure, she says, that intelligent persons cannot understand that pressure upon public servants which alone drives any man into the employment of a double. And while I fear she thinks, at the bottom of her heart, that my fortunes will never be remade, she has a faint hope, that, as another Rasselas, I may teach a lesson to future publics, from which they may profit, though we die. Owing to the behaviour of my double, or, if you please, to that public pressure which compelled me to employ him, I have plenty of leisure to write this communication.

I am, or rather was, a minister, of the Sandemanian connection. I was settled in the active, wide-awake town of Naguadavick, on one of the finest water-powers in Maine. We used to call it a Western town in the heart of the civilization of

New England. A charming place it was and is. A spirited, brave young parish had I ; and it seemed as if we might have all “the joy of eventful living” to our hearts’ content.

Alas ! how little we knew on the day of my ordination, and in those halcyon moments of our first housekeeping ! To be the confidential friend in a hundred families in the town,—cutting the social trifle, as my friend Haliburton says, “from the top of the whipped-syllabub to the bottom of the sponge-cake, which is the foundation,”—to keep abreast of the thought of the age in one’s study, and to do one’s best on Sunday to interweave that thought with the active life of an active town, and to inspirit both and make both infinite by glimpses of the Eternal Glory, seemed such an exquisite forelook into one’s life ! Enough to do, and all so real and so grand ! If this vision could only have lasted !

The truth is, that this vision was not in itself a delusion, nor, indeed, half bright enough. If one could only have been left to do his own business, the vision would