

## THE POINT OF VIEW.

WE owe it largely to Judge Sewall and Jonathan Edwards, that Puritan children have acquired such a bad reputation for priggishness, morbidness, and dolefulness. Thanks to these worthies, all the odd little boys and girls in skin-tight

The Puritan  
Child

nankeens and box-pleated brocades, whose wooden portraits have come down to us, figure in our imagination as a set of insufferable young theologians. Who ever conceives of the little Puritans as romping, noisy, venturesome, quarrelsome, or (*sotto voce*) spoiled? Yet any one may read for himself how the Custis children were indulged with rich clothing from over-sea, and how bread-and-butter misses were allowed to take seven to twelve silk dresses to boarding-school. Any one may read those fond, affectionate letters addressing absent children as "My Indear'd Son," "My deare little Daughter," which Mrs. Earle and Mrs. Anne Wharton have preserved to us. Any one who is inured to the pharmacopœia of our forefathers may see at first-hand how tenderly ailing children were dosed with those frightful concoctions of dried spiders, stewed vipers, and melted angleworms, which were then thought so efficacious; how pathetically parents tried, with spices and sugar, to make them palatable: and when, in spite of all, their darlings died, what wistful inscriptions were carved on little tombstones, with broken rosebuds, little lambs, and doves.

And indeed I think there was a good deal for modern children to envy in the lot of the Puritan child. There was plenty of romance and adventure in the virgin woods all round his home. Their depths were full of wolves, catamounts, and redmen. Children had all the romance of savage neighbors, with little or none of the shuddering fear that haunted their elders. "Father," of course, would take care of them. Within the range of "father's gun" Massasoit and Thayendanegea would fear to be seen. In place of the fairies, brownies, and sookas that made romance for his little English, Scotch, or Irish cousin, the colonial child had small dusky contemporaries miraculously learned in wood-lore, and living in strange houses, dressed in beaded skins, and

"fed with curious meat." Tumbling little rivers swarmed with fish that could be caught in the hand, and the embossed and iridescent wild turkey walked out of the woods in autumn with its gawky troop of young ones behind it, like an edible bird of Paradise.

It is safe to conclude that Puritan children were seldom lonely. They had, if anything, an embarrassment of playmates. Where families of a baker's dozen were usual, we may figure to ourselves the harvest of cousins! An only child's ideal of a large family is one "large enough to dance the lancers." But these Puritan families were large enough to dance the farandole! That they never did so was, perhaps, for the same reason that Bostonians never visit Bunker Hill; because they always can. Among these swarming hives a boy might have a special crony among his brothers, or a little girl a "bosom sister." Their tasks were vastly lightened by companionship: Polly and Molly stringing the apples together, while Jimmy and Timothy husked the corn. In the event of visitors at a Puritan house, we may be sure the children were in an excited and hilarious state of mind. Much of the provisioning devolved on the little berry pickers and egg hunters.

"There was racing and chasing on Cannobie lea." When visitors came it was for more than a week-end. They had experienced many adventures and perils to come at all; stage-coaches had been mired, and they had been obliged to descend into the mud and tug and push to start them; inns had been crowded or cold, luggage had been rained on, Indians had, perhaps, attacked them.

"They stayed not for brake and they stopped not for stone:

They swam the Esk River where ford there was none."

Arrived safe after all these hardships, they were in no hurry to be off again. Jane Austen's heroines spent two or three months at the houses of comparatively new acquaintances; and indeed I think they would never have gone home at all but for some friend opportunely going the same way and offering to escort them. Three volumes of "Sir Charles Grandison" transpire during Harriet's visit to her "cousin Reeveses." What Puritan child could be of a

sad countenance with ten or fifteen little cousins coming to spend the winter? How they were all stowed away in such modest houses we can only guess from the immensity of the old fashioned "tester bed." Perhaps, like the gentlemen in "Tomlinson," they were

"Sleeping three on a grid."

Attics, however, were excellent dormitories, and could be divided by hanging quilts into a multitude of sleeping-boxes open at the top to the midnight breezes sweet with locust, lilac, and apple blossom.

Sundays, it is true, were a seamy side in the free and exciting life of colonial children. The Puritan Sabbath may have been made for man, but it was certainly not made for boys and girls. They did not always endure it with meekness either. The most entertaining chapter of Mr. William Root Bliss's inimitable book, "Side Glimpses of the Colonial Meeting House," is that devoted to the "Wretched Boys." From the researches of Mr. Bliss it would seem that the desperate efforts of town and church authorities were all in vain to secure seemly behavior among the back benches relegated to the boys of the parish. Duxbury chose a special committee to curb "their disorder and rudeness in time of the worship of God." The deacons of Farmington were requested to "appoint persons who shall sit convenient to inspect the youth in the meeting-house on days of public worship and keep them in order." John Pike of Dedham was paid sixteen shillings in 1723 for "keeping the boys in subjection six months"; but when he was hired a second time, as Mr. Bliss shrewdly remarks, *he doubled his price*. In a Cape Cod town one John King was unable alone to cope with the boys, and four men were added by town appointment to assist him to chastise them if found "playing and prophaning the Sabbath day." Parents were very long-suffering if they allowed town authorities to punish their sons. Or was Young America too much for his parents? It would seem that herding the boys together on the back benches invited the "Rude and Idel Behavior" which a Connecticut justice of the peace itemized in his note-book as follows:

"Smiling and Larfing and Intiseing others to the same Evil:

"... Pulling the hair of his nayber Veroni Simkins in the time of publick worship. . . .

"Throwing Sister penticost perkins on the Ice on the Saboth day between the meeting hows and his place of abode."

The indignant selectmen, justices, and deacons who recorded these misdemeanors little thought what a comfort they would prove to those of us who have previously conceived of the Puritan boys as "too good to be wholesome." It takes a load of unavailing pity off our hearts, similar to the relief of finding that Fox was a little too zealous in describing the torments of the martyrs.

Another cheering sidelight on the strictness of our forefathers is the orthodox but convivial ordination ball of Connecticut. Dancing was, in fact, not so severely interdicted in Puritan days as a few generations later. Mrs. Earle has a list of picturesque and fascinating names for dances, such as the "Innocent Maid," "Blue Bonnets," and the "Orange Tree." Such ingenuity and variety of dances seem to prove that the most delightful of sports was not very uncommon. Children in Vermont schools three generations ago still amused themselves with "reels of four" and "reels of eight." Raisings, husking, parings, and, above all, quiltings, were shining instances of the Puritanic love of a "high old time" even when assembled together ostensibly for work. But I think the singing-school was the merriest of all the merry old-time parties. What a come-down it would be for a Puritan big boy or girl, to exchange the mirth and jollity of one of their "sings" for one of our afternoon teas, for example! I should like to have heard such a gathering in our valley sing the so-called "Ode on Science," with its resounding patriotism and glorious martial air. To be sure there is nothing about science in it except the assertion that:

"She visits fair Americay [so pronounced to rhyme]  
And sets her sons among the stars!"

I should like to have seen some Puritan damsel advance to sing the "Worldly Song," while some bashful big boy held his candle over her book, and smiled at her tuneful warning:

"Of all false young men to beware!"

Girls were probably more proficient at music than their brothers: they should have been so, when the principal branches taught them were music, embroidery, and "the globes." "I learn," wrote Eliza Southgate Bowne, with the proud consciousness of a complete education, "embroidery and geography." One supposedly self-respecting town in Connecticut voted that none of its money should be "wasted" in educating girls. Of an old seminary in our town it is still said that its troubles

began when, and have never ceased since, girls were admitted. Learning, however, like love, laughs at locksmiths. Mrs. Earle tells of a little girl who sat on the school-house steps for hours every day to overhear what she could of the lessons of the boys inside. Instances of highly educated women are not infrequent in old memoirs; and certainly many of our ancestresses wrote letters in a charming, playful, unaffected style—the unforced fruit of good reading.

After all, the girls missed very little by not going to school. When a schoolmaster was expected to perform the duties of sexton and grave-digger, as well as to help the minister out with his parochial calls, and even to help the surgeon (and all for a diminutive salary), he could scarcely be expected to prepare very thoroughly for college. His greatest accomplishment—nay, his most solid branch—was an elaborate and ornamental handwriting. This he was expected to vary at will from “Saxon,” “Gothic,” and “old MS” to “chancery, Engrossing, Running Court, and Lettre Frisée.” The smallest children wore hornbooks round their necks, sometimes calling them “hornigs,” “absey-books,” and “battledore books.” These paper alphabets, protected by a thin sheet of horn, have

His School

perished from the face of the earth. But three, I think, are known to be in existence. From the hornbook they advanced to the New England primer, “Reading-madeasy,” and the horrible arithmetics which they made (I suppose) “a shy” at understanding. But this their master himself could hardly have done. If we, in our luxurious childhood, tenderly lured through Greenleaf by pictures of apples, etc., found fractions hard, what would have been our situation confronted with the “Rule of Falsehood,” “Redeeming of Pawnes and Geames,” the “Backer Rule of Thirds,” and “Tare and Trett.” One term familiar to us, such as “the quotient,” was then surrounded by a score of others now obsolete, such as “the Cloff,” “the Suttle,” and “the Neat.” Happy little Puritan girls whose town fathers would waste no money on their education! Happy little boys who were kept at home to help on the farm! The schools were heated by a communal wood supply, each voter drawing a load to the school-house. If a father were delinquent in this respect, his children suffered for it; the seats farthest from the fire being assigned to

them. And yet I think the irrepressible boys who “larfed and smiled” in a Puritan meeting-house could withstand the hardships of the Puritan school. No doubt they found means, then as now, to sweeten and diversify the pursuit of learning; and when the school-master came to board his week at their house, they were dull boys indeed if they did not manage to treat him in his turn to a system of rewards and punishments. At all events, they carried on their “nature study” in a way never to be equalled by our most approved methods. They became learned entomologists, herbalists, and ornithologists without book or teacher. The Puritan child needed no instruction in the great art of observing. He had an Audubonic knowledge of the gopher, field-mouse, woodchuck, muskrat, chipmunk, and bull-frog, “creatures more humorous than any in Collot.” It is true, there were no kindergartens, and in this respect the Puritan children well deserve our pity. Poor substitute, for their tender years, was the severe school-master, with birch and dunce-cap, for those gentle maidens, votareesses of St. Froebel, who now entice their happiest descendants into caterpillar and butterfly games, and charming little pantomimic songs!

Perhaps, on the whole, it was fortunate that the Colonial schools were sparse and ill attended. The Colonial home was well able to fill their place with an excellent course in manual training. Childish industries were varied, interesting, and important. The Puritan child had the satisfaction of knowing that the household could get along but ill without him. Seeding raisins and “going to the store” were not *then* his chief employments respectively within doors and without. Besides driving the cows to and from pasture, the children hunted oak galls, spruce gum, and partridge eggs in the forest, hetchelled and carded wool, strung onions, apples, and corn for drying, dipped candles, “tried out” lard, tended the calves and hens, mended and spun, and caught the geese to be picked for pillows:

Rising up early,  
Weeding the cabbages,  
Going forth berrying  
In the dim woodland;  
Piling the hay, and  
Picking up apples,  
Or heaping the pumpkins  
High in the bin:—  
... Thus their week-days.

Whittling occupied a good eminence. The hereditary art of boys was a fine and valued

one. They could make door-handles, pegs, spouts for maple sap, wooden spoons, and even the somewhat clumsy brooms used in that day. Tom Sawyer's aunt's fence, which had to be painted with such exceeding care, was paraded every morning in the busy Puritan house, and many a boy and girl, we may be sure, "felt nationly" when the all-important task was deftly and cleverly done.

When, perhaps late in the afternoon, they ran out to play, their favorite games were probably the same as ours—oats peas beans, green gravel, Sally Waters, hide-and-seek, kitty in the corner, cross-tag, squat-tag, and hop-scotch. These games, we are told, derive from a remote antiquity. English children played them in their primrose fields when Crecy and Agincourt were yet to be fought. More modern is the pretty pageant "King William"—which, however, is strictly not a Puritan game at all.

His Play It seems to have taken root and flourished only where the Church of England was established. Thus in the old Episcopalian town of Arlington, Vt., it is still played by children in the town hall at Christmas parties, while it seems unknown in the other (Congregational) towns of Bennington County. The date of "King William" is easy to fix, for the opening rhymes plainly relate to the "glorious Revolution" of 1688:

"King William was king James's son:  
Upon a royal race he run;  
Upon his breast he wore a star  
To point the way to London Bar."

Puritan boys played a great variety of games of ball. Trap-ball, fives, and other poor apologies for the national game were in vogue among them, and foot-ball appears to have been popular, especially in winter; when, according to the traveller Misson, it was played in the streets. Misson seems, however, to have been but little impressed with it. He writes as follows:

"It is kicked about from one to tother in the streets by him that can get it, and that is all the art of it."

Little girls lavished their affections on very clumsy and shapeless dolls, which perhaps roused all the more their imaginative motherhood. What were called "French dolls" were apparently the lankiest and most awkward of all: a parody on the Gallic name. The beds, chairs, and carriages made for these poor creatures, however, were often as beautiful and perfectly made as the full-sized models which we now hunt with undiminished ardor from farmhouse to farmhouse. Rag dolls cannot have been quite unknown, but rags were too precious to be used commonly for playthings. Very rich little girls perhaps had a rag doll or two in their nurseries.

The manners of the Puritan child were a little too formal and a little too meek. How could fathers and mothers ever endure being addressed as "esteemed parent," or "honored sir and madam"? A pert child must have been a great curiosity in Massachusetts Bay. Such a one was generally thought to be delirious or bewitched. No Puritan child in its senses was rude to its elders. When Ann Putnam, for example, spoke out boldly and saucily in meeting, she was supposed to be having a fit. I confess that I think there was a charm in the somewhat stiff manners of the little Puritans. Their bobbing courtesy has returned, and is the height of fashion in the metropolis. Why not, then, the more dignified "retiring courtesy" and the "cheese" as well? Delightful as is the free prattle of modern children, occasional "flashes of silence" would not come in amiss. The picture which Miss Repplier draws of the repressed and over-governed Wesleys and Martineaus seems far too dismal to be generally true. Certainly "Snowbound" paints the life of a Puritan farmer's boy in very glowing colors. May we not, I wonder, comfort ourselves with the belief that children were children still, even under the theocracy, and that parents then as ever had much ado to keep from spoiling them? Eloquent of the Puritan parental heart is that brief entry left by one of them:

"Fifty years ago to-day died my little John, Alas!"

## THE FIELD OF ART

### THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING

IN the catalogues of our museums you may find entries like this: "John Smith, American school; The Empty Jug" or what not. In such entries little more than a bare statement of nationality is intended. John Smith is an American, by birth or adoption; that is all that the statement is meant to convey. But the question occurs: have we an American school in a more specific sense than this? Have we a body of painters with certain traits in common and certain differences from the painters of other countries? Has our production in painting sufficient homogeneity and sufficient national and local accent to entitle it to the name of American school in the sense in which there is, undoubtedly, a French school and an English school?

Under the conditions of to-day there are no longer anywhere such distinctive local schools as existed in the Renaissance. In Italy, in those days, there were not only such great schools as the Venetian, the Florentine, and the Umbrian, differing widely in their point of view, their manner of seeing, and their technical traditions—each little town had a school with something characteristic that separated its painters from those of other schools in the surrounding towns. To-day every one knows and is influenced by the work of every one else, and it is only broad national characteristics that still subsist. Modern pictures are singularly alike, but, on the whole, it is still possible to tell an English picture from a French one, and a German or Italian picture from either. We may still speak of a Dutch school or a Spanish school with some reasonableness. Is it similarly and equally reasonable to speak of an American school? Does a room full of American pictures have a different look from a room full of pictures by artists of any other nationality? Does one feel that the pictures in such a room have a something in common that makes them kin, and a something different that distinguishes them from the pictures of all other countries? I think the answer must be in the affirmative.

We have already passed the stage of mere apprenticeship, and it can no longer be said

that our American painters are mere reflections of their European masters. Twenty, or even ten, years ago there may have been some truth in the accusation. To-day many of our younger painters have had no foreign training at all, or have had such as has left no specific mark of a particular master; and from the work of most of our older painters it would be difficult to guess who their masters were without reference to a catalogue. They have, through long work in America and under American conditions, developed styles of their own bearing no discoverable resemblance to the styles of their first instructors. To take specific examples, who would imagine from the mural paintings of Blashfield or the decorations by Mowbray in the University Club of New York that either had been a pupil of Bonnat? Or who, looking at the exquisite landscapes or delicate figure pieces of Weir, would find anything to recall the name of Gérôme? Some of the pupils of Carolus Duran are almost the only painters we have who acquired in their school-days a distinctive method of work which still marks their production, and even they are hardly distinguishable to-day from others; for the method of Duran, as modified and exemplified by John Sargent, has become the method of all the world, and a pupil of Carolus simply paints in the modern manner, like the rest. Those American painters who have adopted the impressionist point of view, again, have modified its technic to suit their own purposes, and are at least as different from the impressionists of France as are the impressionists of Scandinavia. We have painters who are undeniably influenced by Whistler, but so have other countries—the school of Whistler is international—and, after all, Whistler was an American. In short, the resemblances between American painting to-day and the painting of other countries are no greater than the resemblances between the painting of any two of those countries. And I think the differences between American painting and that of other countries are quite as great as, if not greater than, the differences between the paintings of any two of those countries.