LECTURE V.

ON

COURTESY,

AND ITS

CONNEXION WITH SCHOOL INSTRUCTION.

BY G. F. THAYER.

The subject on which I am to address you is courtesy, as it is to be taught and practised in school, and thence carried abroad into society.

In treating the topics that fall under the general subject, I shall avail myself of a very liberal interpretation of the term, and endeavor to point out the deficiencies which exist in the young, in relation to what constitutes good breeding, — in those minutiae, on the observance of which, the comfort of persons of delicate nerves and refined sensibility depends. And allow me to insist on their ultimate importance, notwithstanding their insignificance when considered abstractedly and singly. The general relation of things illustrate this idea. What is there, from the ant-hill to the cloud-o'er-topping Andes, that is not composed of atoms? This magnificent globe, the handiwork of Infinite Power, is made up of particles too minute for the human eye to reach. The liquid portion of it, that wonderful production of Omnipotence, is a collection of infi-
nitely small globules, gathered into the mighty oceans, whose agitations mock all the energies of man, and drown whole cities in "their wild waves' play."

The atmosphere, — that curious contrivance of Paternal Goodness, through the agency of whose manifold properties the ear is regaled with music, the smell with odors, and the eye with objects of delight, — is a material substance, whose elements are inconceivably minute! And yet these all are the production of a power so vast, as to will into existence whatever and in what manner soever it might suit his Omniscient Wisdom to create. Shall we, then, in aiding to form a human character, despise the trifles of which it is to be composed?

What is there in nature or art that is not the result of a combination of parts? The bread we eat, the fabrics that form our dress, the couch on which we repose, — reflect on their various and numerous elements,— are all small, and, singly considered, insignificant or mean. Language, the vehicle of our ideas, whether written or spoken, is composed of particles which in themselves convey no notion of their combined power; and, when looked at or listened to apart from their connexion, excite no thought, arouse no emotion. And yet, what may not, what does not, language effect in the hands of eloquence?

I need not, I trust, urge this point further, although it is susceptible of a universal defence. Still, whether admitted or not, in theory, the practice of teachers evinces but a very doubtful evidence of such faith. Hence we find a kind of leaping at a subject, instead of an investigation by single steps, which may account for the very imperfect results in most of our modes of education, whether religious, moral, political, or literary.

Children are brought into life plastic, and, for a time, passive beings; ready to receive those mouldings and impressions, which the training of a mother may produce; but before they are consigned to the teacher's care, this original characteristic is in a considerable degree obliterated, or at least so modified, so perverted by bad management, evil example, or the indulgence of unhappy propen-
sities, with which the original elements of most human beings are to some extent intermixed, as to render the task of the educator one of almost hopeless labor, and compel him to deprecate the fate that consigns these helpless ones to parents so unfit for their mental and moral culture.

But let us not despair. Let us not attempt to finish our task in a day; to do all our work at once. As the child who carries home, from his first half-day's session at school, the knowledge of one letter of his alphabet, is content, and even proud of his acquisition, so let the faithful teacher suppress all anxiety, if, in her efforts to eradicate bad habits in her pupils, she can discover, from day to day, but a single step taken in the road to amendment; being well assured, that persevering fidelity will in due time reap its reward.

The most common faults in deportment, or neglect of the courtesies of life, among school children, consist in the indulgence of boisterousness, uncleanness, rudeness of speech, disrespectful tones; and, indirectly, lack of order in relation to clothes, caps, books, &c., carelessness in regard to the property of others, or thoughtlessly meddling with others' affairs.

Among the regulations of a school of long standing, in one of our large cities, we find the following requisitions, which, with some exceptions, are connected with our subject; and reference to which I have thought would lead us to the consideration of those details, most profitable to the practical teacher and conductor of a school.

"Boys are required to scrape their feet on the scraper, and to wipe them on every mat they pass over, on their way to the school-room; to hang their caps, hats, overcoats, &c., on the hooks appropriated to them, respectively, by loops prepared for the purpose; to bow gracefully and respectfully, on entering and leaving the school-room, if the teacher be present; to take their places immediately on entering; to make no unnecessary noise within the walls of the building, at any hour whatever; to keep their persons, clothes, and shoes, clean; to carry and bring their books in a satchel; to quit the neighborhood of the school,
in a quiet and orderly manner, immediately on being dismissed; to present a pen by the feather end, a knife by its haft, a book by the right side upward to be read by the person receiving it; to bow, on presenting or receiving any thing; to stand, while speaking to a teacher; to keep all books clean, and the contents of desks neatly arranged; to deposite in their places all slates, pencils, &c., before leaving school; to pick up all hats, caps, coats, books, &c., found on the floor, and put them in their appropriate places; to be accountable for the condition of the floor nearest their own desks or seats; to be particularly quiet and diligent, whenever the teacher is called out of the room; and to promote, as far as possible, the happiness, welfare, and improvement of others."

Under the head of 'Prohibitions,' are the following items, which it may be useful, in this connexion to introduce.

"No boy to throw pens, paper, or any thing whatever, on the floor, or out at a door or window; to spit on the floor; to mark, cut, scratch, chalk, or otherwise disfigure, injure, or defile, any portion of the school-house, or any thing connected with it; to meddle with the contents of another's desk, or unnecessarily to open and shut his own; to use a knife in school without permission; to quit the school-room at any time without leave; to pass noisily, or upon the run through the school-room or entry; to play at paw-paw, any where, or at any game in the school-house; to retain marbles won in play; to whittle about the school-house; to use any profane or indecent language; to nick-name any person; to indulge in eating or drinking in school; to waste school-hours by unnecessary talking, laughing, playing, idling, standing up, gazing around, teasing, or otherwise calling off the attention of others; to throw stones, snow-balls, and other missiles, about the streets; to strike, push, kick, or otherwise annoy his associates or others;— in fine, to do any thing that the law of love forbids; that law which requires us to do to others as we should think it right that they should do to us."

These regulations, it is perfectly obvious, from the pro-
miscuous manner in which they are introduced, were adopted as cases occurred in school to render certain laws necessary. Hence, they are not arranged according to their relative importance, but seem generally to have a bearing, directly or indirectly, on the subject of the present discourse.

And here let me pause a moment, to say, that although some of them may be out of place, I have ventured to introduce them all, as found among the rules, &c., of the school adverted to, because I wish to throw out some hints on the subject of order, in connexion with that of courtesy, for which these items will serve as my text. In fact, I may almost claim the identity of the two, when I consider the result of both to be so similar, namely, the promotion of the satisfaction of those about us, and the most agreeable regulation of ourselves.

If I can in this Essay render any service to my brother teachers, or rather, to my sister teachers, under whose care our children, in their earliest stages, are usually placed, it must be done by plain statements and minute detail. I shall, therefore, take up the items just read, separately, and comment very briefly upon each, as I proceed.

Scraping the feet at the door, and wiping them on the mats. This should be insisted on as one of the most obvious items in the code of cleanliness. It is not only indispensable to the decent appearance of a school-room, but, if neglected, a large quantity of soil is carried in on the feet, which, in the course of the day, is ground to powder, and a liberal portion inhaled at the nostrils, and otherwise deposited in the system, to its serious detriment. Besides, if the habit of neglecting this at school is indulged, it is practised elsewhere; and the child, entering whatever place he may, shop, store, kitchen, or drawing-room, carries along with him his usual complement of mud and dirt; and the unscraped and unwiped feet are welcome nowhere, among persons a single grade above the quadruped race.

I may be told, it is a matter little attended to by many
adult persons of both sexes. To which I would reply, in the language of Polonius,

—— "'Tis true — 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis — 'tis true."

But this, instead of being an argument in favor of the non-observance of the wholesome rule in our schools, only points more emphatically to the duty of teachers in relation to it; for when, unless during the school-days, are such habits to be corrected, and better ones established?

I am fully aware of the difficulty of carrying rules like this into execution, even among children of double the age of those that form the schools of some who hear me; and do not forget how much this difficulty is increased by the tender age, and consequently greater thoughtlessness, of most of the pupils of the schools usually taught by females; but still, much may be done by proclaiming the rule, and placing at the school entrance one of the elder scholars, to remind the others of it, and see that it is observed, until the cleanly habit be established.

In the school above alluded to, the rule has grown into so general observance, that the discovery of mud on the stairs or entry, leads immediately to the inquiry, whether any stranger has been in. For, though few carry the habit with them, all are so trained by daily drilling, that it soon becomes as difficult to neglect it, as it was at first to regard it.

Hanging up on the hooks, caps, outer garments, &c., by loops. It is not every school that is provided with hooks or pegs for children's caps, garments, &c. All, however, should be so provided with as much certainty as seats are furnished to sit upon. It not only encourages the parents to send the children in comfortable trim, but induces the children to take better care of their things, especially if a particular hook or peg be assigned to each individual pupil. It is one step in the system of order, so essential to the well-being of those destined to live among fellow-men. If dependent on the attention of mother sat
home, I am aware that many children would often be destitute of the looks spoken of; but the children themselves could supply these, under the teacher's supervision; for I understand the use of the needle is taught, in many schools, to the younger pupils of both sexes, and has been found a very satisfactory mode of filling up time, which, among the junior classes, would otherwise be devoted to idleness.

Bowling. All nations, civilized and barbarian, have some mode of testifying respect to superiors in age, or rank, or wisdom. That most common among civilized and enlightened nations, in the present age, is the bow. It has also come to be used between persons of similar grade, as a token of recognition, and an accompaniment to the friendly salutation of the day; and no one, excepting the disciples of Penn, who abjure almost every external custom of the world's people, considers it as an act of degradation, or in any degree improper. In fact, it expresses the same thing in our sex, that the reverence, — so to call it, and as it was formerly called, — in the female does; which is clearly defined by its present name, courtesy; and this is what we contend for. It should not by any means be neglected, either at school or at home. Nothing tends so much to give the right feeling which should accompany this ceremony, as an answering salutation from the teacher; and, when convenient, the addition of the cordial 'Good morning,' &c. should be made. Indeed, I should object to a pupil's making the bow, merely because he is at the school-room door, if no notice is to be taken of the compliment. I would not have it thus unmeaning, or slavish. The place is in some sense holy; but made so, mainly, by the pure sympathy of mind with mind, and heart with heart; and I would have the child salute, not the inanimate walls, but the friend who presides within them.

It would also be useful for children thus to salute each other, as they meet in their walks, in the streets and elsewhere. It would engender a degree of respect, by which their mutual relations would be much improved, and a
check given to that extreme familiarity so proverbially injurious.

I have known some schools to be distinguished for this act of courtesy, by its pupils, on meeting persons in the streets, gracefully touching the hat, while a large majority of schoolboys not only omit this, but the bow likewise; nay, look away, or cut the individual altogether, and especially if it be the teacher. This, to be sure, may and often does arise from shame-facedness; but children should be taught at school not to indulge such ill-bred timidity.

The children of European parents, we find, are seldom lacking in this token of civility, which gives them an appearance of manliness that most of our own boys cannot claim.

In this connexion, I would remark, that some parents forbid all appendages of language, in speaking to others, merely as expressions of respect. In replying to a question, the answer must be given in the blunt monosyllable, yes or no, without the addendum which we, as adults, are accustomed to make, when addressing our betters or our elders. This, however, is principally confined to the fashionable world; but, like many other fashions, it has its rise in short-sighted folly, and is "more honored in the breach than in the observance."

Of course, I say nothing of those sects of religionists, who have conscientious scruples in the premises; all such, be they wisely founded or not, I pass unnoticed, or at least uncensured; for their quiet manners and peaceful habits can never jeopard the moral or the social compact. But with others, the "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," of good old Puritan times, I shall never fail to vindicate.

I should likewise always expect a child to say, if I asked him to accept a thing which I offered, and he declined, "No, I thank you," or something of the kind; and if he accepted, to express it in the words "Yes, if you please," or equivalent terms; but how frequently does one hear, in such cases, only the naked yes or no, uttered in the most laconic style, as if the child felt offended at the question.
Now, words are cheap, and a few can as well be applied as not, in these cases; and I feel almost disposed to set up for a reformer of the children's manners, even at the table of a stranger, when I find such neglect of an expression of courtesy, so necessary, in my apprehension, to finish the sentence. In doing this, however, I should not forget the importance of removing that gulf between the teacher and the taught, or the parent and the child, so justly deprecated by a friend of children, in an eloquent discourse on these relations. I think as highly as any one of that contact of mind with mind, that sympathy of feeling and good understanding, which should subsist between the parties; but I feel, likewise, that the two things are perfectly compatible with each other; as my own child cannot love or confide in me the less, because I require of him an attention to those laws of good breeding, which civilized society has proclaimed to be requisite between parties so related.

The distinctions of marked respect, awarded by youth to age, in the past generation, have well-nigh become merely "the legends of tradition." To me, this is matter of serious regret. The transition from lack of external respect to indifference, and even contempt, is so easy and natural; and from a disregard of venerable men, to that of venerable things and venerable institutions; that I trace, or think I trace, the disregard of wholesome laws, of those moral principles which formerly were the palladium of our republic, the frequency of mobs, riots, lynchings, insurrections, which have of late years tarnished our national fame, to that notion of "liberty and equality," that levelling down, which, in the hands of the multitude, without some such restraints as those alluded to, to hold them in check, and show them their true position, become anarchy, and the most frightful licentiousness!

How awful is the responsibility of teachers! How assiduous should they be, to do all in their power to stay the swelling flood, which threatens to prostrate to one common level the good and the bad, the wise and the ignorant, the child below his teens and his gray-haired sire!
I confess that I am alarmed at the prospect, and feel impelled to exert the humble faculties that God and Nature have given me, to aid in averting the threatened evil. All may do something; you, teachers, may do much. You are training the thousands that, in less than the quarter of a century, will form the people of this nation. How soon it will be here, and how large a portion of us will, ere that period, be crowded from the scene of action! Let it be our endeavor so to act our parts, that, when we are gone, those who will then occupy our places will feel constrained, not only to "rise up and call us blessed," but, influenced by our example and our instructions, will see to it, that the commonwealth of our country sustains no injury at their hands.

The next four or five requisitions are valuable, as affecting the habits of the children no less than as promoting the well-being of the school. Children cannot, at four or five years of age, when first committed to your charge, be supposed to have any fixed, acquired principles; it therefore becomes important to train them to good habits, as the best auxiliary to rectitude which they can enjoy, in the absence of the higher and nobler motives, to be acquired in maturer years.

The first of the four relates to the scholars' taking their places, on entering the school-room. This is a right step, and the only safe one. If they wander about, they will probably fall into temptation, and be led to do something they ought not to do.

I have seen children, on a person's going into a school-room, quit their seats, gather about the visitor, and stand, with mouth ajar, drinking in, with the most intense interest, every word said to or by the stranger, as if the communications related to the falling of the sky, or some other equally wonderful phenomenon. What in deportment can strike a delicate mind with more surprise and disgust than this? In some schools, Lancaster's tablets, containing the suggestion,

"A PLACE FOR EVERY THING,
AND EVERY THING IN ITS PLACE;"
occupy a conspicuous situation. It should not be disre-garded. It is a valuable direction; but should particu-larly apply to the keeping in place of the scholars them-selves.

The next forbids unnecessary noise. Children are, by nature, active little beings, and it is a serious privation to them to be required to sit still. The convenience of others, however, demands it; and without a good degree of quiet, worthless will be the result of a teacher’s labors. Besides, the power of sitting still and minding one’s own affairs, is an attainment of no despicable rank, and one that many adults might, with advantage, add to their stock.

The next in order is, on keeping clean the person, clothes, and shoes. This, I am aware, must cost the teacher a great deal of labor to enforce; for if sent from home in a clean condition, the chances are more than two to one, that, on reaching school, a new ablution will be necessary. And in how many families this business of ablution is rarely attended to at all, with any fidelity; and as to clean clothes and shoes, if insisted on, the answer might be in some such pleasant and laconic language as this: "He ought to be thankful that he can get any clothes, without all this fuss, as if he were dressing for a wedding or a coronation!" Still, the rule is a good one, and should be enforced, as far as practicable. Water can at least be had; and if a child seems a stranger to its application, one or two of the elder scholars should be sent out, as is the practice in some European schools, to introduce it to him, and aid him in using it. And if you can arouse him to feel some pride in keeping his dress and person clean, and his shoes well polished, or at least, in keeping them free of mud, you teach him a lesson of self-respect, that may prove his temporal salvation, and bring him to be, when out of school, instead of the squalid vagrant, a companion of pilferers and refugees from justice, the incipient worthy member of society, and perhaps a benefactor of his race. It is amazing to reflect how very slight a circumstance in the life of a human being, in the early stages, sometimes casts him on that tide, which leads to glory or to infamy!
Some one of note has said, that "he considers cleanliness as next to godliness;" and I have been accustomed to look upon one, thoroughly clean in the outward man, as necessarily possessing a clean heart, a pure spirit. Whether it may be adopted as a rule of judgment or not, need not now be decided. The claims of cleanliness, are without considering the deduction as infallible, too commanding to be resisted, and should ever be maintained.

The fourth relates to quitting the neighborhood of the school, on being dismissed. This is desirable for the safety of the children; it removes them, to some extent, from temptation, and aids in the fulfilment of the reasonable expectations of parents, that their children will be at home at the appointed hour. It is a practical lesson in punctuality, which, as the young come into life, will be found of great service to them. It may be ranked with behaviour, and considered as among those things which constitute the character of a good child. It is especially due to the families residing in the vicinity of the school. Do what you may to prevent annoyance, it is scarcely possible for a large school to be an agreeable neighbor to families within its hearing. They are subject to its petty disturbances, in all states of health and sickness, in trouble and in joy; and are surely entitled to the relief afforded by dismissal and sending the children to their homes. Shouting, screaming, and yelling, should be prohibited, and the children directed to go away in a quiet and orderly manner. Surely, every principle of courtesy, of kindness, and good neighborhood, demands it, and should not demand in vain. Who has not waited, with the operations of some of the senses suspended, for the periodical abatement of an intolerable nuisance, and felt, in due time, all the joy of the anticipated relief?

The next three rules are so obvious and natural, that, did we not witness their infraction, it would be difficult to conceive of it, excepting in cases of thoughtlessness. Still, in a majority of instances, the rules are disregarded, and consequently demand notice. They direct the child to present a pen with the feather end towards the person
receiving it, a knife by the haft, and a book with the right side up for reading;—simple directions, the propriety of which is so evident, as to forbid any argument to urge them on your attention. Civility to others often requires of us some slight personal sacrifice; but here, the trifling act may be performed in the right way, with the same facility as in any other.

The next requisition in course is, that the pupil bow, inclining the body slightly, on giving any thing to, or receiving any thing from, another. This is a rule practised by every well-bred man, and conciliating the goodwill of every observer. I would not, on any account, have children civil from policy; it is desirable to have them so from nature. But if they are not so, they should be taught, and either exercise these little courtesies, because they are right in themselves, or because they have been directed to do so. If, however, they knew the great gain arising from their observance, the acumen even of children would secure all due attention to them.

It would not be too much to say, that many a lad owes his fortune in life to a well-timed and graceful bow. "A man's manners form his fortune," is a trite proverb, which many of us wrote over and over again, as a copy-slip at school. There is much truth in it; and the bow is considered by many as the very essence of manners. We notice this in the rustic mother's first direction to her child, on presenting him to a visiter, as she, in her not very grammatical but expressive interrogatory, calls out, "Where's your manners, John?"

Next, boys are required to stand, while speaking to a teacher. This is a very wholesome requisition, and highly useful in promoting that distinction between the teacher and the taught, which it is the tendency of some modern innovators to break down, to the prejudice of good order, necessary discipline, and sound learning; but on the observance of the principle of which, the permanency of our time-honored and valuable New England institutions depends.

To my apprehension, there is something exceedingly
gross in a child's sitting while talking to a teacher who is standing. It is an inversion of the natural order of things, and brings to my mind the quaint dream of a humorist, depicting the future relations of beings, and representing a horse as mounted upon his former rider, and a fat young turkey spitting and roasting the cook!

Next, to keep all books clean, and the contents of desks neatly arranged. If, as has been said of us, a full-grown Yankee cannot talk five minutes in the open air, without exercising his mechanical tact, there seems to be the same kind of irresistible necessity for a boy to mark, scrawl, and draw pictures on the blank leaves of his class-books; to say nothing of the soil and dogs-ears, their almost invariable concomitants. Now, this ought not to be. On every good principle, it should be suppressed. It is a positive waste of property; an unpardonable tax on (frequently) very scanty means. It nourishes a habit, alike hostile to thrift, to prudence, and to neatness. It depreciates, to the young mind, the value of education, by abusing the instruments employed in its acquisition; and by habitually misusing what belongs to the individual, leads him to underrate, and to take similar liberties, with the property of others. If the scholars have desks, their contents should be neatly arranged, not merely because it pleases the eye, but because it is far more convenient; because any article wanted may be thus more readily found; fewer removals will be necessary, and books will consequently last longer; time will be saved, impatience avoided, order preserved, and its stamp become more and more deeply imprinted on the character, which will be, to a young man, a recommendation of very great importance.

The rule requiring all slates, &c., to be deposited in desks, before quitting school for the day, partakes so much of the nature of this, that nothing further needs be said upon it.

Boys are next required to pick up hats, caps, coats, &c., that lie in their way, as they pass along. This rule proposes the benefit of others, and should be always prac-
tised. The good turn that one may render in this way is paid back, as opportunity offers; or is transferred to another who may need it; and thus a free circulation of little friendly offices is maintained. Children have good feelings, but they are slow to express them, without some process of development. Hence, with few exceptions, the evidence of their existence is seldom exhibited, until some training has brought them out.

"I consider a human soul without education," says Addison, "like marble in the quarry; which shows none of its inherent beauties, till the skill of the polisher fetches out the colors, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot, and vein, that runs through the body of it." This sentiment may be applied to the intellectual and the moral systems. Education is requisite to show their properties, which, undeveloped, exist to no useful purpose, but remain a dormant possession to the close of life. The necessity of this rule can be fully understood by those only who are familiar with the heedless habits of childhood. Fifty pens, if furnished at the teacher's expense, shall be passed over fifty times, by fifty boys, and not one be picked up by any of them, where no such requisition is in force; and so with books or pencils, copy-slips or caps.

The next rule is kindred to this, but goes further. "Every boy to be accountable for the condition of the floor nearest his seat;" that is, he is not to allow any thing, whether valuable or not, to lie on the floor, and, consequently, every thing contemplated in the preceding rule, as far as any individual's vicinity is concerned, is taken care of, and all worthless articles likewise removed. This making committee-men of all the pupils must have a very good effect on the condition of the school-room, and promote that neatness and order, which are above recommended.

The next rule requires the pupils to be particularly quiet and diligent, when the teacher is called out of the room. This I regard as of very great consequence; for it involves a sentiment of magnanimity, which it should
be the aim of all guardians of the young to implant, to de-
velop, and to cherish. Children often infringe school regula-
tions, and much is to be overlooked in them, espe-
cially when at a very tender age. Their little minds are
scarcely able to entertain, for a long time together, the
influence of many rules, except under the excitement of
great hope or fear; and when the teacher is present, they
often unconsciously offend, and should be judged with
clemency; but when left as their own keepers, they
should be early made to understand how discourteous, how
dishonorable, how base it is, to transgress the laws of the
school. Each should vie with each in good example,
and thus convince the instructor, that confidence reposed
in them can never be abused.

The last item, under the head of Requisitions, is this:
"To promote, as far as possible, the happiness, comfort,
and improvement of others." If to the few exclusively
moral and religious obligations, those of courtesy be added,
this requisition cannot fail of being observed. I say, ex-
clusively or strictly moral, because the notion of courtesy
hardly enters the mind, when we speak of moral conduct;
and yet, in nearly all the minor points, and in most which
affect the happiness of others, in our ordinary intercourse
with them, apart from the transactions of business, it is
courtesy that influences us most. It may be denominated
the benevolence of behavior. Aware I am that a hypo-
crite may be courteous; and hypocrisy in a child is inex-
pressibly loathsome. But hypocrisy is not a necessary
attendant on courtesy. One may be as courteous as La-
fayette, and yet as pure and upright as Washington. If,
then, school-boys are kind-hearted and friendly to their
mates, and evince it towards them in their manners, they
will, by their example as well as by their words, fulfil the
injunction of the rule.

The "Prohibitions" are in the same spirit as the re-
quissions, and seem to be much the same in substance,
although thrown into a negative form of speech. The
first is in these words: "No boy to throw pens, paper, or
any thing whatever, on the floor, or out at a window or
This refers to a voluntary act of the pupil, — the rule requiring boys to pick up whatever is found on the floor, to those accidental scatterings, for which one would not be culpable. The prohibition is founded on that necessity for order and neatness, which must ever be maintained in a well-conducted institution, to whatever object worthy of attention it may be devoted. And this is urged thus repeatedly, because of the ineffable importance of first steps. Begin right, should be the motto and rallying word of every nursery and every school.

The next forbids spitting on the floor. This topic I would willingly avoid, but fidelity to my charge forbids it. The practice, disgusting as it is, is too prevalent in many of the families that furnish pupils for your schools, to be overlooked, or winked out of sight; and if the children could carry home new notions in regard to it, I am sure you would have furnished a good lesson to their parents.

The habits of large portions of society demand a reform. It is futile to expect any general amendment in those who have grown old in given practices; but with the children, those whose habits are, to a great extent, yet unformed, much may be done. And although the counteracting influences of home may militate against your wholesome requisitions, happy is it for us, that a goodly portion of New-England respect for teachers still remains, to give authority and weight to your well-founded and reasonable rules. In many, if not in most families, of our own countrymen, the fact that the 'school ma'am' said so, is sufficient to make the rule promulgated binding on the parents; the mother, especially, will exert her authority and influence on the teacher's side; and if the teacher possesses the qualities of judgment, discretion, a proper consideration for the circumstances of the families to which her children belong, to guide her in the adoption of her regulations, she will be able to exert a power for good, within the sphere of her daily duties, which will continue to be felt and acknowledged, long after she shall have rendered her final account.

Next, marking, cutting, scratching, chalking, on the
school-house, fence, walls, &c., are forbidden, as connected with much that is low, corrupting, and injurious to the property and rights of others. They are the beginnings in that course of debasing follies and vices, for which the idle, the ignorant, and profane, are most remarkable; the first steps in that course of degradation and impurity, by which the community is disgraced, and the streams of social intercourse polluted. You mark the track of its subjects as you would the trail of a savage marauding party, by its foul deeds and revolting exploits; as you would the path of the boa constrictor, in its filthy slime, which tells that man's deadly enemy is abroad. And we are called on, by every consideration of duty, to ourselves, to our offspring, and to our race, to arm against this tremendous evil, this spiritual bohon upas, which threatens so wide-spread a moral death.

We cannot escape the evidences of this, which assail us on every hand, sometimes on the very walls of our school-houses and churches; but especially in places removed from public view, where the most shocking obscenity of language is displayed, to poison the youthful mind, illustrated by emblems, which, in the words of one who deeply mourns with us over the existence of this monstrous evil, this desolating curse, "would make a heathen blush!" These frightful assaults on decency demand reform. The deep, low murmur of insulted humanity will, I doubt not, unless this evil be checked, ascend to the tribunal of Eternal Purity, and invoke the malediction of our Judge, which may yet be displayed in the blasting of our fair land, like another Sodom! To avert so deplorable a catastrophe, let the thousands of the good and virtuous in your midst, formed into one indomitable phalanx, take the noble stand which belongs to them, and never abandon it, till the enemy be forever vanquished; forever banished from the now polluted, but ever to be cherished, land of the Pilgrims!

By these practices, the mind acquires such a hankering after, and morbid relish for mischief, that no tree, or shrubbery, or flowers, or public embellishments, or exhibitions
of art or taste, however beautiful or expensive, are sacred from the marring or destructive touch. A sensibility to the beautiful needs to be cultivated among us; and may easily be done with the young, if a proper and sincere value be placed upon it by ourselves, and the children see that our admiration is a reality. It exists much more generally in continental Europe, than in our own country. There, the decorations of public walks, parks, and gardens; the galleries of the arts, and the magnificent structures which adorn their cities, are looked at, enjoyed, admired, by all classes; and rarely indeed is the Vandal hand of mischief or destruction found to desecrate these monuments of a nation's refinement. But how is it with us? No sooner has the artist given the last touch to the fluted column, than some barbarian urchin chips off a wedge of it, in wanton sport. How often is our indignation excited by the painter's boy, who, as he passes the newly-erected dwelling or recently-painted wall, daubs it with his black paint-brush, for yards in length, as he saunters heedlessly along. And what more common, in almost all public buildings,—in cupolas, observatories, &c., especially,—than for persons, apprehensive of being forgotten by posterity, to cut out their names or their initials, as if this were their only road to immortality! In fact, such individuals can hardly aspire to a more enduring immortality for their names; or if they could, their fate, properly considered, would be like that adverted to by the poet,

"—damn'd to everlasting fame."

In how many ways does this recklessness of beauty, order, and propriety, display itself! We observe it among men, gentlemen, reputed to be well bred. Let there be a public meeting in a well-furnished apartment, and if ballots for officers or committees are to be prepared, ten to one, the scribes will cut them apart on a polished mahogany table; or, if more convenient, on the lustrous top of a piano forte! If these things are so, can we begin too early to introduce opposing influences?
The next item prohibits the meddling with the contents of another's desk, or unnecessarily opening one's own. Any just notion of the rights of property would make the former part of this rule superfluous. That point is, however, one to be acquired with little children, who, although they may understand and tenaciously claim what belongs to number one, are not so well instructed in the rights of number two. They have learned and perfectly comprehend the meaning of meum, but have not advanced as far as tuum. There are children of a larger growth, who seem to act on the same principle. They would have, like the primitive Christians, "all things in common;" but are not disposed to contribute to the general stock. How many of the trespasses of advanced life might be traced to beginnings on a scale as small as this!

The latter part of the rule would be found useful in preventing any inbreak upon the general order. If the desk open on hinges by a rising lid, the attention of surrounding pupils is distracted from their own occupations, to see what is going on with the neighbor; and probably, one side of a slate is carried up by the lid, which lifts it as high as the laws of gravitation will permit, to fall with a clatter that bids defiance to study. The boy himself, perhaps, is tempted to take his luncheon, concealed by the open lid, or to arrange some apparatus for play, to be introduced to his fellow at a convenient time, when it may be done with impunity; and when the lid falls, its noise will probably disturb all the children in the vicinity, if it do not at the same time interrupt a class exercise, which may be going on in a remote part of the room.

In a well-regulated school in Philadelphia,—whose morning session consists of four hours, besides a recess of half an hour, at the middle of it,—the pupils never open their desks but twice during the session; that is, at the opening of the school, at nine o'clock, and at the close of the recess, when all do it, at a signal, simultaneously, and take out whatever they may have occasion to use for the coming two hours. Thus, much inconvenience to the school is avoided; and the children at the same time acquire a
habit of forethought and providence, which will be extremely useful in future life.

The use of knives is the thing next prohibited. In mere primary schools, this rule, and the one last mentioned, would find, perhaps, little to do. Some, however, there are, I doubt not, even in such schools, who suffer from the too free use of knives, as their forms, desks, or benches, could testify. Nothing is more fascinating to a boy than a knife. And what pleasure can there be in possessing a knife, if one may not use it? Hence the trouble occasioned by the instrument. He early learns, in imitation of his elders if not his betters, that wood was made to be cut, and that the mission of a knife is, to do the work.

This topic can hardly be thought out of place, by those who will look into the recitation-rooms of almost any of our colleges, where many a dunce, unworthy of any degree, soon, by his dexterity in this department, lays claim to that of master of the art,—of hacking; "and has his claim allowed."

I well remember, too, as doubtless do many of my respected male auditory,—and those who do not can easily recall similar illustrations from their own recollections,—that the forms in the old county Court House, in Boston, were nearly demolished, so that it was difficult for a place to be found of sufficient amplitude and smoothness, to support a paper to sketch a brief upon, by the industrious lawyers of that renowned city!

If, then, this wretched practice is indulged in by the young gentlemen in our colleges and universities, and by the educated counsellors, in our very temples of justice, ought we not to endeavor to prevent its increase, by laying the axe at the root of the tree?

"To quit the school-room without leave; to pass noisily or upon the run through the entry or school-room;" are next forbidden. The propriety of these rules is so very obvious, as to make it almost unnecessary to advert to them. The former I shall pass over; its obligation is, I presume, universally enforced. The latter will ask of us a few moments' attention.
Whatever is connected with school, should, without becoming gloomy, austere, or forbidding in its aspect, be distinguished for quiet, for calmness, and order; and whatever militates against these, is entirely out of place. Hence, I would avoid making it the scene of play, however innocent in itself, unless at appointed intervals; and then, all plays should be of the most quiet nature. Some skilful teachers have succeeded in so dividing the time between study and recreation, and changing them by established signals, as to find no inconvenience from it; but each is pursued with its appropriate spirit, at its appointed seasons. For myself, however, I could not recommend the practice for general use, believing that the notion of reverence, which we attach to a church, belongs, in some degree, to the temple of education, and should not be violated by boisterous merriment. Hence, the rule prohibiting running through the school-room or noisy travelling, I deem of sufficient importance to be insisted on, not in school-hours only, but at all hours and all times.

Playing at any game in the school-house is next forbidden, and at that of paw-paw, any where. To retain marbles won in play is also prohibited. The reason for the first of these three items has been already intimated. The sacredness of the place furnishes it, and forbids whatever would introduce antagonist influences. The mind should be kept as much abstracted from dissipating causes, while acquiring knowledge, as possible. Consequently, there should be no admixture of extraneous elements in the scene of mental labor. The very implements of sport should find no place therein. Among the many arduous efforts of the teacher, none is rewarded with a more meagre harvest than that of endeavoring to create or excite within the pupil the spirit of application; and just in proportion as the objects around him or in his desk remind him of his darling recreations, will his school-tasks be neglected, or pursued with a dreamy or divided attention. A school-room should have an atmosphere and influences of its own: while that is breathed and these are enjoyed, the results will be legitimate and satisfactory. When the
hours of recess arrive, let play be as absorbing to the pupil as his lessons were before. Let him work with his whole mind, and play with his whole heart; but each in its own time; each in its own place.

The game of paw-paw is thus particularly denounced, from being, wherever it has fallen under my own notice, a peculiarly low game, practised little but by gamblers of the meaner sort, and usually for money; or, with boys, for marbles. One addicted to this game, in the first place, almost inevitably falls into very degraded and corrupting society, where language, frightfully profane and revoltingly obscene, is the common vehicle of wicked and impure thoughts. All, among gamblers, meet on common ground; and for the enjoyment of the game, all other considerations are passed by. And, secondly, a passion for gaining, without an equivalent, what belongs to others, is fostered, and grows by indulgence, endangering one's habits and principles in all coming time; entailing, it may be, upon the man, the whole train of wretched consequences, bankruptcy in health, fortune, character, and future hopes; and upon his family, poverty and shame, starvation and remediless despair!

Such consequences are not confined exclusively to the game just mentioned; but are alike applicable to all games, by which the pockets of one party are picked by the other. And it is on this account, that boys, by the rule referred to, are forbidden to retain their winnings, in the game of marbles. This game has somewhat to recommend it that paw-paw has not; it is a boy's game, and is never resorted to by any but boys; and, during its practice, it deals not with money, or anything of much cost; but the effect dreaded is, that it cherishes the gambling spirit.

Next, to whittle about the school-house; to use any profane or indelicate language; to nick name any one; to indulge in eating or drinking in school; to talk, laugh, play, idle, turn round in the form, to tease or otherwise call off the attention of others; to throw stones, snow-balls, or other missiles about the streets, are prohibited.
I have already adverted to the whittling propensities of our people; but with your permission, I will add a remark or two, with a view to placing this national peculiarity in a stronger light. So proverbial have we become, among foreigners, in this respect, that, if a Yankee is to be represented on the stage, you find him with a jackknife in one hand, and in the other a huge bit of pine timber, becoming every moment smaller, by his diligent handiwork. If he is talking, arguing, or, more appropriately, if he is driving a bargain, you find him plying this, his wonted trade, with all the energy and dexterity of a beaver; and, as it was once said of an English advocate, that he could never plead, without a piece of packthread in his hands, so the Yankee would lose half his thrift, unless the knife and wood were concomitants of his chaffering. But the habit is of evil tendency, and ought to be checked. He indulges in it without discrimination, upon whatever is cut-able; and, worse than the white ant, which saws down and carries away whole human habitations, when they have become deserted, the whittling Yankee would hack your dwelling in present occupation, until he rendered you houseless. Let the mischief be checked betimes; do it at school; showing, at the same time, the uselessness, the folly, and the annoying nature, of the habit. It is not merely at home, among our own people, that it is practised by us; but we carry it with us wherever we go, and, even among strangers, establish our New-England identity by it. This is illustrated by the following hit, taken from a late newspaper:

"A chip of the old block. — A friend, who is making a visit at Louisville, Kentucky, writes us under date of the ninth, as follows: — 'Wanted, three thousand cedar posts, cut into suitable lengths for whittling; to be delivered at the Louisville chancery court.' The foregoing is a copy of an advertisement in this morning's paper. The fact is, at the circuit court, all the lawyers cut the counter or bar without intermission, pulling out their long knives, and slicing off huge pieces without mercy. I
ON COURTESY.

hope the new court-house will be finished soon, or they will be shaved out of house and home.” On which the editor remarks, “We have always supposed Louisville to be largely impregnated with Yankee blood; but these facts establish its genealogy beyond a doubt.”

Bad language is to be checked, of course. It is a vice that, in the language of Chesterfield, “has no temptation to plead, but is, in all respects, as vulgar as it is wicked.” The gentleman no less than the Christian is above it. Still, nothing is more contagious; and it should be avoided, as well on account of the effect of its example on others, as from its intrinsic turpitude.

Nick names are objectionable, because they irritate the persons to whom they are applied, and because they become permanent appellations, frequently attached to individuals even to old age. We know of an instance of a teacher who was driven to actual lunacy, by the persecuting tenacity of his school-boys in this folly.

Eating and drinking in school will hardly need to be adverted to. They are (in hours of study, especially) as much out of place as they would be in a church. And the other misdemeanors mentioned must be of course expelled, as wholly inconsistent with decorum in a school-room.

There seems to be a fascination about the throwing of stones and snow-balls, wholly irresistible to school boys, which, from the annoyance and danger of it, in cities, has called for municipal interference. The injuries often attending these exercises demand rigorous prohibitions, in the schools of all our large towns, at least.

Next, the pupil is forbidden to strike, kick, push, or otherwise annoy, his associates. Striking, from the time of Cain to the present day, has been common in all communities where two individuals have been found together, and arises from a propensity in our nature, implanted for self-protection, but which, unless directed by the discretion of a mind judiciously trained, is ever prone to exhibit itself in acts of domination or violence, and demands the promptest and most decisive action of every teacher to
repress. **Striking**, however, much to be deprecated as it is, is far less **dangerous** than **pushing** and **kicking**, to which school boys are equally addicted. The evil of these cannot be measured in advance. The offender knows not how serious may be the consequence from a fall occasioned by the one feat, or an ill-directed application of the foot in the other. Persons have been brought to a premature grave, or made useless cripples for life, by these inconsiderate, childish follies. A word of caution on this topic, daily, from teachers who have the charge of boys, would be usefully bestowed.

Other and higher considerations connected with this subject are involved in the **summary** of the prohibitions, as pointing to the heavenly principle, by which children should be guided, in their conduct towards one another. The words are these: "**In fine, to do anything which the law of love forbids**; that law which requires us to do to others as we should think it right that they should do unto us." Guided by this golden rule, children, as well as adults, would never voluntarily do wrong; but, creatures of impulse, they act **first** and think afterwards, if they think at all; and need the constant check of the friendly teacher, to keep their duties in mind. Not that they are specially prone to **evil**; they are not. They are full of the germs of excellence. But **heedlessness** is the great characteristic of their period of life, and renders the "**line upon line and precept upon precept**" so indispensable.

The **spirit** of the school rules at which we have glanced, should be carried into every family. It is not enough to present the summary at which we have arrived; we should also insist on minor particulars, by words and actions, not at school only, but **at home**, where great familiarity produces influences unfavorable to the exercise of courtesy, — such as the closing of all doors, especially in cold weather; the doing of it gently, without **slamming**; moving quietly over the floor; abstaining from shouting, whistling, boisterous plays, wearing the hat in the house, &c. Just in proportion as such habits can be secured by **your** labors,
will you bring down upon your heads the blessing of mothers, worn by care, by sickness, and the rudeness of their offspring. Powerless themselves, to produce a reformation, their gratitude to you will be sincere and heartfelt.

Children should be taught to take leave of their parents and friends, on going to school, and to offer the friendly salute and kind inquiry, on returning home. Nothing tends more to strengthen the silken cords of family affection than these little acts of courtesy; and their influence on the observer is highly favorable to benevolent feeling. If these points are attended to in our families, they will not fail of being carried into company, where they are always a coin of sterling value. But it is not at school, at home, or in company, only, that this is to be regarded. In the street, and in the church, especially, children should be courteous. All noise should be suppressed, not from respect to the place alone, but from regard to the comfort of others. I have known persons of sober minds to be wholly distracted from their devotions by the drumming of a child with his foot, during the religious services. Such habits are exceedingly annoying to delicate nerves.

Cutting and trimming the nails in church is an abominable practice; and yet there are persons, who, one would think, from the perfect regularity with which they devote a portion of time to it, and the long-continued business they make of it, not only never attend to it elsewhere, but consider it as one of the prescribed exercises of the house of prayer! I know of a lady who has actually been driven from the sanctuary, by the persevering practice in this, of a person, falling under her eye, in a neighboring pew. It is a sacrilege truly revolting to a reflecting mind. Our masters of politeness forbid our making this "sacrifice to the graces," even in the presence of any one. It is to be done in our private apartment, as much as making our toilet or performing our morning ablutions; and shall we desecrate the temple of the Most High by such profanation!

There are many occasions in travelling which call for
the exercise of courtesy. It may be shown by preferring others' ease or accommodation to our own; especially, if the aged, or females, or children, are in company. It is a duty required of us by the highest authority; and it is one whose exercise always secures its own reward. To surrender a superior seat to one who needs it more than we do; to close the avenue through which the damp or cold wind is entering and pouring upon the neck of a feeble fellow passenger, and she a woman, perhaps unfriended and alone, imparts a delightful emotion. And even to relieve the weary mother of the burden of her child, for a short stage, or to toy with it and soothe it to tranquillity, when the unwonted scenes have excited it to fretfulness, is not unworthy of our thought, but furnishes another illustration of mercy's double blessing.

There is a native goodness of heart which inclines some adults to these little acts of courtesy, without any hint or instruction from others; but the young are not apt to think of them. They are likewise often selfish, and need to be reminded of their duty. They are not only thus negatively deficient, but sometimes positively rude, from inconsideration. You find them indulging in loose conversation, perhaps profane,—singing, whistling, and even smoking,—to the obvious annoyance of those about them; and scarcely willing to abstain, although entreated to do so, to prevent the positive sickness of those who have the misfortune to be in their company.

How many of these evils, not trifling in amount, might be prevented by an early training in all our schools, notwithstanding the counteracting influences of the ill-bred at home. It is certainly an object worthy to engage our attention; for it is called for in every situation in which a human being may be placed, in the presence of his fellow-man. It belongs to the mart of business as well as to the family circle, the school, or any of those situations to which I have alluded. It forbids a man to wound his neighbor in a lecture, or even in debate,—though great is the latitude allowed in these. It will not forget the feelings of others, which each one of us has sometimes in his
keeping; and if an unpleasant remark must be uttered, it requires that it be expressed in terms,—the gentlest possible by which the desired object may be effected. It remembers that,

"As the soft feather best impels the dart, 
Good language takes the satire to the heart;"

and thus, while most it spares, is surest of its victory.

Courtesy is not always exhibited in words or acts. The tone of the voice may speak more than a studied paragraph. It is capable of administering consolation and even pleasure, when words themselves have lost their power. It is a trite adage, that "the manner of reading is as important as the matter." The spirit of the saying is equally applicable to our subject. The manner of doing a genuine kindness affixes to it its principal value. A look even may express it most emphatically. In fact, the appropriate tone, and look, and manner, are indispensable, in all these offerings. They are emanations of the benevolence of courtesy; and attest to that element in it which comprises its essence, its only intrinsic recommendation.

He who said, "Be courteous," undoubtedly intended, not only that the outward behavior should be such as to conciliate the good will of others, but that the act should arise from emotions of kindness towards fellow-beings,—emotions, springing up in the heart, spontaneous breathings of philanthropy towards our neighbor, our countryman, our brother of the family of man.

Let this be the end and aim of all our teachings. And while we, in every proper way, and at all suitable times and places, inculcate this grace upon our pupils,—whether by minute, and, as some may think, insignificant particulars, or by aiming at the higher and more obvious duties which it involves,—let it be a primary object with us to be what we would make; to practise what we preach; to move, the living example of the finished character we draw.

This will be found the most successful mode of secur-
ing the result of our labors. In fact, this alone, unaided by any instruction, will effect tenfold more than all the instruction we can furnish, without it. It is the practical lesson, seen, felt, immediately copied, and never forgotten.

What our school-children are to be,—refined or clownish, orderly or careless, pure or corrupt, benevolent or malicious, profane or moral; and consequently, cherished or neglected, esteemed or avoided, loved or despised, venerated or hated,—may depend essentially upon us; on what we do or leave undone; on our fidelity to our precious charge, or our self-indulgence and neglect of opportunities.

President Wayland, of Brown University, has remarked, that "he who is not able to leave his mark upon a pupil, ought never to have one."

Teachers, of both sexes and of all grades,—in whatever department of education engaged,—let each one of us so instruct, so teach, by precept and example, not only in courtesy, but in whatever is honorable, holy, just, and pure, that our mark may be of more worth in this world to every pupil, than the badge of the Legion of Honor to the distinguished soldiers of Napoleon; and, in the world to come, a passport to the mansions of the blest!
LECTURE VI.

ON

THE BRAIN

AND

THE STOMACH.

BY USHER PARSONS, M. D.

Your invitation to appear at this time as a lecturer implied a request that I would, in accordance with past usage on such occasions, address you professionally, by suggesting some useful measures for the preservation and improvement of health. On former occasions, you have been counselled by the learned fathers of the medical profession, who, in addition to their transcendent talents, have enjoyed the privilege of selecting such subjects for their lectures, as were best calculated to interest an audience like the present. Among them, exercise, in reference to physical education, has been repeatedly chosen, and the whole bearing of its influence so ably treated that nothing new can be added. I am therefore compelled to turn from this more desirable and interesting field of labor, to one less dignified and less susceptible of illustration and embellishment. It is the connexion and reciprocal influence between the brain and the stomach.

We are taught by Anatomy and Physiology, to con-
sider the human body as made up of two classes of organs and functions, one of them being analogous to vegetable organization, and chiefly concerned in conducting those internal functions and processes, that are essential to the growth and sustenance of the body, the other being added to this, and connecting us with the world around us. The former or internal system of organs and functions constitutes what is termed organic life; the latter system, being peculiar to animals, is termed animal life. This last mentioned system comprises the organs of sense, and of all voluntary motion, which are immediately connected with, and dependent on, the brain as a common centre and source of nervous influence, where all impressions made on the sentient extremities are received, and from which all the mandates of the will are issued through nervous channels, to the muscles or instruments of motion. Hence the brain has been termed the store-house and work-shop of the mind.

The organic life, or that system of organs concerned in digestion, absorption, circulation, and growth, is placed under the influence of nerves which are remotely and slightly connected with the brain, and are consequently not subjected to the control of the will. Physiologists have placed the centre or focus of the organic system in the epigastric region, or what we commonly call the pit of the stomach, for the reason that the nerves of organic life are more numerous there, and because of our feeling a peculiar sensation in this region, about the heart and stomach, whenever the organic functions are disturbed by strong mental emotion.

We may here pause for a moment, to admire the wisdom of the Creator, who, in giving us a control over those organs that admit of improvement and education, and require to be exercised, has in infinite goodness placed those of organic life — a momentary suspension of whose action would destroy us — beyond our power or interference. We can exercise the muscles of locomotion, and the voice, in any manner we please, while those parts pertaining to organic life are beyond our control. We can neither make