

HOME,
THE SCHOOL,
AND
THE CHURCH;
OR THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

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VOL. III.

PHILADELPHIA:
265 CHESTNUT STREET.

PRINTED BY C. SHEEMAN.

1853.

THE
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.
1853.

ARTICLE I.

DEFICIENCIES AND MEANS OF SUCCESS IN
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.*

BY THE REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

CHRISTIAN education is a most important part of every parent's duty, and the root of innumerable future blessings. It is common to hear complaints, that the children of pious parents disappoint the expectations which are usually, and not unnaturally formed; and it is true that this is too often the case; and that in some instances children piously educated, will, when they break through the restraints of education and habit, become excessively wicked; and they may even, like Eli's and David's children, perish in their wickedness. In these extreme cases, there has probably been either some serious neglect of parental duty, or the formation of unhappy connexions with others; at least every Christian parent is dumb before God under such awful dispensations, and is feelingly alive to the conviction of his own sinfulness.

But, after all, the mass of Christian piety in a country will be found to be in the generation of the pious; and though God shows his own sovereignty in raising up, sometimes, an eminent instrument of good from among the most wicked, he also shows the riches and the faithfulness of his own promises: "The generation of the upright is blessed: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

It may be useful briefly to notice some causes of want of success, and also to touch upon the means of a successful Christian education.

I. In considering the causes of want of success we must first notice the *disregard of one of the most important religious principles*, a due knowledge of which lies at the root of all success in this work—that all children are by *nature* born in sin, and the children of wrath; that they inherit from their parents a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. However pious the parent, his nature is cor-

* Part of the *Introduction to DOMESTIC PORTRAITURE* of Legh Richmond, &c., by the Rev. E. BICKERSTETH. Republished by R. Carter and Brothers, N. Y. 1850.

and never was learning more demanded, than at a time when worldliness, error, and infidelity, are combining to prostitute the literature of the day, and when the popular ear is itching for every mocking counterfeit and rival of the Gospel. Never was there a time when there was greater demand for a thoroughly-trained and regular and authorized ministry,—for which no hasty substitutes, however zealous, active, or multiplied, can ever be safely introduced. But learning may rise to any conceivable height, and only hinder the work of God. How vehemently should we pray that God would “apprehend” our educated sons, and the sons of the Church, and the sons of the alien, and make them chosen vessels! If false fire is sometimes thrust into God’s censers,—if revivals sometimes occur which are only the kindlings of bitter zeal, fanatical contention, and enthusiastic or licentious heresy,—the reason is all the more urgent for us to ask the true baptism of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And this we may do with lively hope, remembering the seal of the sacrament conferred on the children of promise.

When the excellent and venerable Dr. Proudfit was dying, and when articulate speech was gone, he made an effort to cite a chapter and verse of a passage in Isaiah. His family turned to it,—Isaiah 59: 21. It was this: “*As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.*” The dying saint inclined his head in token of assent; and these were his last words.

ARTICLE XXI.

SOWING AND WEEPING: TEARS AND SHEAVES.

BY THE REV. GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D.D., NEW YORK.*

THERE are great promises connected with personal effort to win souls to Christ. First of all, for its combination of place and grace, is that precious passage in the Psalms, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him!” How full of sweet encouragement is this! Whole sheaves of souls shall the man bring with him, to present before the Saviour in glory, whose life has been a faithful sowing of this precious seed. Sheaves and tears! This kind of spiritual husbandry is exceeding profitable; there is no kind of labour on earth that yields so rich in return. Nor is it subject to any of the uncertainties of an ordinary harvest. The season itself may be unfavourable or unfruitful; there may be severe frosts or

* Extracted from “*The Independent*,” New York; and referred, from the signature, to Dr. Cheever.—Ed.

parching droughts; there may be high winds and desolating tempests; yet the final profitable result is not to be doubted.

He shall *doubtless* come again with rejoicing. There is no *perhaps* about the matter; he shall *doubtless* come. And he shall come with *rejoicing*. He *would* come with rejoicing, even if no sheaves were gathered; for all labour done for Christ is infinitely precious, and shall have a rejoicing reward. And so said the prophet Isaiah when sadly he was bemoaning that he had laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought; he said suddenly, by the impulse of the Divine Spirit, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." And to this answers the apostle, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ," whether the sheaves be gathered or not. He shall be glorified, and we shall rejoice. Yea, there is joy in this very business of weeping and sowing; there is great joy; and when a Christian returns from it, though he bring not a single ear of corn, nor a single grain of wheat with him, and much less a cart pressed down with sheaves, yet in his own spirit he shall rejoice. If the seed sown does not bring forth fruit in others, yet doubtless it shall in his own soul; it shall cause him to rejoice in the peaceable fruits of righteousness; it shall be in him joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is fruit for Christ, and a ground of joy and glory in the Christian, though never a seed that he has sown should sprout or take root, or come up into a harvest in the souls where he has sown it. This is fruit for Christ, the very labour he has entered on, and a blessed exercise to his own spiritual being; the animation and the blessedness of which shall cause him to rejoice with new life in his own soul, and to bless God that he was ever led to undertake such labours. It is such labours that keep the soul alive, that keep the fountain of love and joy unchecked and open, fresh and sparkling in the soul. Such labours are necessary to preserve the spiritual being from stagnation, from palsy, from death. Therefore, this personal effort for Christ would make the soul of the Christian rejoice, though he should see in other souls no result whatever from his labours.

But the promise not only has a *doubtless* and a *rejoicing* in it, but the mention of *sheaves*, a bringing of sheaves. It cannot fail; such labours shall not be undertaken in vain. There shall be fruit in the souls of others; souls shall be brought to Christ; and he that enters on these faithful labours, and perseveres in them, shall *doubtless* be the honoured instrument in bringing *many* souls to Christ. He shall bring his sheaves, whole sheaves. As in the time of harvest, men, women, and children follow the carts, laughing, and shouting, and singing, so there shall be singing in his soul, when the harvest is gathered in. Then, he that weepeth, and he that soweth shall rejoice together. Here, Lord, am I, and the children whom thou hast given me! Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds! Lord, I sowed but ears of wheat, and here are sheaves of glory! It was

Paul that planted, and Apollos that watered, but God only that gave, or could give the increase.

As to the matter of promise and encouragement, then, there is plenty of it. But it is worthy of special remark that it is made only to labours conducted in a certain way; a certain *kind* of sowing is requisite, as well as the right kind of seed. The seed, it is very clear, must be the Word of God; thence alone springs up the harvest of holiness, salvation, and eternal blessedness. The seed is the Word, the field is the world, and they that sow are Christians, at least if they sow aright. But a man may sow other things besides the Word, and if he does, then the sheaves will not follow. Just as a man may build, even on the foundation of Christ, wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones; but when the day of trial comes, all this stubble-work will be burned, and if he himself is saved, yet it shall be so as by fire. Just so, a man may sow other seed besides the Word of God; he may sow seed that shall produce cockles and darnel, instead of sheaves of wheat; but this stubble shall be burned, and well for the sower if he escapes burning with it. Let him see that he takes good seed; that by and by, if he see the tares, he may be able to say, Lord, did not I sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? Ah! an Enemy hath done this! Well then, see that *you* do not do it. See that you sow *good* seed, and let the Enemy have all the sowing of the tares to himself, and he shall reap the consequences.

Besides this, take care that you not only sow good seed, but that you sow that seed aright. You have different soils to encounter. When God's preparatory providence, like an inundation of the Nile, has been softening the souls of men, and preparing their hearts for the seed, you may sow broadcast, and it will take root; you have just to scatter your seed, and it is done. The sun will ripen it, for the ground is soft, and rich, and moist.

But where the soil is harder, it will never do for you to throw your seed in a careless manner, and then hasten on. You must stop to see that it is 'in the earth; you must sow it at a proper depth, taking time, if need be, to open the furrow and put in the seed, and carefully cover it over; otherwise, the moment you turn to go, the fowls of the air come and devour it. Some Christians sow the Word, if at all, very superficially. They sow it merely in the dust of the streets, as it were, and do not put it into the soil, and so the wind blows it away. We love to see a Christian sowing *heartily, thoroughly, patiently*, thinking not so much of the extent of ground he goes over, as of the thoroughness of his work. We love to see him put the seed deep, and see that it has a resting-place, so that when he turns to go, he may say to himself, There! that is safe; neither the fowls can get it, nor the wind take it, nor the devil find it. The Lord, if he pleases, can bless that word, and make it grow; for it is neither on stony places, nor by the wayside,

but in the earth of the man's heart. There is great blessedness in sowing seed in this manner. Harlan Page, if we mistake not, was such a sower of seed.

But there is a more important point still. The sowing must be done with *weeping*. He that goeth forth and *weepeth*, bearing precious seed. Ah! this is a great point indeed, a great matter. This is where we are all deficient. The want of this weeping is the reason for so little reaping, the reason why there seems to be so much sowing without any sheaves. Almost all the failures of a harvest are owing to this; not owing so much to bad seed, or stony ground, or the fowls of the air, or the devil himself, as this want of weeping on the part of the sower. Satan does not need to weep when he sows *his* seed; for there will be tears enough when it grows; and tears *on account* of its growing. Yea, there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. But Satan's seed will spring and grow *without* weeping; it will grow, too, in *any* soil, in hearts, in stony places, in ground all covered with weeds, in the midst of nettles and poisons, nay, if he sows it in the midst of corn and wheat, it will grow. No weeping is needed to make it sprout.

But the *good* seed needs *weeping*. Satan's weeping comes *after* his sowing; but the Christian's weeping must go *before* his, and must go *with* his good seed into the furrows. If every seed he sows, a tear is dropped with it, that seed will grow. Yea, if he is so full of weeping as he goes, that his tears almost blind him, so that he can scarcely see where he sows, so much the better; his seed will take root and spring forth, and bear fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, some an hundred. There will be great sheaves from such weeping and sowing, sowing and weeping.

I saw in seed-time, says quaint old Thomas Fuller, a husbandman at plough in a very rainy day. Asking him the reason why he would not rather leave off than labour in such foul weather, his answer was returned me in their country rhyme,

“Sow beans in the mud,
And they'll come up like a wood.”

This reminded him of David's expression, They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and also of the sheaves and the weeping, whereon it is a good comment. But it is more important that it be a rainy time in the heart of the sower than in the soil where the sower is dropping his seed, though this, too, is often the cause of a great harvest. But God has promised the early and the latter rain, if his children will, on their part, go forth weeping, bearing precious seed. Where there is weeping in the sower, God will rain upon the fields.

This weeping spirit is in the sight of God of great price. He tells the house of Jacob, when he is going greatly to bless them, that they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will he lead them. “The children of Israel shall come, they and the chil-

dren of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go, and seek the Lord their God." "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Let the Christians in our churches set themselves to this blessed personal labour.

Let the connexion between weeping and praying be remembered. Weeping leads the heart to prayer; for what a man feels interested enough in to weep concerning it, he feels interest enough to pray concerning it. Besides, this weeping spirit is the fruit of praying, of praying much and with great importunity. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, is a man of prayer. Of Jacob's prevalence it is said, He *wept* and made supplication. There never was, nor can be, this weeping in such a cause without prayer; and fervent prayer, at any time, is very apt to be attended with weeping. So much the better if it is. It may be, said David, that God will look upon my tears. And God said to Hezekiah, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears. Above all comes up the great example of our Lord, whose prayers and supplications were with strong crying and tears.



ARTICLE XXII.

INFLUENCE OF EMINENT PIETY ON THE HUMAN MIND.*

AN opinion is entertained, to a certain extent, that superior mental cultivation is inconsistent with distinguished attainments in holiness. It is supposed that deep and thorough scholarship is incompatible with pure and elevated religious affections. Before proceeding, therefore, to a direct consideration of the subject, it may be proper to look at some of the reasons why this idea has been entertained.

One cause of the prevalence of this opinion is the want of enlargement of mind on the part of some pious students. An individual does not see the bearing of a particular study upon his piety, or upon his future profession, and consequently renounces it in disgust, or attends to it with an utter indifference. He thus loses sight of the fact that his mind is an instrument, in a great degree unfitted for work, and that it is of little importance whether he has knowledge of his future profession or not, so long as his mind is rude and shapeless. His great object is not instruction, it is education; it is not acquisition, it is discipline. But if he allows his mind to fasten on the secularity of his study, or on its want of correspondence with his future profession, he will not, as a general thing, advance either in piety or in science.

Another cause of the prevalence of the idea to which I have alluded arises from the injudicious remarks which some eminently

* Extracted from the American Quarterly Register, 1884.