

THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

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Thoughts on education by Eliza C. Lawton

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ELIZA C. LAWTON

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ON EDUCATION**

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BY
ELIZA C. LAWTON.

—♦♦♦—
" Education is a training for future usefulness."
—♦♦♦—

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PREFACE.

So much has been written of late on the Education of Girls that some apology may be deemed necessary for entering on the subject anew. The taste of the day inclines many parents to seek what is showy and superficial in the education of their daughters, and a certain advancement in book learning and accomplishments is usually considered by them as its final result.

In opposition to these views, the Writer conceives education to be founded in that culture of the heart and disposition, that discipline of the mind and the affections, which form the character and prepare a woman to pursue her path in life

with honour to herself and advantage to those around her. This, indeed, as it concerns the future, is the most important part of the training of youth. Knowledge not erected on this basis is insecure against the trials of life; and education can only be truly called complete when acquirements matured by industry and taste are blended in the individual with what is modest, sensible, and lovely in their employment—with a character, in short, founded in moral excellence and the Christian virtues.

E. C. L.

8, Westbourne Terrace, Hyde Park.

Thoughts on Education.



EDUCATION may be termed, without fear of contradiction, the great social question of the day. The impulse of an anxious movement in this direction has been felt through every stage of society; new institutions have been established, and the reform and amelioration of old ones proposed; the defect of existing means for the right training and direction of youth has pressed alike on the attention of the philanthropist and the legislator as a subject of momentous responsibility, in the conviction, that whether Education be given or withheld, it still goes on by imitation and example, unfortunately with a fearful preponderance on the side of evil. It is, however, consoling to know that the subject, by being discussed, is becoming better understood, and that the advocates of a sound and practical system of

teaching for the poorer classes, by the judicious questioning in which their lessons consist—by inculcating a knowledge of things and not words, and by demonstrating the advantage of habits of morality, industry, and economy, rather than enforcing them by bare precept—are effecting a good which will be felt in the course of a few years as little less probably than a social regeneration.

It is not the object of the writer of these pages to enter at length on the subject of general Education, or to offer any opinion upon the late well-meant benevolent attempt to afford the destitute *cast away* little children of a metropolis like London, some degree of book-learning as a remedy for the enormous inequality of their social position. In considerations of this sort the eye naturally embraces the whole circumference of humanity, to examine what is right and what wrong; and to draw inferences from the circumstances of others which may favourably influence our own.

The extremes of society, the upper and the lower classes have each to encounter the peculiar difficulties and besetting snares of their relative position, and herein, at least, may be said to “meet.” To one brought up in the lap of luxury

and indulgence, how hard appears the first lesson of self denial—the sacrifice of some darling object to high and conscientious principle. In the opposite extreme of society how difficult to learn not to repine—not to envy or wish evil to our neighbour ; yet in either case the neglect of such principles of conduct must leave great evils to germinate and bear their fruit in the life.

Experience proves that those whom Providence has equally removed from the cruel trials of necessity and the temptation of riches, are in this happy “golden mean” of their condition most favourably disposed for the work of the teacher, and that to develop the full energy of their being, their moral as well as mental faculties, is not so difficult a task. A well defined object—the advancement of their position—stimulates their faculties, and encourages their industry ; in the pleasure of acquirement and the pursuit of various knowledge they forget vulgar passions and interests, and a moral tone is even diffused insensibly in the calm and regular exercise of the intellectual powers. In such a sphere of youthful life we read the best commentary on the happiness resulting from the habit of industry, and its concomitant sense of improvement, and were this effect merely transient