

Look Around You. - Nature
as an Educator.

Emma M. Cairn - 1902.

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What a world of knowledge we may gain upon looking around us. Many of the grand old elms are still standing which for centuries have spread their branches above our heads. Did you ever stop to listen to the murmur of the stream as it flows majestically in its bed and ever wonder how or why it came to be thus? Again, as you go into the meadows on a bright May morning when the dew is sparkling on the grass and flowers; the birds are singing among the branches of the trees and the fresh morning breezes cool your brow as well as the songs from nature lighten your heart and refresh your mind, have you ever meditated for one moment upon the history of this beautiful

world, and above all its Creator?

While it is true that nature is beautiful and takes care of herself; it is also true that we as individuals form a part of this mighty universe as much as do the birds, the trees, the brooks and the streams, but how vastly different is the history of the past and the future history of man when compared with that of the birds and other nature subjects.

Go into our cities and into our homes. Do you find among the people there that sweet confiding peace and spirit of harmony such as you find in the homes of the birds and other nature subjects? The answer in the majority of cases will be no. And why not? We must trace it back to the history of the education of the race. Go back in imagination to the old school-house where our grand-parents have

attended school, yes, even into the colleges that many of our great men of the nation have attended. Their course of study was practically no better then if as good as the "Course of Study" in our district schools to-day and the district schools at that time were scarcely better than nothing. The boy and girl of to-day have remarkable opportunities compared with those of our parents and yet so few of the vast number of young people in our country make a single effort to obtain such an education.

Young man "Look Around You", study the home, study the history of all great men and see whether or not they did not seize every opportunity for improvement and use every moment advantageously. Perhaps you have observed the differences between class-mates in school

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or college. You perhaps will observe two students passing through college with good records, and after finishing their college work, entering upon a new industrial work. Compare their lives after leaving college with their lives as students.

As students we found them both industrious, but there was a vast difference in their manner and method of study. John would study his lesson but he would see no beauty in it or the relation of the lesson to any-thing outside of the book or the class room. On the other hand Jim would not only study his lesson for the purpose of making a good and intelligent recitation upon it but would apply it to the outside world; he would seemingly forget that he even possessed a book; he would study the rocks, trees and all other nature

subjects. He would thus not only prepare his lesson from the book, but by his own original investigation would become acquainted with the real objects in the lesson and thus lay up a store of know-
ledge for future use.

We now turn to their future lives. They both find that life after leaving college is not as it was in college. In college their work was planned and marked out for them, they must now mark out their own work. Their Class motto: "Hitch your wagon to a star," seemed easy enough while in college but it means more to them now. They find that the distance from the coupling rod of the wagon to the star is long. They are in the wagon to be sure, but they find that the distance cannot be reached in a single bound or the travelling

be over a smooth and flowery path. Trials and tribulations will necessarily beset this path and they will find the travelling to be a severe and fierce struggle or one of joy.

John will find this path more difficult to climb than his class-mate, as he was storing up worthless energy while Jim was storing up valuable energy. Jim has the means at hand whereby he can reach the star, not without a struggle to be sure, but with success at last. John may succeed, but he will find it more difficult to do so than Jim.

Again, we look at their lives, John is struggling with all his might, he takes no interest in the progress of civilization unless it be to increase the fatness of his pocket-book or lift some weighty burden

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from off his hands. Jim is also struggling but his work is not a task to him, it is pleasant and seemingly easy. He is not working for himself alone but for the nation. The energy that he stored within himself while in school is being used not for selfish purposes but for all nature. He finds the distance between the wagon and the star is being reduced. The lifelight dies out of his eyes, the star of hope goes forth from his soul with radiant joy and meets the star that is shining for him.

Let us look for a moment at the lives of George Washington and William McKinley. Both attended college, one received his training from our modern colleges and universities the other from some of the first institutions established in our country. They were both gen-

innes, both lived noble lives and were of great service to their country. But look for a moment at the education of the two men, has their not been as great an improvement in their education as in the institutions they attended? Indeed, there has, the old log school-house of Washington's time with its little better than no instructors has been replaced by colleges and universities where men of talent and genius occupy the chairs of education.

We never stop to think how much of the greatness and power of many of our noted men and women are due to their instructors. They are too often pushed aside and scarcely paid for their services.

But alas! in spite of the many advantages of education that are afforded us to-day. We

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find a large percent of people in ignorance, living degrading unworthy lives.

Again, as we go back to the beginning of our race we find, according to theories of educated persons, that we have gradually developed from the monkey. We have adapted ourselves to environments entirely distinct from those of the monkey, our bodies have been developed and cultivated into beautiful forms and our characters made beautiful.

As a new race has come into existence, so also has a new educational system. But notwithstanding the book learning that is given us and all the beautiful theories that may be placed before us, none can be as great an educator as nature. The true education is found to be a continuous adjustment of

inner relations with outer relations. "The contact of mind with mind and soul with soul."

No deeper thought was ever uttered by a poet than when he said as he was observing the unfolding of a flower. — "I saw God in His glory passing near me, and bowed my head in worship." The same beautiful thought has been given to us by Tennyson who said: —

"Flower in the crannied wall
I pluck you out of the crannies
I hold you here, root and all in
my hand,

Little flower, — but if I could under-
stand

What you are, root and all, and
all in all,

I should know what God and
and man is."

The story of the development of the human race is familiar to almost every boy and girl. Yet a great number of them are

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not found in either the day or the night school. There are many reasons for this. As a rule our boys and girls do not come from the richer classes and to see honest, deserving, serious, young people, for lack of accommodations, turned away from the training that fits them for living usefulness, is to witness an unfortunate condition, a picture exceedingly sad to the most unconcerned.

We find that the teacher of to-day must bring other elements into her school-room; must live with her pupils; and, as they develop so also will she. Nature must be the foundation and beginning of all instruction. The teacher that is able to meet these requirements

and knows the means by which to reach this desired end is not only preparing the pupil to meet the battles of life but is leading him "Through Nature to God."

Young men and women look around you. Take but one look at this vast and mighty universe and see therein the power, beauty and love of God. Then take another look at your own life and see it in its true light. You will perhaps find either ignorance and deceit or it may be education as far as knowledge is concerned but selfish purposes or a saddened and heavy heart. Awake, from this morbid condition and re-joice with nature! Join in her expressions of joy and let

your voice and soul go forth
into the world singing her
songs; spreading the news
and, aiding in the education
of the young people of our
nation.

You will find opportunity
for employment on every side.
Go into the cities and establish
in the slums thereof a school
for the purpose of educating
the young people that may be
found there, into beautiful
characters and useful lives,
such that they will be a blessing
to the nation. I am certain
that those who spend their
lives for the purpose of advancing
the cause of education
throughout the land will
certainly find it worth their
while.

Emma Mabel Cairn, '02.