Look Around You: Nature as an Educator.

Emma M. Cairns - 1902.

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 meadow on a bright May morning, when the dew is sparkling on the grass and flowers, the birds are singing among the branches of the tree and the fresh morning breeze 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 beasts 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 which 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 schoolhouse 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 this 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 classmates in school...
finishing their college work, entering a new industrial work. Carol

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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 knowledge 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 Clare 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 beat 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 classmate, as he was storing up with less 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 contents of his pocket-book or lift some weighty burden.
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 life light 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-
inex, both lived noble lives
and were of great service to their
country. But look for a moment
at the education of the two men,
had their not been as great an
improvement in their education
as in the institutions they attended?
Indeed, there has, the old log school
house in 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
dwomen are due to their in-
structors. 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
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 planted 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 cranied wall,
I pluck you out of the cranied wall,
I hold you here, root and all in
my hand,
Little flower, but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and
all in all,
I should know what God 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
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 know the means by which to reach this desired end is not only preparing the pupil to meet the battles of life but in 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 purpose or a saddened and heavy heart. Awake, from this morbid condition and rejoice 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 Cain, '02.