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FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

AN ACCOUNT
OF A
REMARKABLE ESTABLISHMENT
OF
EDUCATION AT PARIS.

"YOUR theories are good, but impracticable." This is the answer which every man who proposes a new plan of education must expect. He is sent away without examination, as a mere schemer, and blind practice still follows the old beaten path, conducted therein by another blind being, called custom.

The plan here detailed will not give room for this continual objection. It is not a romance that is now presented to amuse the public; it is the history of an institution which actually exists at Paris. There is a good sketch of it in the journal of Geneva of December, 1787. But the chevalier Paulet has enabled the writer of this to examine and verify every thing: he has recounted to him the progress of his thoughts on education: and it is from the chevalier's own relation that the following particulars are faithfully recited.

This gentleman, born of an Irish family settled in France, served in the French army during the latter part of the German war. He quitted it at the peace, and lived at Paris in the midst of society, where he soon experienced that amusements do not form happiness. He might nevertheless have continued to spend his life in dissipation, had not a fortunate circumstance drawn forth both his virtues and his talents.

As he was hunting in the forest of Vincennes, he was struck with the cries of a child. He sought and found him in the bottom of a ditch, in which the water was accumulating from all sides. The poor child restored to life, told his story to his benefactor. Son of an invalid, and an orphan by the death of his mother, being left alone on the highway, he had subsisted on the generosity of travellers. Illness had prevented him during two days from coming out of the forest, and he had fallen into this ditch which he had not strength to quit.

The chevalier, from this moment adopted and took the greatest care of him, and made it his pleasure to become his instructor. After a few weeks, his ward, with tears in his eyes, brought him two children of his own age, who were beggars and hungry. Having been the companions of his adversity, he wished them to participate in his good fortune, and he had promised them that his friend would also be theirs. "But I cannot (said the chevalier) take them, I am not rich enough. Are you willing to share with them what I give you; your cloaths and your meals?" The child accepted the proposition with joy, and the chevalier, satisfied with the trial he had made, scrupled not to increase his family. He now becomes the father of three children; and as the desire of doing good is augmented by doing it, he took in more orphans of the neighborhood, among whom he equally divided his care and his bounty. Growing more and more eager for such benevolent employments, he knew no other pleasure. Each day he retrenched some superfluity of his own expences, and was astonished to find how easy it is to become truly rich, by reducing one's-self to that alone which is necessary. But all his economy could do, did not satisfy his wishes. Fortune, however, soon seconded his designs. Hearing that a considerable inheritance had fallen to him, he made a *vow of poverty*. His plan, till then bounded by his circumstances, extended itself successively to two hundred children, whom he chose from the class of poor soldiers, or of gentlemen of no fortune to whom he intends that education should restore that which distress had taken away. There are besides these, one hundred of his pupils, who serve apprenticeships to different trades, and he reserves room also for twenty-four young persons, to be able to encourage those who are recommended to him for talents and good behavior.

This seminary founded, by the beneficence and cares of one man, is excellent in its detail with respect to order, instruction and morality.

The chevalier Paulet, though he gives his young people a civil education, yet has preferred a military form, either from a remaining partiality for his first profession, or from the opinion that young people, being easily captivated by the dazzling appearance of a military life, can better submit to the strict discipline it imposes. Besides, he was well aware of the defects of the common schools, and has avoided them as much as the difficulties with which he is surrounded have permitted.

1. The *pupils govern themselves.*—They are formed into divisions of forty, each of which has its captain: and there are besides, a major, a commander, &c. These officers are members of a permanent council, which, meeting every night in public, hears all reports, judges all faults, and keeps a register. The internal police is entrusted to a guard, which is relieved. A centry at the door alone has power to open and shut it. All the particulars of their administration are regulated by articles, which form the code of the commonwealth. When any new question arises, or when an appeal is made, the council addresses itself to their wise Mentor, who gives his advice, but never constrains; seeming rather to follow than guide them. He has thus often had reason to be surprised at the good sense of these children: who being accustomed to make use of their intellects, know how to examine the different sides of a question; and divest themselves of all partiality to pronounce a sentence that gains universal applause. He has not admitted those servile and arbitrary punishments, of which the least inconvenience is, that children disregard them, either through custom or false pride, and whose severity must be encreased to preserve their effect. He has rejected the mistaken notion of those masters, who have found no better expedient than to condemn young people to an excess of labor, in order to punish them. In his house the guilty are condemned to idleness; standing fixed against a wall, they are subjected to a state of inaction, which is continued in proportion to their faults. If the crime is great the party is deprived of his uniform; and one may easily perceive how much the desire of regaining it is conducive to the fulfilling of the necessary condition.

2. The care of *instructing* is *partly given to the pupils themselves.* The chevalier having made choice of able masters and had the art of simplifying all methods of instruction, has by degrees acquired scholars capable of of giving lessons to beginners. Nothing can be more interesting than to see in a large hall, several different clases, each of which occupies a table, over which presides a young master who exercises his utmost attention to prepare the members of it for passing into the hands of the professors. The young director cannot, however, grow too proud of his place; for when he leaves the table where he sat as master, he goes to another in quality of a scholar; perhaps under one of his juniors whom he had just before superintended. The chevalier related with pleasure, that the under drawing master, a youth of of ten years old, giving an account of those under his care, said of one of them, "I think we shall never be able to do any thing with him; and I am afraid he will turn out ill in life." This anecdote is related, amongst others of the same kind, to shew that the children attach themselves to the institution, and consider their honor as interested in its success. They are instructed in languages, history, literature, geography, mathematics, drawing, music, fencing and dancing. Care is taken to communicate learning to them gradually; and, as ostentation is of no account, they are not in a hurry to acquire learning only for show. He rather prefers leaving their minds long on the same study, that they may the better imbibe it; and his method of employing the more able, to assist the less able, is also very proper to make that enter into the judgement, which most masters only place in the memory.

3. The Chevalier Paulet derives an advantage from his situation which cannot belong to every schoolmaster. Being at liberty to apply his pupils to the profession for which they seem most fit, he is not afraid of being desired to make a mathematician of one whom nature has designed for some mechanic employment. The caprices of parents do not here frustrate the intentions of nature. It is true that gentlemen's sons are qualified for study, while the children whom he intends for trade only learn reading, writing and accounts. But the Chevalier stops nobody in the full exertion of their talents; and having acquired by a long observation, the art of seeing the extent of a child's genius, and of perceiving their turn of mind, in spite of their inconstancy, his success is incredible. A boy, twelve years old, the son of a soldier, read to us a pastoral of his own composition in three languages; and the purity of the Latin and French gave us a good opinion of the German. Many of them are good translators, and some speak English tolerably well. A youth of fourteen had himself the charge of a class of geometry, and read to us, at the same time, a dissertation on Horace and Boileau, which shewed wit and judgment. Two of his pupils have been sent to Rome, to perfect themselves in painting: the apartments are ornamented with their drawings. The Chevalier pointed out a picture to us, which one of them had finished without assistance; it is the resurrection of the son of the widow of Naim. A celebrated artist of Paris, after having much praised it, wished to make some observations to the young composer: the looks of the young man who was restored, appeared to him too animated. "The hand (said he) is stretched towards his mother with too much action; he is *too much alive* for a man that is just come out of the grave." "In my opinion (answered the young artist) Jesus did not raise him as a physician, but as a God." He was thirteen years old. The Chevalier has seen extraordinary talents for music display themselves by a like liberty given to the natural disposition. One of his teachers on the violin, aged fifteen years, has made an opera, which he says manifests genius: and we heard a concerto on the harp, a sonata on the harpsicord, and very agreeable symphonies, the composers of which were among the performers. It would be impossible for those who had not seen the musicians, to guess their age. A President of the Parliament of Bordeaux, who was visiting this institution, it is said, was so much struck with the abilities of a scholar of fourteen, in instructing his class, that he asked him of the Chevalier, to make him tutor to his son, of eight years old. The double employment of learning and of teaching, must certainly raise in this school a seminary of good masters.

When the intended additions shall be completed, and when the Chevalier has in his house three or four hundred people, chiefly intended for the arts, with workshops and good artists, one cannot doubt but that, in a short time, he will form able persons of every description. Always intent on consulting nature, he watches the first emotions of curiosity in a pupil, at the sight of the arts with which he is surrounded. Should a young novice be uneasy and agitated at the sight of a machine of which he wants to discover the principles, his sagacious patron sees a path pointed out; and, accustoming his fingers to the pencil, and his head to calculation, continually offers him new models, and engages him either to follow them, or to exercise his own invention. In the mean time all the arts being assembled in his house, the artists gain an universal knowledge, and improve by the light they reflect on one another. Other artists, in general, are not well acquainted even with their own profession, from being confined to that alone.

4. The *care of morals* is attended to, as well as the culture of the mind. "I cannot (says the Chevalier) make distinguished characters of all my scholars, but they may all become honest people." Very different this from those modern philosophers who make a practice of separating morals from religion, that they may the easier destroy them, one after the other: the Chevalier makes it his study to unite them. He had composed a catechism, as plain as possible, with the doctrine he had to inculcate; and conceiving it absurd to give for trial to the capacity of a child that which requires the reason of a man, he had resolved that this part of instruction should be the last, and the best taken care of; but he has received so many representations, and knows so well the officious zeal of bigotry in calumniating the most innocent intentions, that he has again made use of the common catechism, and teaches it to children. But in spite of the clamor of some of the clergy, he has protestants in his house; and, as they are educated in the same manner as the Roman Catholics, toleration is not so much in question with them as a true unanimity.

We have seen how much the intent of this institution is conducive to the spreading of principles of equity, of moderation, and of mildness, among them; and to the inculcating mutual love. But the Chevalier explained the intention of several regulations of less importance, which tended to prevent vice, and to produce their effect without shewing their design. He takes off from his vigilance the appearance of distrust, and contrives some probable reason which hinders curiosity from being gratified at the expence of morals. Experience has shewn him, that the most efficacious method of surmounting the dangerous effervescence of puberty, consisted in violent exercises; which, by fatiguing the body, quiet the imagination; and, by furnishing innocent public recreation for youth, save them from the dangers of solitude and idleness. Each hour has its employment; even walking has its rules: and, as all the motions are accompanied with martial music, a beat of the drum is sufficient to assemble all the young people that are dispersed, and to bring them to their colors. This discipline has not the inconvenience of the authority of masters, which they are soon accustomed to elude. The Chevalier, in giving his pupils the charge of themselves, has found how to spare them lies, deceit, and all that apprenticeship of falsehood, to which children use themselves, to avoid constraint, and the arbitrary punishment of their teachers.

If there is an opportunity of giving an useful lesson, or a good example, the Chevalier does not fail to make use of it. A young soldier had been received into the invalids, who had quitted the service with the admiration of his corps. He was carrying bombs, in a garrison that was under siege, for the service of a battery, and had his right arm taken away by a ball, which also wounded one of his comrades. "Poor fellow! (said he) was not there already mischief enough done, for you to be spared?" Then causing his load to be put on his left shoulder, he added, that he was bound to serve his country as long as he had an arm left. Paris was resounding with the praises of this young hero, when the Chevalier resolved that the presence of this brave soldier should excite the emulation of his pupils. After having related the fact, he adds, that this hero intended him the honor of dining with him, and that he invited all those of his scholars to meet him, whose names were not set down in register of any fault; since, to deserve to sit in company with a man who had so well fulfilled his duty, the party must never have neglected his own. The chevalier retires, the council assembles, the registers are consulted, and many of the young people find themselves excluded. Not a complaint, not a murmer is heard. They receive the maimed soldier with military honors; he is informed of all that passed; and the chevalier concludes by saying, that in order to reward the repentance and submission of those who had not been permitted, they might surround table, and drink his health. It is not probable that this scene will ever cease to be engraved on the hearts of these young people, or fail to leave deeper impressions than all the precepts of a superficial education.

5. It now remains to give some account of the *economical* part of the plan, to which the Chevalier Paulet attaches himself very much; First, because frugality is beneficence; and in the next place, he has observed, that whatever superfluous expence is retrenched, some vice receives a check. For instance, he has discharged from his house mercenary domestics, a certain source of corruption. The scholars having the care of the house by turns, learn early that useful occupations do not debase any one; and they themselves buy most of the things for their wants, which is an apprenticeship of life. There is no authority or dependance among them but what is reciprocal, and consequently without danger. Their dress is simple, but neat. In each division there are some who are entrusted with inventories of the linen and furniture, and these give an account to others, who are to examine and see that nothing is lost, and that all that is worn be repaired in time. Each pupil is committed to the care of another, and when any negligence is observed, they not only blame the one immediately guilty, but him who, in quality of inspector, ought to take care of him—the young gentlemen are not exempted from domestic employments; they preside like the rest over the kitchen, with this distinction, that they do not put their hands to any thing.

When the Chevalier shall have improved his plan, and has in his house the necessary workmen, he will not have recourse to any strange tradesmen. He has in particular resolved to give a large extent of land for cultivation, and to form a great number of gardeners; not only to provide them with the resource of an useful occupation, but also to profit by their labor, and sell the productions of his garden in the metropolis. If he is deceived in his calculations, his benevolence alone has seduced him into error. Always animated by grand motives, he seems to forget all that he has done, to think of what he may yet do. The execution of his new plans requiring adequate means, the king has granted him 32,000 livres, to replace the interest of the capital he applies to his new buildings, the plan of which may serve as a model to all establishments of this kind.

This worthy man is entirely devoted to the cares of this large family; he thinks and acts only for his children. His equipage consists only in a little pheaton; and coarse linen and a mean coat compose his apparel. This neglect of himself has something moving & great; it shews forgetfulness of himself, and a perfect indifference for all but his chief object. Endowed with great activity, he undertakes every thing without confusion and without noise. He studies all tempers; he corrects the defects of youth with patience, and encourages those that do well by praises, not so much intended to excite self love, as to create a desire of surpassing themselves. As for those who do not succeed, he never puts them to the blush: "They are unhappy enough (says he) in wanting abilities & application, and they are punished enough by the shame of studying under their juniors." A well judged indulgence is the ground work of his method. He loves his pupils too well not to be beloved by them. It was very interesting to observe their sentiments differing with their ages. They had no servile fear, but an honest confidence animated their looks. They answer strangers who speak to them with a modest assurance. Dissatisfaction is less felt there than in any other place of education, because the greater part of the youth are employed in what they chuse, and because their studies are varied with useful recreation and walks. Their patron interests himself in their amusements as well as in their labors. "*They must be happy* (said he) *that they may be good.*"

All the pains he takes to finish what he has so nobly begun, become pleasures. What pure happiness must this feeling man enjoy in the midst of these many pupils, to whom, in lieu of misery, dereliction, idleness, vice, and all its dangerous consequences, he gives a happy youth, a virtuous education, industrious habits, an advantageous trade, and returns them back to society, after having made them good citizens.

The modesty of this good man is equal to his beneficence. His school, established these fifteen or sixteen years, is hardly known at Paris. This obscurity is his glory; but it is fortunate that he is taken from it, as it is hoped that so fine an example will not remain without imitators.

Edinburgh Magazine for May 1788.

FROM THE CHARLESTON CITY GAZETTE.

In perusing, lately some state papers, my attention was particularly attracted by an important and masterly