

## CHAPTER II.

THE REASON WHY THE GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKES THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE, AND THE USE WHICH SHOULD BE MADE OF EDUCATION.

SCHOOLS MOSTLY MAINTAINED BY GENERAL REVENUE.—DEFINITION OF GENERAL REVENUE.—WHAT GOVERNMENT PROVIDES.—WHAT GOVERNMENT ENFORCES.

In the preceding chapter we saw that South Australia, considered as a State, pays out of the public funds for courts of justice, for jails, and for police, which are necessary for the protection of all its inhabitants. But the South Australian Government also pays a great deal for the **education of the people**. No child at a public school pays for the third part of the cost of his teaching. The schools are built and the teachers paid in a much greater proportion at the expense of the **general revenue** than from the school fees. As this phrase, the general revenue, will be very frequently used in this book, it must be explained at the outset. It means the money paid by everyone in South Australia through taxation and in several other ways, which will be explained in their proper place, for carrying on the business of the colony; and it is spent by the various government servants under the direction and by the authority of parliament. Parliament is chosen for this very purpose by all the male inhabitants of the colony who have reached the age of twenty-one. Everyone has an interest in the wise spending of government money, and in checking the foolish spending of it, because everyone pays part of it, and should try to get the full value of it.

It is believed that the well-being of the colony depends very much on all its children being prepared for the duties of citizenship by receiving a good plain education at small cost—and at no cost at all, if the parents are very poor. As the world stands now, anyone **who cannot read and write and cast accounts** is at a great disadvantage compared with those who have been taught these things. It is an advantage to everyone to know something about **the world** in which he lives, **the language** which he speaks, **the laws of health**, and **the laws of the land** which he ought to obey. These things will make his life pleasanter, and his work of more value to himself and to the community. For this reason the South Australian Government have built schools all over the colony, and placed trained teachers over them. They have ordered that certain things shall be taught in a certain way, and they have appointed inspectors to go round and see that they are properly taught, and that the children are kept in good order. They have done more than this; they have made a law that every child between seven and thirteen should attend school or be properly taught at home until he can pass in a certain examination in reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic, and they punish the parents who disobey this law. In order to supply good teachers, they have established a training college, with masters, where young men and women are instructed both what to teach and how to teach it. In order to encourage the pupils, both boys and girls, there are offered rewards in the shape of money and scholarships, which give those who distinguish themselves opportunities of learning, free of cost, at colleges and advanced schools, those higher branches which are not taught at the public schools. Advanced education is carried on still further at the University, so that there is every opportunity offered to the clever and to the diligent to rise to the very highest education in the world.

GOOD AND BAD USES OF LEARNING.—DISHONEST WORKMAN.—  
CONSCIENCE SHOULD BE THE HIGHER LAW FOR EVERYBODY.  
—THE LAW OF THE LAND DOES NOT PUNISH ALL WRONG-  
DOING.

But all that can be taught in this way at school, at college, and at the University **does not actually make one a good citizen**. The power of reading, of writing, and of calculating can be turned to evil as well as to good. There is no kind of knowledge that may not be mischievous in wicked hands. Those who prefer bad books to good ones will be the worse rather than the better for reading them. Those who write not true and kind letters, but falsehood and ill-natured slanders, do a great deal of mischief. If an author writes not wise, true, pleasant books, but wicked, lying ones, he does harm to the people who read them. If a man writes (however cleverly) any one else's name on a cheque or a bank-note to get money for it, he will be taken up for it, and tried, and sentenced to prison and hard labor. If any of you make use of your knowledge of arithmetic to cheat other people not so clever, you will be a curse to the colony, and bring disgrace on yourself and all belonging to you. If you read history without admiring what is noble and generous and courageous and patriotic, and hating oppression and cruelty and deceit, and cowardly selfishness and greed, you will be none the better citizen, even though you had the name and the date of every battle that ever was fought at your fingers' ends, and could tell the succession of all the sovereigns of Europe.

Children cannot learn too young and cannot learn too well that these things are taught to them, not so much as an exercise for their own quickness and cleverness, as that they **may make a good use of them**, and that, through their education, they may serve their neighbours instead of hurting them, as well as make

their own lives pleasanter and more respectable. It is an old fashioned saying that **honesty is the best policy**, and it is a true one. Not only is it the best policy for the person who practices it, it is also of the greatest advantage to the whole body of the people amongst whom it is practised. Any country which is inhabited by honest and industrious men and women, and obedient, well-behaved boys and girls, is always a richer and a happier, as well as morally a better country than one where lying and cheating and idling are common. A shoemaker may make a pair of shoes of bad leather, and put few stitches or pegs in them, in the hope of getting more money for his work at first, and also that his customer will come sooner to him for a new pair; but there are more shoemakers in the world than one, and customers always prefer **honest work**. The careless or dishonest workman may cheat a few people **once**, but the steady custom will always go to the work which is best for the money.

School learning does not always make a good citizen; it depends on the moral conduct or the **good or bad disposition** of each child whether the knowledge is turned to good or bad uses. It is possible for the cleverest and most ambitious scholars to be selfish and disobliging and domineering at home. A boy may be a disobedient son and an unkind brother, and still pass a good examination and satisfy his teacher. A girl may get praise for attention and diligence at school, and yet be saucy to her mother, and cross with the little ones, and neglect a number of little home duties that are really better things than lessons. The school teachers have nothing to do with home conduct; but every child's conscience ought to be **a law to himself**, a higher law than even the law of the school.

In the same manner the law of the land does not take notice of all the wrong things that its citizens may do. There are many things which it would be impossible to control, and many things which it would be unwise to control even if it were possible.

GOVERNMENT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH RELIGION.—WHAT FAULTS ARE NOT CRIMINAL.—WHAT FAULTS ARE CRIMINAL.—EDUCATION OUGHT TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF DUTY.

In reading history you will learn that many attempts have been made by governments to make all their subjects of the same religion. Many well meaning attempts have been made for hundreds of years, and carried out with the most severe punishment for dissent, and with the most searching inquiries as to the religious beliefs of the people. But now all civilized countries have come to the conclusion that this is a matter with which **governments must not interfere**, and that everyone should be allowed to worship God in his own way. And this is not because religion is of no consequence, but because it is of **such great importance that it should be free and that it should be sincere**. Under persecution, timid people pretend to believe what they really do not, and courageous people are punished for their sincerity.

There are many things in which the laws allow people to do wrong without punishment. A man may eat too much, or drink too much for his own health or for the comfort of his family. He may tell lies. He may be sulky and ill-tempered, and make his wife and children very much afraid of him. He may neglect them, and spend almost all he earns on his own selfish pleasures. He may use bad language. A woman may make her home miserable by laziness, bad temper, or bad habits. Though all these things are **wicked** they are not what is called **criminal**—that is, they are not punishable by law.

If a man is disorderly and makes a disturbance in the streets when he has drunk too much, he may be taken up by the police and punished. If he tells lies to cheat people out of money, or to get credit for goods on false pretences, he may be punished by law. If he uses profane or indecent language in a court of justice

or in a public place where it is offensive to other people, he is liable to punishment. If he neglects his family so that they come upon public charity, when he has means to support them, or health to work for them, he can be summoned and sentenced to pay so much towards their maintenance.

It is therefore plain enough that in the same way as a child may obey all the laws of the school without being in all respects a good child, so can a man or woman obey all the laws of the land without being altogether a good citizen. But no good child is rebellious at school, and no good citizen breaks the laws of the land. In both cases, however, there is a higher law of the conscience to satisfy ; and where the school laws are reasonable, and the national laws are just, they help to train the citizens up to the higher law of morality which binds the conscience. And as we find that a great many of the worst faults in the world would be cured if people only knew how foolish they were, we may hope that with a better education for everybody, there will come to everybody a higher idea of duty.

