

## Greek Education.

To us whose education is so largely dependent upon what is left us by the ancient Greeks, Greek education should be a subject of considerable interest. But in fact, we care little about it beyond a mere hazy idea that the boys learned certain gymnastics and some music and how to write orations, poems, and dramas to hand down the ages for us to drag out our weary hours translating. Ah yes! Our life is full of drudgery and strife - why, then, spend nearly half their time on the athletic field. But comparisons are odious.

In ancient Greece the education of girls was very meagre including besides certain domestic lessons such as sewing, which they did with exquisite skill and care of the home not much except dancing and music in both of which they often became very proficient. We shall have to speak, then, mostly of the boy's school life which began when he was about six years old. He was put in charge of a trusted slave



called pedagogue,<sup>2</sup> whose duty it was <sup>to escort</sup> and  
follow school, to teach him morals and man-  
ners, to keep him out of harm's way. Tho'  
he never entered the school-room the ped-  
agogue was the boy's constant attendant  
during all his common school life. He  
instructed him to walk in the street with  
head bowed, to make room for his elders meet-  
ing him, to blush when spoken to and in the  
presence of older people to maintain a re-  
spectful silence. The little proverb which  
exasperated our own infant souls, "Child-  
ren should be seen and not heard" was  
repeated in almost the same words to him,  
at least so we gather from remarks made  
by the Dikairoi Logos in Aristophanes' Clouds.  
As they liked before the age of Kindergarten  
and scientific investigations, which have  
led to the liberties and with which the  
natural activity and fidgetiness of the  
child are treated today, it is likely the little  
Greek boys were as much imposed upon as  
the children of primitive New England.  
A hint of this is given in the way the Dikairoi  
Logos speaks of the "orderly standing at  
attention" after reaching the school-room  
without fidgeting or crossing the legs



while they learned fine old national au-  
stems." And yet it may be that we have  
an exaggerated idea of the severity which  
surrounded the children of antiquity.  
A great feeling of relief came over me when  
I learned that Greek babies had rattles  
and the little girls had dolls. But as my  
sense of I read further my sense of relief  
grew and I began to wonder if my sympa-  
thies so lavishly expended had not been un-  
called for. For I found that they had illus-  
trated lesson books and A. B. C. poems.  
Callias wrote a grammatical tragedy in  
which each one of the letters spoke in the  
prologue and the chorus combined vowels  
and consonants into words.

There were some men, evidently, whose  
opinions on the subject of the early training  
of children were more in accordance  
with what we are accustomed to, but they  
were not probably widely followed. N. A.  
Collins in his little book on Aristophanes  
gives this note to the passage in the Clouds  
where Strepsiades says of Pheidippides:-  
"He was so very clever always, naturally,  
when he was but so high, now, his build makes  
~~him~~ lousier



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Out out a boat, make a coat of an old shoe  
and frogs out of game granite stones - quite  
wonderful."

Says Mr. Collins:- "A fit no doubt at the  
theories of education which were in fashion  
then and have been reversed in modern days.  
Ogden in his treatise on Legislation advised  
that the child who is intended for an archi-  
tect should be encouraged to build toy  
houses, the future Farmer to make little  
gardens and so forth."

The Spartan children, on the other hand,  
knew nothing of tenderness and in  
our thoughts the treatment to which they  
were subjected <sup>from their very babyhood</sup> amounts to positive cruelty.  
The Spartan ideal was warlike strength  
and endurance, first and foremost, every  
thing else being absolutely subordinate.  
At the same age that the little fellows at  
Athena were beginning to learn their letters  
the Spartan boy was sent away from his  
home to live in barracks with others of his  
own age. A strict trainer governed him with  
iron-clad rules and we can imagine  
how sore his little heart may have been  
as he went for the first time to lie down  
on the hard bed of needs which his own



childish hands had gathered and without  
the loving good night which other children  
of six and seven receive from a fond mother.  
His education in contrast to that of the  
Athenian boy, was compulsory by state  
law. Physical training he received of the  
most popular kind, but intellectual be-  
yond the barest rudiments none, with  
the exception of music. Just Reason speaks  
of how much importance was attached  
to self-control, which was even more true  
in Sparta than in Athens.

Very early the children began to mem-  
orize selections from Homer, a book to  
them almost as sacred as the Scriptures  
to us. For this we are expected to pay them  
boundless homage; but to my thinking  
~~αὐτῶν ἀεὶ δεῖα~~ δεῖα is no worse than "Man's  
chief end" which many of us learned be-  
fore we could comprehend it. They became  
more proficient than we; but that is be-  
cause they gave more time to this and a  
great deal less to other studies. The Greek  
father set his children at learning Homer,  
lyrics to the gods and other poetry and  
those for the same reason that our fathers  
gave us the 23rd. Ps. Sermon on the Mt.



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and hosts of other passages, not only an intellectual training but also that they might be in our minds always an incentive to noble life.

The first studies to be taken up in school were the same as we had ourselves at that age; the letters as we called them, 'reading', 'writing', arithmetic in Greek all called by one name γραμματικά. Much less attention was given to arithmetic than to the others. Wax tablet and stylus took the place of pencil and paper, the former a thin oblong board covered with wax, something like our slate, the stylus metal or ivory in shape much like a pencil with one end sharp for writing, the other blunt to erase and smooth over the wax again. These were the cheaper and commoner writing materials but papyrus bark and parchment were also used with reed pens and red and black ink. That writing was one of the chief foundation stones of education we see from what the Sausage Seller in the Knights says in his surprise at the future predicted for him: - "But, good sir, I have not liberal education except writing and this, poor as it is, very poorly."



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Their books must have been awkward things, merely a roll of parchment sometimes on a wooden roller, the title dangling on a tag.

The school-boy's arithmetic consisted mostly of the art of reckoning common to the jests of every day life. His examples in addition, subtraction, and multiplication were more difficult than the same now-a-days; for he did not have the Arabic numerals. Because he worked under this disadvantage and counted on his fingers, all the world still counts by fives. He represented the units by fingers and fractions by bent ones, a relic of which too is left in our word digit, finger. At first he made straight lines for numbers, a method somewhat modified later; for instance by representing five by two straight lines at an angle, the outline which the hand would make when spread in counting that number, and two of these angles with their vertices together ten, and for higher numbers as hundreds and thousands the initial letter of the word as in our Roman system. Numbers were also often represented by letters of the alphabet



The first ten characters standing for those  
from one to ten, the eleventh for twenty, the  
twelfth for thirty and so on. Eleven was  
represented by the letters for ten and one.

Geometry was not taught in the com-  
mon schools; but was a favorite study  
of university students, its importance  
shown by the story that over the door  
of his lecture room Plato had written,  
"Let none ignorant of geometry enter here."

In the common schools in the most  
brilliant period of Athenian glory, the time  
of Pericles there were but three courses,  
grammar, including reading, writing, &  
arithmetic, and music and gymnastics.  
There were no language courses as the  
barbarians were supposed to learn Greek  
and no true Greek would degrade him-  
self by studying a foreign tongue. An  
amusing instance of popular ignorance  
of geography is given us by Aristophanes in  
the Clouds, where Strepsiades when shown  
a map of his own country, is horrified to  
find Sparta only a few miles away from  
Athens and begs to have it removed.

Harmony between body and soul was  
the goal of all education and health of the



body as well as of the soul was first among  
the things to be striven for. The philosophers  
themselves taught that the beautiful and  
the noble held the first rank, then followed  
the just, and then the useful. To reach  
this harmony of body and soul the ed-  
ucation was tri-fold, spiritual and corpo-  
real. "To study with a view to the use of  
learning or its subsequent application  
was considered mechanical and illiberal  
to the last degree."

As to ~~the~~ gymnastic training. While in  
Sparta the physical was considered of the  
~~greatest~~ importance, in Athens it went  
hand in hand with the intellectual and  
brawn was never superior to brain. For  
this there were two places, the palaestra  
exclusively for boys (an institution carried  
on by private means and the gymnasium  
for both men and boys and under State con-  
trol. The games they had were always  
under the supervision of overseers, which  
must have spoiled half the fun. It is a  
surprise to learn that in the matter of  
training and, in fact, of athletics in gen-  
eral, the Greeks, that people whose very  
name has always suggested to our litera-



uninspired minds, the Greek's objection  
in this line, that they were not what  
modern athletes would even consider  
correct.

To music great importance was attach-  
ed as it was thought essential to culture,  
not simply nor primarily as a source of  
pleasure, but because it was supposed  
to purify and elevate the soul. "Education  
in music," says Plato, "is essential because  
rhythm and harmony penetrate to the  
depths of the soul, affect it powerfully and  
teach measure and control." For this  
reason music in the schools was not  
allowed to have a pretentious character,  
simple, noble, dignified melodies alone  
must accompany the words." He finds  
this mentioned by Aristophanes when he  
puts these words into the mouth of the  
Dikaios Logos: - "But if any one should  
play the buffoon or chat any of those  
flourishes such as musicians now-a-  
days affect, those intricate flourishes  
à la Phrygia, he got well dubbed being  
beaten with many stripes for spoiling  
good music."

Other mention made by Aristophanes



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of music taught in the schools is found in the Kingdom where the Chorus says that Cleon touched his lyre so often to the Dorian mode, refusing to learn any other style, that the music master became angry and ordered him to be taken away. A Greek father was as careful about the music his sons ~~heard~~ heard as parents of the present about the books their children read. Plato says further: - "This is the point to which about all the attention of wise rulers should be directed that music and gymnastic be preserved in their original form and no innovations made. Any musical innovation is full of danger to the State and ought to be prevented - That is what Darius tells me and I can quite believe him; he says that when modes of music change the fundamental laws of the State always change with them."

These, then, were the subjects that constituted the curriculum of study for Athenian boys in the common school, which took them to their sixteenth or eighteenth year.

The schools were private enterprises



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receiving no financial aid from the State, tho' it claimed a right to supervision of the manners and morals, not the teaching, schools inspectors being appointed under the management of the Areopagus.

The school-room was not a particularly pleasant place with its bare floors & walls and no seats for the pupils except occasionally rough wooden benches. There might be a statue to some god or the ~~Altar~~ any thing to keep before the attention a lofty ideal. We are told that these old teachers were firm believers and practitioners of the maxim "Spare the rod, spoil the child"; but I can not believe they were without some streak of indulgence; for they kept drinking cups so that the thirsty children might refresh themselves.

It might be well for us if we struck as we walk down to see of 30 classes that we are favoured by some ill fortune to remember these students, who had to go soon after sunrise. And the DeKalb Log tells us that in <sup>his</sup> good old days, they had to go even if the snow came down as thick as lumpy meal.

As for the school-master himself, - he



It was by no means an enviable one. His social position was not the best; his income was small and often slow to come in and criticisms upon him frequently unkind & unreasonable. If he was really learned he was accused of pedantry and if in his eagerness to have his pupils do well, he was impatient at their idleness, he was accused of having a bad temper.

After the common school education the Athenian youth entered the ranks of the Ephebi, patrolling police occupying for the most part the frontier and looking after the safety of the country. Two things were accomplished in this - the state was furnished with men needed for the work and the young men were given training to fit them for active service in the battle-field. They were obliged to serve in this capacity, ~~by state law.~~

Of what may be termed university work in ancient Greece we add merely a word. The professors were those who belonged to the class called Sophists and many, tho' not all, especially in later times were men of noble character.



and not as often supposed villainous. Socrates stands as a representation of the better class of these teachers, and the real beauty of his character, notwithstanding his manifest faults, the modern soul delights to honor.

We can not unconditionally accept Aristophanes' opinion of the Sophists & especially Socrates, because he stood for the old conservative party which then rejected what was really good & true. He had prejudice against any thing new. At first these teachers took no form & place, but in later times they had permanent institutions. Many of them were visionary, some of them were shallow; but as a whole the work they did for Greece was not such as she could have missed without great loss. As Mahaffy says:—"These men really shaped and the first form which university education took in Europe, meaning by university education that higher general training, which, coming after common school discipline, trains men for the duties of social & political as well as scientific & literary life."



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In conclusion let me quote again from Prof. Mahaffy. He says: "The Greeks were far behind us in the mechanical aids to human progress, they understood not the use of electricity or of steam or of gunpowder or of printing. But in spite of this the Greek public was far better educated than we are - nay to some extent because of this it was better educated."