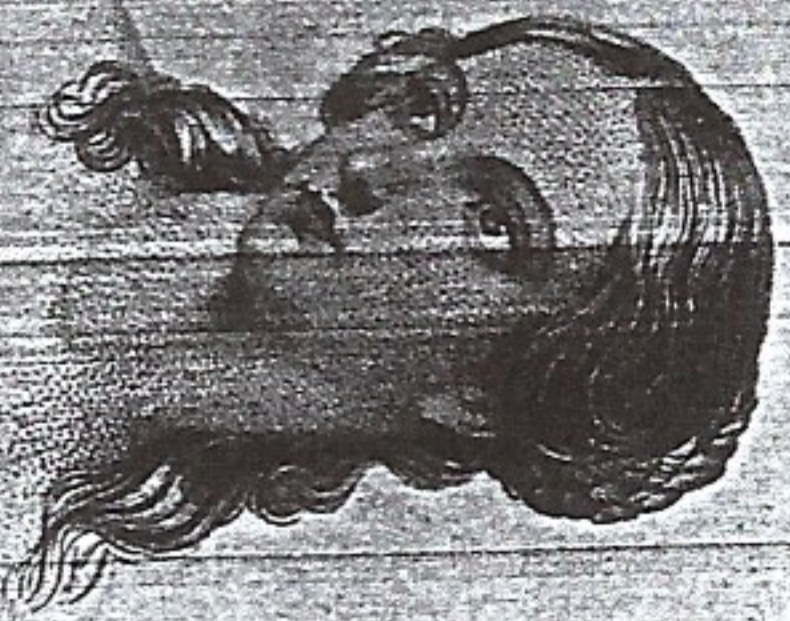


THE BOOKS

AND

AMERICAN SMITHS



BOSTON:

Wm. Brodribb & Company

MDDCCCLXII.

1862

## PHRENOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS.

BY MRS. SERA SMITH.

GENTLE reader, art thou a Phrenologist? If so, we will indulge in a few harmless lucubrations.

We will, if you please, enter this place of public resort, because, if I mistake not, there is a school kept hard by, and soon the door will fly open, and out will burst a little host of future legislators, embryo judges, incipient divines, and unledged orators and statesmen.

Stand one side. Hurrah!—out they come. Now mark; did you ever see such a set of heads? What facial angles! what breadth, height, and compass of brain! Observe their temperaments too. None of your little, puny, pale-faced children of the aristocracy, looking like the relics of humanity; but firm, athletic, vigorous young republicans, half able, even now, to cope with the venerable and musty sticklers for preëminence, and ancient usages in the tottering fabrics of other lands. Mark

## PHRENOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS. 101

the clear, brilliant eye, looking as if a very volcano of thought and passion were slumbering beneath. Address them, and ten to one, some sturdy young democrat will read you a lecture upon the rights and privileges of boyhood, worthy of a Jefferson.

Does any one believe the mothers of boys like these, are weak, nervous, unthinking fashionables? No, it is contrary to the very laws of our being. They are strong-minded, strong-hearted, rational matrons, worthy to be the country-women of Mary, the mother of Washington,—worthy to be called American wives, American mothers. Of the fathers we will say nothing now. It is the mother that stamps the character of the future man. She gives the bias to good or ill,—makes him the hero, philosopher, or statesman. It is she who makes him the upright, virtuous citizen, the supporter of the laws of his country, and the upholder of its institutions, or the degraded and depraved outcast, on whom the stern arm of justice executes her severest penalties.

She may be unconscious of all this, but it is no less the fact. Her child will inherit hers, rather than its father's intellectual organization; and it is the tones of *her* voice, *her* teachings

by its infant bed, *her* language and daily demeanor, that are stamping its character, and making the hereafter good or bad man. If she knows all this, and is faithless to her trust, who shall depict the guilt and woe that may ensue? Nature, as well as religion, cry shame upon such a mother.

But we are straying. Let us stand by in this recess, and mark the boys as they divide themselves into groups. Do you see that boy in the centre of half a dozen others, all of whom are talking with great vehemence, while he is entirely calm? There, I am glad of that, he has taken off his hat, and we can see his head distinctly. What a calm, intellectual brow! He is rather pale too,—a young student. But mark the preponderance of the intellectual over the animal region. He will through life sway the intellects, but never the passions of men. He speaks now, and his voice is low, and very sweet; the boys are perfectly quiet about him. There has been some juvenile litigation amongst them, and they have chosen him umpire; and they will abide by his decision too.

He has given his award now, and, I dare say, it is worthy of a Hale. You see the boys are perfectly satisfied with the propriety of his

decision, and are dispersing. That boy, I doubt not, will one day sit in the place, once occupied by Chief Justice Marshall, unless he be overtaken in youth, and thus fall a victim to his precocity.

There comes a young leader, swinging his cap, and hurrahing at the top of his lungs, followed by a score of boys, all as eager as himself, about to engage, I warrant, in some trial of strength or skill. You see those boys are all smart, all active, but yet how naturally they move off in the wake of that young champion. What a Napoleon head is there! What power in the animal region! and how nobly balanced by the broad, intellectual forehead! That boy is made to command armies, and to sway popular assemblies. He will rule, let him be where he will. People will bow before him as by an instinct they cannot resist.

What are those boys collecting about that rich, crusty old gentleman's door-way for? They are in close consultation, and, if I mistake not, he was more than once rated them soundly for making so much noise about his premises. Hurrah! there it goes, three cheers for Mr. ———, and they are off in a giffy. Out comes the old gentleman, his face red with wrath, shaking his head, and

denouncing vengeance upon every soul of them. He looks up and down the street, — not a boy is to be seen. There, a roguish, chuckling face has just peered round the corner, and is off like a flash. He gives chase. The boys have been round the square, and, in the absence of the owner, have repeated the cheers at his door, and now turn up another avenue. They will not dare repeat the experiment, and the irritated, baffled old man goes in, breathless and mortified, ruminating plans of revenge.

Here is a group of miniature politicians, deep in the mysteries of party. They gesticulate as much as their fathers, and are ten times more in earnest. They are of opposite parties too, and some heat has been elicited, for combativeness is pretty actively excited. Hard names have been exchanged, and both leaders (you can easily distinguish them) are quite red in the face. Yes there are blows, and their voices grow loud. "Call me Tory, will you? I won't stand that, — the Tories helped the British, and were against our independence." "Then don't call me Hartford Conventioneer, — nobody shall do that."

There, will not those boys understand the principles of our government? Will they not at

some day be nobly capable of exercising the elective franchise? Suppose they be a little intemperate in their discussions, it is infinitely better than the dull, cold apathy of a despotism.

Our boys have a most sovereign contempt for what we call aristocracy. Even the boys of the silly things in our land, who try to affect the airs of that class, will do nothing of themselves to sustain such pretensions, except as it is drilled into them by perpetual talking and coercion. The boy has everywhere a glorious contempt for *caste*. He naturally chooses the brightest and smartest boys for companions; let them be found where they may.

I recollect in a neighbouring city the boys at one time were divided into two classes, distinguished by the names of the "upper-enders," and "lower-enders," and much bickering and ill-blood ensued. The upper-enders were the sons of the wealthier citizens, and the lower-enders, of the middling class.

Never did one boy meet another of the opposite faction without bristling up and looking defiance, or skulking to the other side of the street, according to the strength of his nerves, age, &c. Things remained in this condition,

apparently, for some time ; though a close observer might have detected symptoms indicative of an approaching crisis. The lower-enders began to bandy contemptuous terms ; sometimes "stumped" the upper-enders to fight, — talked of gloves, soft hands, and white faces. The upper-enders grew exasperated, tried to look fierce, and at length, screwing their courage to the sticking-point, actually challenged their opponents to combat. The call was obeyed with alacrity. Never did mail-clad champions of the olden time thirst more eagerly to distinguish themselves in military prowess, than did these doughty heroes of a dozen years, to signalize themselves in the war of the upper-enders and lower-enders.

It was a bright moonlight evening. The elements were hushed, unconscious of the great destinies about to be decided, or else breathless with expectation. A certain brother of mine, a youthful Maurs, having enjoined silence, divulged the precious secret. I was at that time too much an admirer of martial achievements to betray him, and he departed with many and sage injunctions to "be careful," "not to get hurt," &c. About eleven o'clock he returned thorough-

ly bespotted and betorn ; but what was all that, and a few bruises into the bargain, when his party had been victorious ! The lower-enders had beaten the upper-enders, and driven them into yards and enclosures, whence they dared not show a head ; and they never, from that day forth, presumed to turn up a nose at the lower-enders. Thus ended the war.

All this is boyhood, you say ; ay, and so it is ; but it is American boyhood. Did you ever think of the thing before ? Did you ever think of the difference of boyhood in our own country, and that of every other on the face of the earth ? Did you ever think of the contrast in America and England even ? Here we have no aristocracy, no privileged orders, no laws of primogeniture ; and boyhood, in the mass, must be altogether a different affair in the mother country, from what it is with us ; and it is too obviously so under other governments to admit of even a comparison.

Our boys will not tamely submit to usurpation, to airs of superiority ; they are keen observers, and even keen thinkers. They ask the why of every thing, and the wherefore must be rational indeed, to excite the reverence of these

stripling republican cavaliers. They are such boys as our own institutions, and no others, are calculated to develop. Their education is in accordance,—the circumstances by which they are surrounded are likely to make such boys unlike those of any other country; and they must be followed by such men. And here I come to the point phrenologically.

The institutions of America, all of them, political, moral, and religious, are, of all others, best calculated for the development of the higher faculties of our nature; and these are of themselves establishing among us a *cast, a type of head, which will itself guaranty the perpetuity of those institutions.*

We have nothing to fear from foreign or internal disorganizers and corrupters,—for the permanency of our institutions is written upon the very brows of our children,—in plain, legible characters upon the forehead of every school-boy, that, sauntering, swings his satchel in our streets. We need not enter the legislative hall, to seek for the conservative principle of our government; it is to be found everywhere, in the vigorous, manly outline of the heads of our professional men, our artisans, our free voters.