

## SCHOOLING.

### The Modern System of Cramming Hateful to Children.

Schooling is a great thing, of course. Education, we are taught to believe as an article of faith, is the one thing that's making everybody happy and rich. But just how great schooling is and just how valuable education as we buy it is I never quite knew until a few years ago when a country schoolmaster gave me one of his experiences.

The inspector had come round to inspect the country schoolmaster's school, you know, and the scholars were marshalled up to have whole volleys of questions shot off at them, when, to the country schoolmaster's horror and despair, they got this charge of grape shot right square in the middle of 'em: "Tell me," quoth the inspector, slowly and solemnly, it never striking either himself or the poor despairing schoolmaster that the whole thing was richly humorous. "Tell me," quoth he, "what were the battles in the wars of the Roses? And the date of each? And the leaders on each side? And who won? And who were the leaders killed in each, if any?"

Then he turned round leisurely, leaving the twelve-year-olds to flounder in this mud of questions, and began to speak of something else.

But the poor country schoolmaster couldn't stand it. He'd got enthusiastic over his school, and thought of nothing else early and late, and bought a microscope to show how butterflies had feathers, and had spent hours and hours explaining how the wars of the Roses were just the struggle between rival feudal lords as to which should be on top, and how the result was that the winner, all other great lords being killed off, became a despot only to find that the Commons—the traders and small land owners—had crept up by playing always for their own hands in this game of three-handed euchre. And he'd told them that this was the golden age of the English poor, because the barons were too much occupied in cutting each other's throats to be very oppressive, and because wages were higher than ever before or since, and because of all sorts of other things. And his scholars just knew where the wars of the Roses came in I tell you, even though they didn't know armfuls of dates and names, and here was a question that would make his school look altogether neglected, and his school a badly taught school when it was one of the best taught in Canada. So he said, kind of timid, you know:

"They won't be able to answer that question. I've never taught them dates and names."

"But why not?" inquired the inspector. "They're all in the period, and you're supposed to teach it according to the handbook."

"But I don't know those names and dates myself," urged the country schoolmaster, dodging the question. "If I taught them they'd only forget. I try to teach them what they'll remember." The "thems" and "theys" are getting mixed, ain't they?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't know the names and dates either," admitted the inspector, who wasn't half a bad sort, and not an addie-pated pedagogue. "Still, they're supposed to learn them. It's in the period, you know. However, I'll ask them something else." And he did ask them something else, accordingly, and at the end of the year this country schoolmaster's school was on top in the reports. But supposing the inspector had been a muf? Why, just because the man hadn't crammed his unfortunate boys and girls with a lot of worthless trash he'd have found his school reported as horribly neglected, and himself as fit only for farming. I know the machine-department spirit. I wouldn't be a bit astonished to hear it

ordered that all schoolmasters must be of one size round the waist. It's practically ordered that they must be one size round the head already.

Now, I believe in education, and I'm convinced that schooling is one of the wings of happiness, don't you know. But I really can't for the life of me agree that just because schooling as we have it is better than nothing it's very much to be proud of. I know that I'm guilty of heresy and schism, and all that, and shall be thought of by many as a regular blackleg from the democratic faith when I rise to remark that Canada school education is mostly a huge farce, and that the good resulting from it is very largely in our minds and nowhere else. It may lighten this somewhat to add that other schooling is usually no better and generally much worse.

Do you happen to recollect how you were to'd fairy tales and stories when you were small, or if you don't recollect haven't you ever told fairy tales to the little ones? And haven't you noticed that, long before they could repeat the story at all, much less word for word, how they knew, the little rascals, if you dropped a single line or altered a single figure of speech, and how they love to hear the same story and over again? Their little memories are like magic glasses which show pictures as you breathe on them, so delicate, so tender, so strangely fantastic in what they catch and what they do not catch. Who hasn't been put in a quandry by a child's alarming remembrances and terrible resurrection of words and scenes at awkward moments? And who hasn't seen a little child pondering in its little mind over some puzzling riddle it has tumbled on, and who hasn't felt a kind of reverence for the baby intellect that tackles everything in its sweet, quaint baby way? I've heard soom poor benighted people say that the smart children's sayings are all nonsense, that children never say 'em. Now, didn't some people ought to die out of a world whose very little children they don't know.

I mind a child of mine disputing with its playmates over the great question as to how babies came. And I told it when it asked me as simply as I could that all things grew from eggs opened a flower to show it the ovum and how this made the eggs grow and the seeds come. And the little innocent, in the fulness of its heart, started in the next day to parade its knowledge.

"Only chickens come from eggs," retorted a youthful cynic.

"Well," said the little one, paused for a moment but recollecting "chicken is what my mamma calls me."

And so all along a child's life, if you watch it, you can see its little brain at work, and its little soul blossoming to the sunlight. Its very play is learning. Its great joy is to have "talks." And this little mite of a human life is sent to school and treated like a pat of butter to be stamped to a certain shape. Its little memory is forced to remember dry, dull facts that we all know it'll forget the moment it's old enough. And its little life is haunted with a nightmare of lessons, lessons, lessons, which it's considered bad if it doesn't like. I hated school myself. And so did most of us. And so do most of the children now.

### EQUALITY IN NATURE.

The sentiment of equality in nature is the political creed of our epoch, and is conformable to the law of nature which makes effects adequate to their causes. This political creed of humanity cannot fail to engender ideas of equity, which will become broader and broader and more and more practicable as time rolls on. This sentiment of equity is wounded, crushed and well nigh destroyed by the present industrial organization of the capitalists. By prosecuting industry upon a large scale for the exclusive profit of a few shareholders, the bourgeoisie destroy the individuality and independence of the producers.

Fifty years ago we had millions of artisans working at their own homes, on their own account, in nearly all

branches of industry. To-day the very great majority are in the factories of the capitalists working as wage slaves. From being their own masters, as they were, they have become wage workers; they work for other masters, they obey their bidding, their rules and regulations, their caprice. They must arrive at the minute to the sound of the whistle (which has been aptly christened the American devil); they are drilled and disciplined like soldiers in barracks; the profits of their labor no longer belong to themselves, but to their bosses, who prove themselves to be irresponsible tyrants.

Is it, then, astonishing, finding themselves deteriorated—physically, socially and morally, powerless to struggle against the continued reduction of the prices of products made by machinery which belongs to the capitalists—that the workers should have sought for some means whereby to reconcile their personal dignity as freemen, with the ever-descending prices of products and the increasing degradation of the condition of labor, and that they should do this in the interest of the collectivity? It would be still more astonishing were it otherwise.

Social science having demonstrated that if the instruments of labor were placed at the disposition of all, instead of producing for the profit and fortune of one, there would be more wealth, happiness and equity among men. Is it astonishing that they should have resolved to eliminate all useless intermediaries, all the aristocracy of idlers, all parasites, and all artificial monopoly?

Injustice always irritates men, and they revolt against it. How can we suppose that millions of unfortunate beings who have worked all their lives for nothing but their food, clothing and shelter, while they have made gigantic fortunes for their employers, can look upon this condition of things as other than a condition of injustice? And can we look upon human nature as being so stupid as not to try to discover some new combination of the means of labor which should reconcile the moral dignity of man with his physical well-being? How can we believe that, having mentally perceived the problem, the producer could fail to seek for a material solution in the elimination of this aristocracy of idleness, this feudalism of industry, this standing army of loafers, which spoliates and degrades them?

Supposing that the worker accepts, in a cringing and cowardly manner, the poverty which to-day chains him to misery, has he the slightest guarantee that to-morrow his lot will not be worse? What assurance has he that the proprietor of a factory, a field or a house will not deprive him of labor, diminish his wages or increase his rent?

Everything is too uncertain and too contrary to his interests in the present state of society, for him to support these evils with patience much longer, and it should be a source of gratification to us that it is so, for without this sentiment of revolutionary justice, which every man feels within his breast, we should remain in a state of stagnation, and it is well known that society must either progress or die; it cannot remain stationary.

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