

PUBLIC SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.

[Contributed to, and under the management of, Mr. S. McAllister, Headmaster of Ryerson School, Toronto.]

THE RELATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS.*

I DO not profess to deal exhaustively with this subject, but will make a few suggestions for the consideration of my younger fellow teachers. Every one will admit that there ought to be friendly feelings between parents and teachers; where such feelings do not exist the teacher's influence is weak and his efforts are of little avail, be he ever so able and zealous in his work. Let us glance at some methods which are adopted by teachers to produce them. Some resort to frequent visiting; for in certain localities it is looked upon as one of the essential qualifications of a teacher that he be a good visitor. Teachers, in some instances, are not slow to adapt themselves to this easy way of gaining the good-will of the people; they adopt a pleasing style of conversation, take a somewhat pliant stand in theology and politics, suit themselves agreeably to the learned and to the illiterate, distribute their visits periodically, so that the parents are delighted, if not honoured and instructed, by the attentions of their teacher. He is soon looked upon as far superior to most of his predecessors in social amenities. Others try to win the affections of the parents through the pupils. Various devices are employed to this end. Some give presents, in the shape of prizes, cards, or confectionery. Others are mild and kind to a gushing extent. They never say anything that would give offence to the pupils; and if they do forget themselves in an unguarded moment, an abject apology must make things right ere

the child leaves for home. No thought is entertained of punishing the child's guilt as it deserves by a castigation, lest ill-feeling should be engendered, and unpleasantness be caused, on the part of the parents toward himself. Others seek to gain and retain the esteem of the pupils and parents by avoiding all appearance of harshness; they speak kindly even to delinquent pupils whose conduct is most reprehensible. They eschew corporal punishment, as fit only for a barbarous people in a barbarous age, and pretend to regard it as something that should not be introduced into the school-room by ladies and gentlemen in this enlightened nineteenth century. Order must not be enforced if pain will be caused, or if harsh measures have to be resorted to in order to secure it. The preparation of home work, if obnoxious, must not be rigidly insisted on, however easy the tasks may be, and however able the pupils may be to prepare them. And thus months may sometimes elapse without any serious study. At last a difficulty stares such a teacher in the face; a creditable appearance must be made at the annual spring examination. But he is equal to the emergency. The scholars are prepared to answer certain questions; the departures from these are so few that the pupils answer with great readiness and accuracy; and a correspondent of some local newspaper writes of the examination as "a grand success." The teacher who has accomplished so much is a fruitful source of conversation in the locality, and although his pupils be profoundly ignorant of the rudiments of an elementary education, and, many of them inwardly regard the whole examination as a fraud, expressions like the following are not infrequent: "We have

*Abstract of a paper read before the Waterloo Teachers' Association, by William Linton, Cedar Creek.