

But the main question still towers above us like a citadel: "What is the Mission of the Public School?" Before assaulting it, let us run another parallel. Is there an education that all men in a free State need; an education that furnishes a general preparation for life; an education that belongs to no particular walk in life, but that is a pre-requisite for all walks; an education that does not develop particular dexterities so much as it develops the man who is back of dexterities, and is more than dexterities; an education that extra State agencies cannot furnish, in the first place, and that State agency can better furnish, in almost all cases, in the second place? If there is such an education, manifestly it lies within the province of the public school. Let us see if we can find an education that fills up this measure.

#### PRIMARY AND GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.

Argument is scarcely needed to show that we have such an education in those studies that are now pursued in our primary and grammar schools. The studies form the common platform of all education, considered in the technical or school sense. No matter what dexterities a man cultivates later; no matter what special lines of study he may follow, no matter what broader and fuller course of study he may master; no matter what profession he may choose or what arts cultivate, these studies he must have. They are essential to the growth of the man and to his success in life. I shall here throw them into three groups:

*First:* Reading, spelling, penmanship, language, and grammar. These studies have to do, first, with acquisition, and secondly, with expression. The pupil must acquire knowledge; he must be able to communicate his knowledge. In the earliest stages of human history direct observation of men and things is the only way to learn. In the next stage, men not only observe directly, but they learn from the oral teaching or tradition of those older or better informed than themselves. Then come writing and books, which are in some sense the most valuable source of information and training. In a literary age literature becomes the great instrument of the school. Thus, to learn to read is the first and greatest of school acquisitions. It is the key to the vast store-house of recorded knowledge. Hence, to say of a man, in our society, that he cannot read, is to say of him that he is untaught and ignorant. Next, writing is the art preservative of arts; next to oral speech, it is the instrument of communication; older than books in its origin, it is later, or, at most, contemporaneous in its acquisition. Then, in connection with reading and writing, should be mentioned such training in spelling, language, and grammar as will enable the pupil to express with force and correctness his thoughts and feelings. These things may be thrown under the general head of composition,—a branch of education hitherto neglected in schools, and that calls for a larger cultivation.

*Secondly:* Those rudiments of mathematics which constitute arithmetic. These rudiments must be taught partly because they are a business necessity, and partly because they are an invaluable practice in logic. Time will not be taken here to determine just how much arithmetic, but it is pertinent to remark that, as a rule, the strongest thinkers among men who have had only common-school education will be found among the good arithmeticians.

*Thirdly:* A modicum of geography and history,—modicum, I mean, as compared with what may be known. The school geography cannot be a cyclopedia, nor can the school history be an extended treatise.

Such is my grouping of the common studies. It will be observed that drawing, music, civil polity, and German are not included. This is not because I undervalue these studies. As I am not drawing up a course of study, but making an outline, I am not here called upon to discuss disputed questions. It suffices to say that some room should be found for drawing, music, and civil polity in common schools, though they should not be pushed to the front. Whether German shall be taught or not, will depend upon the presence or absence, in any community, of a considerable German-speaking and reading population. For American history and polity I must say, however, that they should by all means have a place in American schools, especially so long as the great defence of our State schools is the argument that the State must educate in her own defence.

#### SCHOOL RECEPTIONS.

BY J. A. WILLARD.

The fact is established by Divine authority that it is not well for man or woman to labor alone, devoid of human help and human sympathy. We are so constituted by nature that it gives us pleasure to see our friends. Our doors are always open to welcome them, and we make special effort to entertain them, to contribute to their happiness, well-being, and amusement.

We are, or should be, a genial people. And it is especially a teacher's duty to cultivate that trait of character. True geniality never detracts from true dignity; indeed they are almost inseparable traits. Wide is a teacher's influence, almost beyond the limits of human comprehension, for who shall fix its bounds? In her daily life her every act makes its impress upon the minds of her pupils, and they in turn, acting upon their associates, extend her influence far and wide. Every day of a teacher's life is as a pebble, or weightier stone, cast into a pool whose circling eddies widen and widen until they meet the shores of time; and who shall say they do not reach over into eternity? It is a teacher's duty to see that her influence is of the best; then to strengthen and extend that influence by every available means. What is her best course for so doing?

An excellent method is to reach the pupils in their homes. But how shall she do this? The teacher of a graded room has from forty to fifty pupils, coming from as many different households. She has manifold school duties, which overlap the limit of school hours. If, in one of the higher grades, she has daily written work to be examined, weekly or monthly diaries or reports to be filled out for every pupil, monthly or bi-monthly examinations to be marked carefully and justly at their merited per cent., lessons to be planned, fresh questions and new ideas to be lung in which will awaken her pupils to a keener mental activity and greater zeal to search beyond the text-book in hand,—illimitable work which any earnest teacher cannot fail of finding,—it is impossible for her to secure time to visit each one of these forty or fifty different homes.

Fellow-teachers, if you cannot go to the homes, bring the homes to you. But perhaps you say the homes will not come to you. No, not singly and alone. Now and then a mother or a sister will come into your school-room for an hour, venturing the remark that "she fears you don't like company and she is troubling you," and will sit in a constrained way, as if she had no right there,—perhaps partly because you are a little constrained and illly at ease. But the majority of the homes do not visit the school-room at all. They elect the members of the school board, at least the male portions of the home do this, and they send their children to school. There their interest seems to end, unless their son happens to be punished, or not promoted as rapidly as they think he ought to be. Then they severely criticise the teacher, the principal, and perhaps the superintendent, the school board, and the whole school system, without stopping to inquire into the cause of the son's probably-more-than-deserved punishment or non-promotion.

This is not as it should be. There should be a cordial and constant coöperation between parent and teacher. They should know each other personally, and thereby be an actual, living, continual help to each other. The pupils of a public school come from all sorts of homes. Some from homes where the influences are pure, elevating, and refining; and some from habitations which can hardly be called homes. And it is often these very habitations that the teacher has most need of reaching. They need her regenerating influence while she needs their coöperation in controlling insubordinate and refractory spirits. A word of command from a rough, illiterate father to perhaps an equally rough son may save a teacher many a day of trial. Now, these fathers and mothers will not come singly to visit the school. Not even the medium class will do so. And from the best homes they come, if they come at all, "like angels visits,—few and far between."

No, the majority of homes will not come to you singly and alone. Then set apart a special day, and invite them to come to you in company. Make special preparation for the day. Interest your pupils in it, and you may be assured they will rouse the interest of

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