

## Correspondence.

KINGSVILLE ONT., Jan., 29th, 1884.

To the Editor of the CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—I am one of the many who take pleasure in reading our common property the CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL, although at times I hold to opinions opposite to those advocated by it. At present I beg to explain my disagreement with your editorial on "History in the Public Schools" in the January number last.

You quote "proceed from the known to the unknown," then desire that we start at the Victorian age and work backwards. Pray, sir, what do public school children who have not started History know of the present age? They know partially that two contending factions are on the public stage, that *Grits and Tories* (unexplainable terms to them) are in opposition but their ideas of public weal, business, or advancement are vague indeed.

And, sir, are the minds of the children capable of grasping any ideas of the advancement, progress, and stupendous work of the present age in the study of *History* without first having other periods known to institute comparisons with?

Perhaps my views are too conservative in this respect and I need more enlightenment; but I hold with "beginning at the beginning" and working down. My reasons I will endeavor to explain.

The first part of the *History* of most countries is not very distinct. It is traditional and much in the form of a simple yet attractive story that a beginner (a child of ten or twelve) would readily understand. The pupil could trace, with proper teaching, the growth of the nation and with his mental eye look back into the story, and picture the events as easily as he now can a Sabbath School story book or one of *Beadle's Dime or Nickel* mental poisons. It will be like a child watching builders erecting a house,—foundation, collar, sidewalls, windows, doors, chimneys, are easily understood by him in parts but if he looks at the completed edifice, as he would at the present aspect of the Empire of Great Britain or the Dominion of Canada, he would but very indefinitely comprehend the steps, or the order of their procedure in producing the present condition. Children, too, have time to watch these steps rather than to analyze steps from effects, and if they but correctly have the successive stages of history delineated for them they will be interested enough when they are older to inquire into the complex problems of nineteenth century history, to see the repetition of history, to see the reasons of certain procedures, to comprehend the allusions to historic events that have influenced the people, language, commerce, and international affairs, made in the public press. As for the amassing and committing to memory of *dry bones and numberless dates*, I think that about one-tenth of what we have will be ample.

Why have not historians tried to write a text book commencing at the present age to work backwards? Because it is next to impossible, it would be such a see-saw, intermingled business that it would never see the light of day. It looks very pretty perhaps as a theory and may appear to have a parallel in science, geography, etc., but when in these studies we must commence at the beginning. In arithmetic we do not start at the results of ages of calculations.

There is a tendency to look upon every new idea advanced in school affairs as the best; that all twenty-year-old notions are questionable if not useless; that perhaps our father and their ideas were behind their precocious children. I have tried teaching of things of the present time, but found that I had to refer back so much to explain terms that it was nothing but giving the whole in a lump, an impossibility. Is not the present entrance examination in history a cause of such land-mark, bird's-eye, skeleton, date-be-spangled teaching of history? The questions range from 55 B. C. to A. D.

1876 about, over more territory than, though perhaps not so thoroughly desired as, first class teachers' history requirements.

Trusting that I have not trespassed too far on your valuable space.

I remain yours, very truly,

FRANK LEIGH.

[We are glad our correspondent has given his own views on this subject. We hope many of our friends will discuss educational matters from their own stand points. It is useful to have both sides of a question clearly presented, and is the only way in which sound progress in methods can be accomplished. In addition to what we have already said on the teaching of history we submit the following points.

1. More than 75 per cent of the pupils leave the public schools without entering the fourth class in which the study of history is begun.

2. Only a very small fraction of the remainder stay long enough at school to master even the barest outline of English and Canadian history.

3. Consequently, for all but a very small fraction the choice lies between the ancient Britons and the story of our own times.

4. We have never proposed that a history should begin with 1884 and go backwards. We maintain that it would in all respects be better in the first place to teach the history of the last two hundred years rather than of the first thousand as introductory to the great study of history.—EDITOR.]

A TEACHER FROM THE OLD COUNTRY, who is engaged in the County of Haliburton, sends a cheery, well-written letter which has the right ring about it. He hopes "to climb by degrees to the top of the tree" and will, we hope, attain his ambition. In commenting on the article, "School Matters in England,"—see Sep. 1883,—he gives the following interesting information about English teachers,—"The youthful aspirant to the office of teacher, must have reached the 6th standard, must pass the Inspector's Candidate's Examination and then undergo the Pupil Teacher's Course of 5 years; then if successful in all the examinations, he or she is supposed to go for 2 years to one of the Training Colleges, but this is sometimes evaded."

In reply to Lennox Teacher he recommends constant employment as a cure for whispering, and directs attention to the articles on the subject in the Jan. and Nov. numbers of last year's JOURNAL.

MR. SAMUEL ATTER, Abingdon, requests replies to the following:—

1. In case a teacher loses, say ten days in a year; in deducting their value from his salary, how would the price per day be obtained? that is, would the price per day be found by dividing the amount of his yearly salary by 220 the number of teaching days in a year, or by dividing the salary by 313, the number of working days in a year, or by 365 the days in a year? (Teacher hired by the year.)

2. Can a school meeting be legally closed before 11 a.m., when no poll is demanded?

3. In case of nomination for trustee, how long is given for demanding a poll, or does the statute give any definite time; if an hour, would business have to be retarded so as to see if any would demand a poll?

4. If the school meeting be opened according to law, and a trustee elected by a majority of those present or without opposition by those present, but after his election a number more of the electors come and elect another man before 11 a.m., which would be the legal trustee?

An American student of Latin being confined to his room by sickness was called upon by a friend. "What, John," said the visitor, "sick, eh?" "Yes," answered John, "sic sum!"