

The Politician and the Public School.

The June *Atlantic Monthly* has a very instructive and suggestive article by Supt. L. H. Jones, upon the baneful influence of the unscrupulous politician on the public schools; and he points out that the reason for the acknowledged superiority of the schools of the cities of Indianapolis and Cleveland lies in the fact that they have largely escaped the influence of this pernicious factor in educational matters.

The article referred to contains for us many useful hints as to the present, and suggestive warnings for the future. Thanks to a certain amount of conservatism in our educational polity the politician is not and can not be so much in evidence as in the United States. Yet the species is known and recognized here, and not seldom he wields influence to the injury of the school service.

Mr. Jones says: "The unscrupulous politician is the greatest enemy that we now have to contend with in public education. His highest conception of the public school is that its revenues offer him the opportunity of public plunder. Did he accomplish his end without other injury to the cause of education than the depletion of its revenues, he might be ranked merely with the common thief. Between the officious impertinence of the politician and the apathy of the good citizen, there is a fine field for work.

"The creation of the office of superintendent is a recognition of the need of an executive officer who is an expert in this very work which the members of the Board are unfit, through lack of training to perform. Having provided such an officer * * * in my own judgment the proper method is to give to the superintendent (either by statute or by the common consent of the School Board) full power to appoint, promote and discharge teachers, and to hold him strictly to account for but one thing—good schools."

This is the plan followed in the cities of Indianapolis and Cleveland. In the former city the scheme is dependent upon the good will of the citizens, and although the politician has again and again sought to have it otherwise, he has heretofore disastrously failed. In Cleveland this control is vested in the hands of the superintendent by statute, and the educational interests are considered beyond comparison safer than those of any other city in the Union.

In other cities, superintendents are appointed, and except in mere matters of detail, are more or less subservient to low grade politicians. Teachers are appointed on the following grounds: "He belongs to a good family, has high social standing, is of a scholarly turn of mind, has always wished to be a teacher, has had

reverse of fortune, has failed in other fields of endeavor, has friends who are taxpayers.

"In some cases, poverty has been assigned as an incontestable qualification, while in a few cases ill health, debarring the applicant from entering upon hard labor, has been offered as an imperative reason for immediate employment as teacher in the public schools." But church influence and partizan politics are the two influences around which most of the undesirable appointments cluster.

"Appointments are made, promotions secured, removals effected on the basis of political auction. 'How many votes can you secure me for mayor when I become a candidate?' seems to be the question in mathematics required in many places."

"The teacher must trade with the merchant, bank with the bankers, take treatment of the doctors, consult with lawyers, and connive with politicians of the dominant party."

"One man writes: 'Teachers here must be of certain church denomination.' Another puts it vividly: 'A teacher's position is very much dependent upon church relations.'

"The modern politician murders the children for mere gain, and it does not seem to make much difference that his own children are among the number. Partizan politics is the most horrible curse that ever spread its blighting influence over the public schools."

First-Class Teachers.

The action of the St. John City School Board in declining to appoint for the future any but first-class teachers, is one that deserves commendation. The same policy has been pursued for some time by the trustees of St. Stephen and Moncton, and has been urged upon St. John by the inspector and others. It is understood that this policy is not to be retroactive, but is only to apply to future appointments. It may be taken for granted that it contains at least a suggestion that all teachers should qualify in accordance with the standard that will in future be required.

There can be no doubt but that this plan will add to the efficiency of the schools. First-class teachers imply a higher standard of scholarship, in itself most desirable, greater experience and higher professional skill. It may not be that a first class teacher will invariably do better work than a second or even a third, but the presumption is in favor of it, and experience has demonstrated it to be true. It is true also, that individuality is to be taken into account in all trades and professions. To expect a third or second-class teacher to perform the work of one holding a