

the other day, when Canon Fleming insisted on entertaining from the Conference quite an unreasonably large party of us, the managers, too, have been my kind friends. And the teachers! When I think of their good will, their confidence in me, their alacrity to comply with my wishes—when I think of all this, crowned finally by our meeting to-night and by their beautiful gift—I am indeed disposed to say with Wordsworth that it is the gratitude of man which leaves one mourning.

I ask myself with astonishment to what I owe this confidence, this favour. I assure you I am not at all a harsh judge of myself. But I know perfectly well that there have been much better inspectors than I. Whence, then, all this favour and confidence towards me? Well, one cause of it was certainly that I was my father's son; another cause has been, I think, that I am more or less known to the public as an author, and I have been always touched to see how the teachers—so often reproached with being fault-finders and over-weening—are disposed to defer to their inspector on the score of any repute he may have as an author, although undoubtedly an author of repute may be but a bad inspector. However, I do not mean to say that I think I have been altogether a bad inspector. I think I have had two qualifications for the post. One is that of having a serious sense of the nature and function of criticism. I from the first sought to see the schools as they really were. Thus, it was soon felt that I was fair, and that the teachers had not to apprehend from me crotchets, pedantries, humours, favouritism and prejudices.

That was one qualification. Another was that I got the habit, very early in my time, of trying to put myself in the place of the teachers whom I was inspecting. I will tell you how that

came about. Though I am a school-master's son, I confess that school teaching or school inspecting is not the line of life I should naturally have chosen. I adopted it in order to marry a lady who is here to-night, and who feels the kindness as warmly and gratefully as I do. My wife and I had a wandering life of it at first. There were but three lay inspectors for all England. My district went right across from Pembroke Dock to Great Yarmouth. We had no home; one of our children was born in a lodging at Derby, with a workhouse, if I recollect right, behind and a penitentiary in front. But the irksomeness of my new duties was what I felt most, and during the first year or so this was sometimes almost insupportable. But I met daily in the schools with men and women discharging duties akin to mine, duties as irksome as mine, duties less well paid than mine, and I asked myself, Are they on roses? Would not they by nature prefer, many of them, to go where they liked and do what they liked, instead of being shut up in school? I saw them making the best of it; I saw the cheerfulness and efficiency with which they did their work, and I asked myself again, How do they do it? Gradually it grew into a habit with me to put myself into their places, to try and enter into their feelings, to represent to myself their life, and I assure you I got many lessons from them. This placed me in sympathy with them. I will not accept all the praise you have given me, but I will accept this—I have been fair, and I have been sympathetic.

And now, my kind friends of many years, before we come to the word which, as Byron tells us, must be and hath been, although it makes us linger, the word farewell, let me give a counsel and make a reflection. First, the counsel. You have a very strong association, the Elementary Teachers'