

# The Educational Journal

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## Editorial Notes.

IF "A Subscriber to THE JOURNAL," who writes from New York City, will write direct to the editor of the Mathematical Department of this paper he will, no doubt, promptly receive the information asked for.

THE department set apart specially for the benefit of teachers of second and third classes is commenced in this number. We hope that those who have asked for it, and for whose special benefit it is intended, will appreciate it, and will show their appreciation by informing us from time to time if they think that in any respect these papers can be made more efficient and serviceable. Please tell us wherein the department meets your wants and wherein it fails to do so. Cannot you send us something for next number, which may be helpful to your fellow-teachers?

IN a recent article on "Education and Crime," on the general argument of which we may have something to say at another time, the *Globe* well says: "'State salary expected' is a potent cause of the moral as well as the intellectual shortcomings of the schools." We are sorry to see that this auctioneer legend is occasionally adopted even by High School authorities, in advertising for assistant masters. Surely no one having the qualifications requisite for such a position will humiliate himself, or herself, by responding to an advertisement of this kind. We wish that we could hope that the day is near when no certificated teacher in the Dominion will degrade the profession by replying to an advertisement with that condition. Those who do so put up their own dignity as well as that of their profession, so far as it is in their keeping, for sale at a Dutch auction.

OUR "Question Drawer" will be open for the use of subscribers this year, as usual, and we shall try to be still more prompt than hitherto in giving replies, not, indeed, to all kinds of questions which may be propounded, but to all such as

may fairly come within the province of an educational paper. Meanwhile, to prevent misunderstandings or delays, let us repeat what we have frequently pointed out, viz., that it is much better that all requests for information with regard to questions arising out of the School Law and the Departmental Regulations should be sent direct to the Education Department, Normal School Building, Toronto. In this way the inquirer will obtain official information. So, too, it is much better to send all inquiries with reference to University examinations, matriculation subjects and conditions, etc., direct to the registrar of the University. Prompt and courteous answers will, no doubt, be sent. Official information is always better than second-hand, if possible to procure it.

MUCH has been said, and much is still being said, touching the alleged injury to children's eyesight caused by school conditions, especially in Germany and the United States. Dr. Scripture, in an article on "The Bad-eye Factory," vigorously attacks Froebelian occupations. He contends that the perforation of paper, sewing with worsteds, cork and pea-work, the making of chains of straws and paper circles, and the stringing of wooden beads are among the worst of all exercises in producing short-sightedness. This is a subject in regard to which it is easy to generalize hastily, but difficult to procure reliable statistics to warrant such deductions, or the contrary. Yet it is a question of grave importance to the family and the state. The prevalence of spectacle-wearing by the young, and even by children, in both the above-named countries certainly shows that something is wrong somewhere in the conditions under which these results are produced. We do not know that there is any good ground for believing that there is any serious deterioration in the sight of the young in Canadian schools. We have not noticed any material increase in the number of the spectacle-wearers. Yet, if there is any reason to fear a tendency in that direction, there should be no delay in instituting a full inquiry into the facts.

## A WORD ON THE ARITHMETIC QUESTION.

THERE are indications that we may have a wordy contest in regard to what some think the excessive proportion of time and attention given to the study of arithmetic in the schools. We are not prepared, without fuller information, to express an opinion upon the main question, whether and to what extent there is ground for that criticism. But when we hear sneering references to the alleged folly of having pupils spend hours in the solution of fancy problems, such as may never be met with in the affairs of everyday life, as if the time so spent were wholly wasted, we cannot but doubt whether those who base their objections upon such grounds have a proper conception of the real educational value of arithmetical exercises. Arithmetic, by which we mean operations with quantities and numbers, is, when properly taught, in a very large degree an analytic process. The solving of an intricate problem makes demand upon the analytic powers such as is required for few other studies. The boy or girl who has patiently "thought out" a complex problem, resolved it into its elementary parts, discovering and setting down in clear propositions the relation of each part or element of which it is composed to every other, till he is able to disentangle all its intricate complications, and to make the analytic factors and the concrete result as clear as day, has developed a power of clear thinking which cannot fail to be helpful to him in almost every situation in life. The greater includes the less. He who has learned to reason closely, discern clearly, and state precisely, in one region of fact, cannot fail to profit by the strength and clearness of perception thus acquired in every other search for truth. Let us not be in too great haste to deprive our children in the schools of the mental training derived from a pretty rigid course in arithmetic and other branches of mathematics, until we are quite sure that a satisfactory substitute has been found.