

Ideal Recreation and What Follows.

PARTRIDGE ISLAND, N. S., July 15, 1898.

DEAR MR. HAY,—Your note finds me engaged on a bit of work that will not brook interruption. I regret this, not so much that I have any special message which I care to give the readers of *THE REVIEW*, as that I should be glad to embrace the opportunity of showing my unabated interest in the great and difficult work committed to our public school teachers. In this day of high pressure, perhaps one of the most important things for teachers is to ascertain, each one for himself or herself, how best to utilize the summer vacation. I think something further might well be said on this subject. There are many competing aims. I am disposed to think, however, that, in most cases, when a teacher has met the claims of the profession in his own county or province, he should give himself to other fellowships and new scenes during the time that remains of his vacation. The vocation of the teacher burns up nervous force and devitalizes the sweeter and richer things of the spirit to a degree unknown to other professions. Unless one, therefore, is content to be dwarfed in respect of fulness of life, one must plan wisely for the conservation and nurture of one's own freedom and complete sanity. Change of scenes, fellowships, interests, occupations is desirable. Outings that bring one into direct contact with wild life are healing and inspiriting. Contact with men and women whose life has been other and larger than one's own is often restful by virtue of the unsealing of fresh fountains in one's own arid spirit; or contact with simpler lives and social forms than one has long been surrounded with, may stimulate interests and reactions full of life-giving elements, and truly refreshing because of their piquancy and charm. But the modes of healthful and profitable rest are manifold, and I think care should be had to secure a certain amount of real repose. Some teachers do not know what it is to get a "satisfying sleep" during an entire school term. Some of us have been able to say in vacation:

'Tis very heaven to taste the wells of sleep,
The founts of supersensuous repose!

Everyone must find out what is best for him or her, and this will vary with the passing years and the time of life. One who has been under the stress of manifold and overtaxing cares may environ himself with nervous and mental habits that demand unceasing activity in some form in order that life be tolerable. A coadjutor of mine in Toronto was wont to get rest by a railway ride, day and night, to Omaha and back. The clatter and jar of the train assured him that something was going on, and he felt that he was a part of it, but

released from responsibility. Years since, I found that if I sought repose in some quiet inland place, the very droning of the bees and the stillness about me became acute irritants, and rendered rest impossible. But on these shores of Minas Basin, where the heave and turmoil of the majestic tides reveal the ceaseless activity of great forces, I found I could sleep, sleep, sleep! I had a consciousness that work was being done, and was cheated into indolence—an indolence which gave me a new lease of life. The study of plants; animals, especially birds; minerals and rocks, lend themselves as winged handmaids of refreshing vacations; while to imaginative and reflective minds nothing can brood over the spirit so sweet and life-begetting as the out-door reading—not critical study—of the poets. In truth, it is a heavenly ministration of the elixir of life—ideal, if you please, but therefore of all the greater practical value. These are the masters that help us to pillow our tired heads on the breast of nature, and bring our spirits into renewing touch with the cherishing mother of us all.

I suppose that what I have said will strike you as being said rather late in the season. Perhaps so, but I should like that we consider for a little how a teacher, who has enjoyed such a vacation as I have spoken of, would resume school duties. We often talk about preparation for work—of better organization and discipline, and all that. There is danger that we become mechanical, and rest in outward things. Of course a school must have organization, but machines cannot take the place of life, last of all in a school.

"'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
More life and fuller that we want."

As the time drew near for resumption of work, our teacher would wonder at himself. The grasshoppers which had been such burdens to him would be mere grasshoppers, and of no account. He would feel a zest in prospect of meeting his pupils. Healthy in body and spirit, he would almost unconsciously seize upon the vital things in education. Form would be less and less, spirit and life more and more. Nothing could prevent him from forethinking his work, and he would be eager to be at his post in advance of the day. In short he would have the insight and courage necessary to foremaster the conditions essential to a healthy and vigorous school, for his own health and vigor will seek fitting expression in his life-work. On meeting his school, the contagion of his own spirit would give it a working unity of the highest completeness. Order and discipline would cease to be ends in themselves, and applied powers, cheerful fellowship in the pursuit of knowledge, sympathetic and courteous intercourse,