

TWO OF THE CONDITIONS OF A TEACHING PROFESSION.

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THE supply of qualified teachers, and their retention in the school service, is a problem which no Province or State on this continent has satisfactorily solved. In the business of education, the man or woman who educates is everything; a qualified teaching staff is, therefore, necessary to the wide diffusion of sound education. This truth has been clearly apprehended and deeply felt by those entrusted with the administration of public school systems. While too much attention can hardly be given to school-houses, furniture, text-books, and apparatus, it is evident that these, however skilfully devised, stop short of the requirements of the case. The matter lies deeper. The living agent, the teacher, is the power which actually determines the efficiency of all other instrumentalities. What is manifestly required, therefore, as an essential part of a public school system, is a staff of efficient teachers, men and women skilled in the difficult profession of teaching. This is the very heart of the whole thing. Failure here is not made good by houses, books, or other appliances: it is failure out and out.

My experience and observation, both on this continent and abroad, have forced home upon me the truth of the old maxim, "The Teacher is the School," and I can hardly overstate the strength of my convictions on this point. Let the reader fix his mind for a little on the best teacher he

ever knew. Call to mind the simplicity and sweetness of his manners, the clearness of his methods, the accuracy of his knowledge. How skilfully he put one in possession of one's own powers. How soon his pupils came to respect themselves, and to have confidence in their own abilities. How delightful to them was study, and how soon they learned, and with what an outcome of real power, that the boundless world of knowledge was not his only, but theirs, and all men's. Place now such a teacher in every school in this "Canada of ours:" what possibilities of noble endeavour and achievement could be denied to a people reared under such guidance! And yet, having brought into existence a system of public schools, every province is under the gravest obligations to do its utmost to secure this very result. Just as far as it approximates this, and no further, will it attain the object for which any public educational provision can properly exist.

Assuming that the business of teaching can fairly be shewn to meet the conditions demanded of the general professions, though differing of necessity, in some of its aspects from them all, what conditions are essential to its actual assumption of such a character before the public? None will dispute that the first condition is this: *only those persons who prove themselves qualified in a prescribed degree must receive authority to act as teachers*