

*Special Papers.*

## \*THE WANTS AND WOES OF THE TEACHER.

To brood constantly over one's real or fancied ailments is a symptom of disease, a sure sign of a morbid condition of mind; to be forever dwelling on one's troubles and difficulties and vexations and disappointments is not an index of perfect health, but of mental dyspepsia. The thoroughly eupeptic man does not remember that he has a stomach, (except at meal times). My purpose in choosing this subject is not to excite that sickly, whining discontent that does not know what it wants, and constantly harbors the gloomy suspicion that the whole world has formed a conspiracy to do it wrong. I had much rather help "to cleanse the bosom of this perilous stuff," and remove from any diseased mind the hallucination that it is persecuted and down-trodden by its fellow-man. I had rather look upon my fellow-men with Tennyson as,

"Men the workers, men my brothers, ever reaping something new,  
That which they have done, but earnest of that which they shall do."

"Contentment with godliness is great gain," and above all things a teacher needs contentment, cheerful courage to do his work, a healthy mind in a sound body, and that comprehensive sympathy and liberal horizon which alone will enable him to make the best of the environment in which it has pleased God to place him.

But there is a noble discontent that I love to provoke in young and generous minds. It is the property of every brave and useful man; it is one of the hereditary possessions of the Anglo-Saxon race, "the race that knows no fear"; it is written indelibly on the darkest and the brightest pages of our national history. There is no special virtue, no commendable meekness, in avoiding a careful examination of our wants and woes, because we are afraid to look them in the face, and then either bear them with patience if we can find no remedy, or bid them resolute defiance if we can. Laziness and cowardice may prophecy smooth things, and counsel submission and compromise; but energy and courage more often lead to that noble discontent, the heritage of our race, which ends by making things better than it found them. If I could succeed in stirring up that kind of discontent among the teachers of this prosperous county I should feel satisfied that I had not spoken in vain.

Now the first woe of the teacher is isolation. He has plenty of company, but little society. From the very nature of his work among children the teacher is cut off from the society of his fellow-workers, which all men love. He is daily called upon to make large draughts upon his patience, energy and sympathy, without much opportunity of replenishing his store by contact with his equals or his superiors. In the bustle and activity of many occupations, men and women receive active stimulation from the sympathy of numbers; they gather comfort and animation and courage and cheerfulness from their comrades. But, in one sense, the teacher is

"Out of humanity's reach,  
He must finish his journey alone;  
Scarcely hear the sweet music of speech,  
And grow tired with the sound of his own."

Only a few times in a year can he hope to have appreciative eyes looking at his imperishable work, or to hear a sympathetic voice saying, "Well done, thou art in thy duty be out of it who may!" For the visits of principals, fellow-teachers, or inspectors, are events of rare occurrence, and these are nearly all the visitors that ever brighten the school-room by their presence and their words of good cheer.

It is this isolation, this absence of active sympathy, for which every vigorous mind hungers, that sends many a clever young teacher out of the school-room into the marts of business, the office of the lawyer, or the doctor, the agent, or of the insurance or railway company. There is generally

something in the bustle and activity of a crowd that supports itself. We may note as the result of our own observations, (1) That not more than one teacher in a thousand who leave the school-room ever return to it, and that one is not generally the finest specimen; (2) that the marked improvement in the physical health and animal spirits of those who have left the work of teaching is conspicuous. It is simply a plain fact that they grow rosier and fatter, and live easier lives, notwithstanding the longer hours of work, the fewer holidays, and the supposed excitements and worries and cares of business.

This is the first woe. Are there any appropriate counter-checks for this mental solitude of the teacher who spends his strength among young children, and associates chiefly with immature minds? Is there any antidote for this slow poison? any balm for this hurt? any medicine for a mind crying continually, "Solo, solo, solo"? I think I can mention several.

1. The monthly meeting of the township or town association of teachers, at which free discussion by every member is the rule. It must be a forsaken corner of the educational field where five progressive teachers cannot be found to lay the cornerstone of such a pleasant and profitable gathering. Five active members can soon attract twenty more to their fold, and render one another the most valuable service, both professional and social. One or two earnest men and women can easily plan a course of systematic institute work on the lines laid down by the department for professional reading. And the sympathy and intelligence and assistance of the educated men in the district can easily be enlisted in the work, and a great amount of good can be accomplished both for the teachers and for the public. My own experience is that no minister or doctor or banker or other educated person has ever refused to take the trouble of preparing and delivering a short address when I have respectfully invited his assistance. Well conducted meetings of this kind will raise the teacher in public esteem, and they will send back all the teachers full of enthusiasm to their lonely work, and as merry as giants filled with new wine.

2. Educational journals. It is the apparent narrowness of the horizon that produces this feeling of solitude, this mental cramp and weariness. Now, in reality the teachers of this Province are an army 8,000 or 9,000 strong, and the teachers of this continent are a host numbering nearly 400,000. Why should any soldier feel lonely in such a goodly company? True, we cannot often see one another's faces, nor hear the tones of one another's voices, but through the medium of the professional journals we can drink at the running stream of thought and catch the whispers of sympathy for which every heart naturally hungers.

The greatest journals of the kind in the world are published in our language and on this continent; we have several respectable papers devoted to education in Canada. Five dollars a year, or less, will place every teacher in the great, vigorous, healthy stream of educational thought and fill him with new ideas of the grandeur and dignity of his every day work. It is impossible to bathe regularly in this stream and not feel the healing of its waters. There is growth and development in the very contact of intellect, especially when reinforced by personal and professional interest. For my own part I would rather wear an old coat and a last year's hat than be cut off from communication with the great army of teachers whose officers and regiments reach from Nova Scotia to California. Such papers as *The American Teacher*, *The New York School Journal*, *The Boston Journal of Education*, *The Educational Times*, *The Pennsylvania School Journal*, and our own EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, and *Educational Monthly* are any of them worth ten times the price of subscription to any teacher who has a conception of the magnitude of the work and the vast importance of education to the human race.

For my part I would rather be the humblest soldier in this noble army of noble men and women, battling with the ignorance of two great nations, than be the proprietor of the largest distillery in America. And I find rest and comfort and relaxation in the professional journals that tell of the labors and the triumphs of the educational battalions who are every year winning victories in "regions Cæsar never knew, None invincible as they."

These journals lift us from the narrow, sensible horizon of the lonely school-room to the great rational horizon of the civilized world; they cost very little and are worth very much.

3. Experiments in new methods of teaching, and careful scientific study of child development. This is what David Page called "scheming." An active intelligent interest in the work itself will relieve as nothing else can, the monotony and tedium of the school-room. "The proper study of mankind is man"; there is no other study so fascinating. Psychology, or the study of mind-growth, is the most human and the most humanizing study in the world, and there is no better field for the study of human nature than the school-room. Especially is this true for those who are so happy as to be in charge of the very youngest pupils. Here we find the rudimentary powers in course of rapid development, and can study as nowhere else, the phenomena of the senses and the intellect. Anyone who has gained a slight acquaintance with the principles of psychology will find perennial interest in studying the development of the language faculty, and particularly and perhaps most interesting of all to the intelligent observer, the evolution of that remarkable native power generally called "The Association of Ideas." Any teacher who devotes a little attention to the laws of memory and the laws of thought, and then sets to work to make practical applications of these laws in his every day work, will certainly find the alleged monotony of the teacher's work very much reduced. If his studies lead him to devise new methods of presenting his subjects, fresh and original applications of the ascertained principles of teaching and learning, he will, like every other scientific man, forget the labor and drudgery in the delight he experiences in performing successful experiments. He will find with the poet that

"Labor is bliss with a thought like this;  
Toil is his best repose."

The second woe of the teacher is poverty. I shall be compelled to touch this topic with a rapid and gentle hand, lest the recital of this great sorrow should overcome us with grief; for

"Not even the hardest of our foes could hear,  
Nor stern Ulysses tell without a tear."

In the presence of this audience it will be most prudent to pass lightly over the painful fact that the human race has never rewarded its teachers well, and has often treated them with scorn and cruelty. The greatest teacher that ever trod this earth was so poor that He once had to take the tribute money from the mouth of a fish, and at another time, when He was houseless by night, He was constrained to say, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." The most God-like intellect of Greece, that land of culture and intellect, was extinguished for time when Socrates, like Christ, was put to death on a false charge. Time would fail to tell how penury and persecution have been the common lot of the teachers of our race. On Galileo and Descartes and Milton and Froebel and thousands less illustrious, this woe has fallen. The teachers of the world have often been compelled to do their work and fulfil their great missions in circumstances of poverty and neglect. But they were "borne up bravely by the brave heart within"; they were the strongest souls of their generations; and though, like Milton, "tried at once by pain, danger, poverty, obloquy and blindness," they "saw with that inner eye, which no calamity could darken"; and they have left us the imperishable legacy of their great thoughts and their shining example.

The facts of the case in Ontario are very plain and simple. Skilful teaching commands less money than any other equally skilled labor in the market; and it commands a lower price in Ontario than in any of the States of the adjoining Union. Take any town of 1,500 to 3,000 inhabitants, and you will find agents, auctioneers, assignees, barbers, butchers, bankers, book-keepers, blacksmiths, cashiers, cabmen, milkmen, merchants, millers, salesmen, and so forth—through the whole alphabetical list of occupations—making more money than the principal of the public school. A good salesman or book-keeper will be receiving from \$600 to \$900 a year, where the principal of the public school with eight

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\* Read by Mr. Charles Clarkson, B.A., of the Seaforth Collegiate Institute, before the East Huron Teachers' Association at its last meeting. Published by request of the Teachers' Institute.