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## The Educational Weekly,

Edited by T. ARNOLD HAULTAIN, M.A.

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TORONTO, NOVEMBER 11, 1886.

A CORRESPONDENT writing to the *Mail* of the 4th, inst. Over the signature "Professional Man," gives his opinions at some length, upon the subject of overcrowding in the professions. He thinks one of the causes of this over-crowding is the fact that the professors in our universities do not point out to the students, that they had far better, from a pecuniary point of view, engage in some calling other than a professional one. "Would it not be acting more honestly with these students who come before these college professors," he says, "if these professors would tell them their honest opinion as to the desirability of their entering upon a professional life? No, these professors are not in the habit of doing so, because they know full well that in nine cases out of ten, if the "freshman" were fully persuaded

that he was about to spend his four years of college life and then his three years of professional training only to enter upon a life where the income would be miserably disappointing, he would at once renounce his contemplation of a literary life and betake himself to some other employment where the work would be fully as easy and the remuneration equally as certain and much more profitable. We read at each annual reopening of the medical schools of the professor who delivers the opening lecture "welcoming" to the particular medical school all the students who may intend to ally themselves with the institution. Would it not, I ask, be a much more honest proceeding for such professor to tell these young men of the rocks ahead, to tell them that it would, in his opinion, be with great difficulty that many of them would make any sort of a decent living, and that if they had plenty of money to live upon it would be all right to choose medicine; but if they had not, to be prepared to find it a herculean task to support themselves and family? All this, I claim, honesty demands from those who occupy these collegiate positions. Young men do not know what a professional life is until they have actually entered upon it. They are induced to take roseate views of it by the unscrupulous statements of some of these infamous professional liars who talk so blatantly about their income from their practice." And he continues. "Look at the innumerable number of High schools in existence throughout our land. High school masters will have to bear their part of the blame for the present overcrowded population in all the professions. Some ambitious B. A. takes charge of a High school. In order to gratify the spirit of rivalry existing between his own school and the school of the neighbouring town, he, by humouring the fancy of some indulgent parent, tells him that his son would make a great success if allowed to take the full course and enter a university. The parents, though poor, in order to do a favour, as they suppose, to their child, will let noth

ing henceforth interfere with the child's attendance "at school." He must go regularly to the High school until he gets "learning" sufficient for him to enter upon a professional training, for they want their son to be either a lawyer or a doctor, so that he may be in a position to accumulate vast wealth. Would it not, I ask, be only an honest act on the part of these High school teachers if they would tell the truth to the parents of these youths committed to their charge? Would they not in doing that be doing only their duty to themselves, the scholars, their parents and the public at large? An evil exists, which is admitted by all, and to cure the evil the speediest way is to strike at its root. Higher education is all very well, and it is much to be desired; but I speak only the truth when I repeat that honesty and candour on the part of High school masters and college professors in Canada at the beginning of the course of those committed to their care would cause an enormously large proportion of these aspirants to professional fame to at once renounce their contemplation of a literary life."

The *Mail* well replies to this that "in the first place the proper function of teachers and professors is simply to aid scholars and students in obtaining a liberal education. It is no part of their duty to offer advice save as to methods of study and kindred matters. In the second place it is scarcely to be supposed that people in other walks of life would regard with equanimity any attempt to turn the whole tide of competition from the professions upon them. Thirdly, such advice might have the effect of making very poor farmers or merchants or artisans of young men who would be ornaments to the learned professions. Many who would be almost certain to succeed in law or medicine might be deterred from adopting these professions if they were told that there was no room for them. The old saying, 'There is always room at the top,' is as true now as ever it was, and men are wanted at the top even in the overcrowded walks of life."