

existing at that period; and after you have looked first on this picture and then on that, you may draw your own conclusions.

You may imagine, if you please, that the wheels of time have been turned forward just twenty-five years and that we are living in the first decade of the twentieth century—somewhat older and perhaps a trifle wiser.

A public-spirited citizen in one of the most enterprising towns is conversing with a stranger. He points with an air of satisfied pride to a large and really elegant building some blocks away.

"That," says he, "is our school house. It is the one thing of which our people are very justly proud; for we regard it as the best possible evidence of our thrift, enterprise and liberality."

The admiring stranger is pleased with the architectural beauty of the building.

"Surely," he remarks, "in a building so beautiful and imposing, one should expect you to have an excellent school."

"Well, that is true," answers the public-spirited citizen. And I suppose that our school is at least as good as the average. The superintendent is a good fellow—clever to everybody; and great on system, and most of the teachers are graduates of the High School—well deserving girls who can afford to work cheap. The school-house cost us a deal of money; we had it built upon the hill there, so that it could be seen from both railroads, you know; School Board expended so much on the outside of it, to make it look well, you know, that they can't afford many extras inside. And after all, it doesn't matter, the school does very well."

The stranger suggests that they pay a visit to the school, and see what is actually being done inside

those imposing walls. But the public spirited citizen demurs.

"We citizens are not in the habit of visiting the schools," he says. "We have so much confidence in the ability of our teachers that we think such visits altogether unnecessary,—and especially so since the children might be annoyed and disturbed by our presence.

The admiring stranger, in order to satisfy his curiosity, determines to visit the school alone. He finds the interior of that palatial building very different from the exterior. The hallways are bare, cold and dark. The school-rooms, although large enough and light enough, are devoid of both beauty and comfort. Ill-ventilated, always too warm or too cold, constructed upon the "one and only" plan of convenience and rectangular precision, they contain not one thing that is pleasant or attractive to the eye of a child. The walls are rough-finished, and the furniture, though designed to be handsome, is made of the very strongest patterns and materials: everything—even to the countenances of the children—bears a prison-like aspect. The admiring stranger, commenting upon the bare discomfort which everywhere prevails, is informed that this is the fault neither of careless teachers nor of an economical school board, but that it is the outcome of a very popular notion that anything like genuine, home like comfort in a school-house is as much out of place as a pig in a parlour.

Nobody expects to find culture and refinement, or even good manners, in a Public School. It is true that the teachers give the pupils regular lessons on morals and manners; indeed, they oblige them to memorize whole pages of moral precepts and rules regarding their behaviour on the street and at the dinner-table. But they never think of these rules as being of any practical use. Like the definitions