

Written for the Educationalist.

THE TEACHER'S POSITION.

I very frequently hear my professional brethren complain that their labor is underpaid and undervalued, and I believe that the complaint is in many cases not unjust. I purpose, therefore, through the columns of the *Educationalist*, to set forth the results of some little meditation on this subject.

I shall divide my discourse into three parts. First, The duties of parents. Second, The duties of trustees. Third, The duties of teachers.

It is too usual to consider a teacher merely a *teacher* in who sells education as a grocer sells sugar, and conceive that the services of a thoroughly educated person are sufficiently remunerated when his salary is paid; but this is not the case.—“Cash payment,” as Carlyle truly says, “is not the sole *modus*.” It is true that you may, by the expenditure of certain monies, secure the services of an individual who will take charge of your children for some six hours a day; but if you want your children *educated* more than this is necessary. You must strive to impress on their minds the necessity of application; to show by every word and deed, that you respect the person, into whose charge is delivered the training of the youthful mind; you must show to the teacher that his labors are appreciated, and you must do your share in assisting his endeavours. You must yourself take a part, and not the least important part in the training of your children. It is absurd to suppose that mere school instruction is the sole end of education. The teacher is not employed merely to pump knowledge into children's brains. True education takes a far higher range; its object is, as the word implies, to “bring out” the faculties of the mind, to make, not *knowing*, but *wise* men. There is a vast distinction between these. Bacon probably *knew* less than many a school-boy of the present day; but where shall we now find a philosopher who approaches him in wisdom?—I am not sure that the capacities of the human mind are improved by the more extended knowledge of these latter times. There is less exercise for the observant and analytical faculties of the brain. To discover the reason of many of the phenomena which we daily observe, it is requisite not to think, but to read; and thus we gain a habit of trusting to others, rather than of working ourselves. It is the duty of the teacher to counteract this

necessary effect of our progress in science, and to do this he must himself own high powers of mind, such as few possess. And the dearest reward he can look to, is the consciousness that his toils have been in some degree crowned with success. Men like to see their work finished, whatever that work may be. The farmer delights in viewing the fields he has ploughed and sown waving with golden grain; the merchant in seeing the prosperity of the village, the business of which he has helped to increase; the mechanic in admiring the building which he has raised and beautified. And what grander reward can he hope for, who has devoted his time and talents to the improvement of the minds of children, than to see these children as they grow up discharging thoroughly and faithfully their allotted tasks in life, and to be able to say with a pardonable pride, “that successful merchant, that rising lawyer, or that skillful manufacturer owe their standing in the world partly to my teachings.” Strive then to bestow on the honest and faithful teacher this reward. Do not ask for a frequent change of instructors; remember that they are no more perfect than other men, and do not expect to find that which never has yet appeared—a human being without faults. Again, one of the most important duties of the people of this Province is the selection of school trustees. Let this be carefully performed. Let all party-feeling be thrown to the winds on occasions of this kind!—What matters it whether a man be a reformer or a ministerialist, whether he advocates one set of local measures or another, so long as he is a man who will carefully and with judgment discharge the duties of his office. But this brings me to the second portion of my subject, viz: How is the teacher's position affected by the character of trustees?

It sometimes happens that a teacher finds his endeavours frustrated by those who are invested with the management of school affairs. Now a school trustee should be a man of some degree of education, one capable of appreciating its advantages; one who will carry out our excellent school-law in the spirit in which it is devised, and who is resolved to have a really efficient school, who will not grudge a fair salary to a man who is ably and conscientiously repaid by the extra facilities afforded for imparting instruction; and, above all, things, one who will discharge the duties of his office unflinchingly, without fear of honor or reproach, and without any other view than the good of the school. These duties are frequently neglected, and the teacher is left to struggle with a body of trustees who are not only inefficient, but who are at times positively hostile to his efforts. He must not expect

to please everybody. A. will want one measure carried out, while B. demands something diametrically opposite; and both will find fault with the board if their requirements are not complied with. A trustee should therefore be one who has a mind and will of his own, and will dare to act up to his own opinions, careless of the good or ill will of those factious persons, a few of whom are to be found in every school section. And many of the remarks which I have made with respect to the duties of parents will apply with redoubled force to those of trustees. The teacher should receive every support and consideration. His suggestions should be listened to with respect. He, from his position, must necessarily know more than any one else of the requirements and the peculiar position of the school under his charge. No two schools are exactly alike, and it is absurd to say that because Mr. So-and-so, in the next school section, manages without certain articles, which Mr. What's-his-name in your section requires, that the latter shall also dispense with them. Mr. So-and-so's pupils may not be so far advanced, or his plan of teaching may be different. It is at all events bad policy to deprive an efficient teacher of any facilities which will enable him to discharge his duties more comfortably or more thoroughly. Remember that “time is money” in teaching as well as in any other trade and profession; and every minute is of importance. It is true a good teacher will do much without apparatus; he may sketch a tolerable map on the blackboard, or construct a machine which will illustrate the various motions of the earth, &c., with an apple or an orange; but the doing so takes up much time which may be more valuably employed, and the school suffers in consequence.—A carpenter might construct a pretty good box with a back-saw and a jack-knife, but it would be bad policy to restrict him on that account, to the use of these. And a teacher no less than a builder, or an engineer, will get on the faster, the better the tools he has to work with. But I have been arguing on the supposition that the teacher is thoroughly efficient. Unless this is the case nothing will be done, and the children had better be left to run loose, than conduct forthrightly every day under the guardianship of one who is incapable of judging any value in the instruction. And when we consider the moral competency for the teacher, this is a subject which I approach with