

The Educational Weekly.

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WE wish to draw attention (1) to a very important fact in regard to the change in the status of teachers as it is at the present day compared with what it was in times past ; (2) to the causes of such change ; (3) to the responsibilities which this change has entailed upon teachers.

IT is a subject, grave and of wide extent, and one to which but scant justice can be done in the space allotted. It will be impossible to do more than give in outline the change to which reference is made ; to mention, with but brief comment, the cause of such change ; and to point out, rather than to dwell didactically upon, how teachers must adapt themselves to the effect of such change.

1. No reader of history can deny that, in the by no means remote past, educators of youth, as a class, were regarded as being comparatively low down in the social scale. Their existence was a necessity, and children were entrusted to their care in order to be instructed in certain conventional elements of knowledge. They were looked upon as mere machines, or mills, allowed to exist, because society demanded that the mind of youth should receive certain impressions, or be moulded into certain forms.

OF course there were numerous and brilliant exceptions to this. There have been in every age teachers who have risen far above this mere toleration of their profession, have earned alike the esteem and gratitude of society. But even so, this renown has rarely, if ever, been attained by means of their intrinsic merits as educators ; it has often been the result of brilliant scholarship, profound study, wide culture. The possession of each of which is quite compatible with very mediocre instructing abilities.

SOCRATES was perhaps as famed a teacher as he was philosopher ; Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, will be remembered as a wonderful educator ; and Froebel has made his name immortal by his theories of education. But not many names could be added to these.

THE exceptions to which we have adverted, do not by any means overturn our position—rather they strengthen it. It would be possible to cite numberless examples in

support of this low esteem in which the ordinary teacher was held. To come down to within a few years of our own generation, may we not point to Squeers of Dickens' *David Copperfield* as not altogether a caricature ; to the social standing of the much-abused usher ; above all to Lamb's well-known essay, which draws no unfaithful picture of the comparatively unsympathetic treatment to which the school-master was subjected ?

TO-DAY, however, if there are anywhere any evidences of such social exile, they are rapidly disappearing. The teacher, as such—from the very fact of his being a teacher, a person to whom the cultivation of the most important part of our children's natures is entrusted—is greatly looked up to, and highly esteemed, as, indeed, it is right and proper he should be. Parents recognize the fact that their children spend the most important part of their lives in the school-room ; that the bent which their mental powers, and, indeed, we may add, their characters, are to receive, is the outcome of the intercourse between the pupil and his master ; and that during the period in which these powers and this character is most amenable to education and moulding, they are wholly under the influence and governance of their instructors. No wonder then, that, with the recognition that these so grave functions are almost entirely in the hands of the teacher, parents should at the same time recognize the necessity of regarding such teacher, not as a mere instrument, but as one who powerfully aids them in the proper bringing-up of their children.

2. It would be impossible to point to the many influences that have tended to bring about this change. It were best to mention what, perhaps, is the most important of them, viz., the change in the character of education itself.

THE change in the education which we at the present day bestow upon our children, is perhaps even more noticeable in the methods adopted than it is in the subjects taught. Indeed, to say that the differences in the latter followed, and were merely the result of, differences in the former, would be no rash assertion.

THE day is long past when children went to school merely to go through a certain course of mental training under a "gerund grinder," who, with the aid of a rod, instilled

a certain number of rules and paradigms into unwilling pupils.

WE do not teach in any hap-hazard way now. We have brought science to bear upon our methods of tuition. We have gone to the principles of psychology ; we have discussed the nature of the mental faculties ; we have studied the child's mind while in the act of reception ; and we have adapted our methods to the knowledge we have thus obtained.

MANY of the greatest thinkers of the day (e. g., Bain, Calderwood, Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, Canon Farrar, James Sully) have thoughtfully attempted to elucidate both the theoretical and practical sides of tuition ; and there is throughout the whole civilized world a keen and lively interest taken by all classes upon the subject of the cultivation of the minds and characters of children.

PEOPLE now see that the teacher is not to be considered merely as the agent by which certain facts are taught ; not as one who doles out knowledge at so much per head per hour ; not as an instrument by which rules are conveyed from a book into the learners' brains ; but as one who influences his learners ; one who, by the contact of mind with mind, by the influence of life and character and culture, stimulates ambition, excites wonder and thought, and so truly develops the minds and characters of those whom he leads rather than rules. This is the change that has come over the spirit of education, and this is the secret of the higher esteem in which teachers are held.

3. WE come now to the increased responsibilities which this change has enforced upon all teachers. None are exempt. From the pupil teacher in the model school, to the president of a college, all now are trusted by the parent, as being the proper leaders (not instructors merely) of youth. And what does not this entail ? It may be summed up in a sentence from Ruskin : "And give them lastly, [he is speaking more particularly of our girls] not only noble teachings, but noble teachers." If our teachers recognize the true aim of tuition, and if they strive conscientiously to attain that aim, they will find that, in this nineteenth century, a mere acquaintance with the subjects to be taught, and a mere theoretical knowledge of the way in which these should be taught, are but a small, a very small part of the requisites for a true guider of youth.