

when alone it is possible for the average mind to learn the beginnings of that self-education which secures the highest and best results both to the individual and to the state.

The greatest and most inexcusable waste that can be committed is committed when we employ in the primary schools crude, inexperienced teachers with little practical skill and no proper conception of the vast interests both material and spiritual that are entrusted to their keeping. No other economy can be practised that will compare for a moment with the employment of none but thoroughly trained, tried, skilled teachers in the elementary schools. All outward material instruments such as fine buildings, complete apparatus, excellent books, are merely dead, mechanical and powerless without the living intelligence, the mental power, the active soul of the accomplished educator behind them. The teacher is the controlling power and the motive force. In the extreme case it is more profitable for a child to sit on a bare stool or behind a hedge with a real teacher beside him than to occupy a walnut desk in a \$50,000 school with only a mechanical hearer of lessons to guide his gropings after light and intellectual freedom.

Stated in abstract terms, all this shines with the light and self-evidence of a primitive belief; but when we come to look at the practical application of the principle, we see how far accepted theory and actual practice may be divorced. In Ontario, for example, primary education receives a very fair share of attention, and our system has many elements of power not found in other countries; and yet we find that considerably more than half of the teachers employed in the primary schools hold only the lowest qualification permitted by law, and that the majority have not spent as much time in the study

of the theory of education as would suffice to learn the art of making and putting on a common horse-shoe properly. Three months' attention to the special duties of his business and life work would not enable a young mechanic to set up a shop of his own, nor even to engage as a journeyman. No veterinary surgeon with merely a quarter's training would be trusted with the life of a favourite horse; no druggist or dentist would be permitted to endanger human life by his ignorance with such short experience in the work of his profession, no matter what his previous general education might have been. This is precisely the measure of the apprenticeship served by the young teachers who will at the end of the year be licensed to go out to underbid, displace and expel older teachers who have just become fairly efficient — at the expense of their pupils. This cruel prodigality of childhood's single opportunity goes on from year to year, reproducing the same waste of money and of the golden years of youth. Here is the general fact: During their most plastic period we entrust the education of children to crude, unformed and immature teachers, and deceive ourselves with platitudes on our most perfect system — the pattern to be recommended to England — where, let us interject, pupil-teachers have to spend four years and run the gauntlet of examination four times before they receive certificates of the lowest grade; where the Normal School courses extend over two full years, while ours is only a little over four months. Is it not time now to put in practice greater economy of effort and resource, to put an end to this costly sacrifice, and to make more scientific application of our educational machinery? There are other extravagances and wastes that demand attention in our system, but there is no other prodigality that