

EXTREMES MEET.

In the management of a school there are two opposite tendencies, either of which if followed to the extreme leads to disastrous consequences. On the one hand, perfect order, absolute silence, rigidly methodical routine, exact similarity of position, movements, mode of answering, execution of written exercises, and so forth, may be so carefully enforced as to become, as a matter of fact, the great leading purpose of the school. The direction of this tendency is towards excessive constraint, slavish adherence to cast-iron rule, want of free play for the individuality of both pupil and teacher, making all pupils exactly alike, all teachers the same sort of drill sergeants, all schools the same kind of penitentiaries. In the extreme, of which alone we now speak, it produces a deadly monotony, and an unnatural uniformity which is well-calculated to nip in the bud the germ of all self-direction and self-education. The pupil comes at last to automatic obedience, and is incapable of helping himself without an order from outside authority.

On the other hand, we have the opposite tendency which takes little note of order, system, and regularity. Things are allowed to take their own course; all goes as chance and circumstance may happen to determine. Programmes and timetables have no longer any meaning. The hours for opening and closing school, the times for beginning and ending recitations, the particular subjects set down for lessons, the proper division of work between teacher and pupils,—these things and others of like importance are quietly ignored. For particulars see Cowper's *Tirocinium*, or visit the school of some untrained teacher who does not take an educational paper, possesses no book on teaching, and takes no interest in the conventions and other professional gatherings. Occasionally you will find him an excellent scholar, perhaps an honor man of his university. But in most cases you will detect unmistakable signs of weakness and laxity in discipline, even before you cross the threshold.

There is Charybdis; here is Scylla. Over-drill and want of drill are both wrong. But every inspector knows of one or two schools in his beat where the round common-sense of the teacher mingles judiciously discipline and freedom of action, constraint and liberty, and succeeds in directing the pupils' spontaneity, through the stage of submission to authority, up to the higher and healthier level of self-government and self-direction. The grand instruments are common sense, patience, and an all-embracing sympathy.

FIFTH AND SIXTH CLASSES.

Within the last ten years several conflicts have occurred between the trustees of high schools on the one hand and the trustees of public schools on the other. Since the law forbidding the formation of union schools went into force, many union boards have been dissolved, and with the general advance of education in the province high schools have assumed

a degree of importance unknown in their earlier history. In the smaller, and the medium-sized towns, the tendency has constantly been to place on the high school boards the best educated and most enlightened men, and in some cases the public school board has practically been handed over to a class of men having very little sympathy with national education and a very limited comprehension of its leading ideas. Even in larger towns, with five to eight thousand inhabitants, the elements composing the public school boards have too often been selected from a class incapable of estimating the results of education otherwise than by monetary considerations. We are far from asserting that none who have been denied the benefits of a public school training are qualified to serve on our public school boards. It is well known that some of the staunchest friends of education are men who have keenly felt the need of early training, who have nobly devoted themselves to the great work of securing for others the privileges which were denied to themselves. But very few such men are after all properly qualified to shape the educational policy of the board, though they are excellent co-adjutors under the guiding influence of broader views, and a more extensive mental horizon.

It is to be regretted that in some cases the public interest in the election of trustees has been so small that the office has literally gone a-begging, and the board as actually constituted has represented the intelligence of the town in the same way that Barebone's Parliament represented the intelligence of England. Hence has arisen occasionally a feeling of hostility to higher education and a distinct antagonism to the high school, as though it were a foreign rival to the public school. Men have lost sight of the system as a whole, and having failed to grasp the main thought of our national system, they have come to set one part against another, to introduce discord where there is the most urgent necessity for complete harmony.

No better example of such shortsightedness can be selected than the attempt to establish in the public schools of an ordinary town classes designed to perform work identical with that which must be done in the junior classes of the high school. On the score of economy alone, it is unreasonable to tax the rate-payers twice for the same thing, still more unreasonable because in the second case the whole tax falls directly on the town, while in the case of the high school the burden is distributed. On the ground of division of labor, it is quite as unreasonable; and again the contact of large numbers of pupils with each other is a powerful educative force which is dissipated and almost lost when they are separated and taught in the small numbers most towns can contribute to the fifth and sixth classes of the public school.

It is well known to educationists that the entrance examinations have during the last twelve years worked a silent revolution in the teaching of our public schools. The introduction of these extra classes, to which admission can be gained without passing a test uniform throughout the province, will rapidly