

Write a note on "Christmas," touching upon the following points: Derivation of the word; origin of the observance; its history in early times; extent of its observance at the present day; how observed in different countries and by different denominations; can there be any certainty that the 25th December is the correct date?

Give a brief sketch of the life of Charles Dickens. Mention some of the evils and abuses against which his stories were mainly directed. Were the stories in any measure successful in accomplishing their object? Estimate his literary standing amongst novelists.

TACT.*

In choosing this subject I am well aware that I have chosen one that has been fully discussed by able minds than mine, many times in the past; but as I have never heard it mentioned before this Association, except in a passing way, I have determined to offer a few humble suggestions trusting that, if nothing else, they may provoke a discussion from which we may derive benefit. My remarks will apply more particularly to country and village schools; my experience in teaching having been limited to these. Call this quality tact, policy, discretion—what you will. I believe many teachers desirous of doing their duty faithfully, have from the lack of it, failed as teachers, or at least, have encountered many difficulties that would have, otherwise, been avoided.

Let us consider the subject first from a social point of view. All will agree with me in the statement, that a teacher supported with the sympathy, coöperation and good-will of the parents, has a greater power for good in a school than one not so sustained. How to acquire and retain these agents of good, will be the first point I shall deal with. First impressions are lasting. A teacher is entering on duties in a new school. He is "a stranger in a strange land," and this fact will not set as a soothing portion to the nervous feeling that always possesses a teacher when facing new scholars for the first time. He must bear himself valiantly. He is undergoing a most rigid examination, the result to be announced between the hours of four and five, to an interested audience at home. Not a particular in face, form, dress or demeanor, will escape notice. This first report at home will have an effect, slight perhaps, but still an effect on the opinions of parents and other interested parties. The plainest face is comely in the eyes of children, if it be a kindly one; the cheapest dress, elegant, if neat and tasteful; the most unassuming manners charming, if marred by no striking peculiarity. Let the teacher conduct himself accordingly, and good must result. Taking it for granted that he has succeeded in creating a favorable impression on the parents through the children, I now come to the most difficult part of my subject:—viz. how to secure the good-will and coöperation of the parents. There are so many plans that might be adopted to accomplish this with more or less success, that I can do little more than mention some I have tried, or seen tried. If the teacher can convince the parents that he has a personal interest in the advancement of each child, the difficulty is in a measure removed.

This incident came under my own observation. On a summer morning some years since, a farmer started for a neighboring blacksmith shop, calling out to his fifteen year old son to rake hay till he came back. When nearly at his destination, he was accosted by a gentlemanly looking person with "Are you Mr. A?" "Yes," said the farmer. "Then it is your son Harry who comes to school to

me. I thought I would just stop and tell you what a pleasing pupil I find him. He is well behaved and studious. It's a pity he cannot come more regularly, but it is your busy season I suppose." Two or three more sentences closed the conversation, and with mutual good mornings they parted, and, as it chanced, never exchanged words again. Yet in those few moments and through the instrumentality of a few courteous words, that boy's future education was determined. Ever after he came regularly to school, and in time received a liberal education. He is now a successful business man, and very thankful for his early advantages, secured by the thoughtful interest of his teacher.

I believe if possible the teacher should be on friendly footing with every person in his section. When I make this statement I do not mean to say he should resolve himself into a visiting committee and inflict his company on every family in the neighborhood, nor yet that he should bring himself to the level of every individual with whom he may come in contact. There is a vast difference between friendliness and familiarity.

For example, a pupil is ill. I do not think it would be a derogation from the teacher's dignity, to step to the door, and inquire for the child, and express a hope to see him in school again soon, even though he should be unacquainted with any member of the household, except the child. Again, the teacher is invited out to tea, and to spend an evening with some family he has not yet met. It is his policy to make himself as agreeable as possible. By this I do not mean that he is not to have an opinion of his own, nor yet that he is to monopolize the conversation of the evening. The people, who by general consent are most popular, are those, who have the happy faculty of being interested in all they hear, and, in order to hear, it is necessary sometimes to listen. It is not considered in good taste to make our daily occupation the subject of conversation in company, and yet I cannot think that a few kindly words concerning Johnnie's or Mary's progress, would be out of place on such an occasion as this. In his social intercourse, I would advise the young teacher, or indeed any teacher, above all things to avoid gossip. I use the word in its widest sense, indeed I include many subjects of conversation not usually considered under this head. For example, there is no teacher who will find life in the school-room all sunshine. He will have lazy pupils, stupid pupils, obstinate pupils, simpering pupils, and many other classes that it would be superfluous for me to mention. With such combinations of character to train up morally, to govern physically, and to instruct mentally, he may expect difficulties. Now almost the first question each person with whom he may come in contact will ask him, will be, "How do you get on in school?" Indeed after the opening remark concerning the state of the weather, he may be prepared to answer this question. Will it lighten his load materially to unbosom himself to a listener, who, never having been in his position, can neither understand nor have any sympathy with the situation?

I believe such a relation will tend to create distrust of the teacher's governing powers, or other capabilities, and since it can neither comfort him in the present, nor help him in the future, I would advise its suppression. Let everything inside the school-room as represented by the teacher to the outside world, be "*couleur de rose*." It will neither add to his salary (an important point), to the world's sympathy, nor to his own relief, to represent it otherwise; the world will volunteer plenty of dark shades to tone down the representation to its proper tint. Lest I have not expressed myself clearly enough, I will repeat my meaning in other words. Let all difficulties general and particular, that the teacher may experience in school, be kept as far as possible from pupil and parent, for if the mischievous pupil realizes that he can easily trouble the teacher, he will, in nine cases out of ten, seize every opportunity of doing so,

*A paper read by Miss Caldwell, of Catawaqui Public School, before the joint convention of Frontenac Co. and Kingston Teachers' Associations, April 21st and 22nd, 1896, and published at their request.