

Teachers' Peculiarities.

Between a mere occupation and a vocation there is an essential difference. In the former, a person is kept drudging for the sake of bread and butter. In the latter, he busies himself not only for a livelihood, but also for love of the work.

Primarily a man's tastes determine whether or not an employment is to him a vocation. And according as it is a vocation or only an occupation, so will be the peculiarities which the employment will stamp upon him. If the employment be a vocation, the observer will be sure to find in the worker an expression and demeanor indicative of largeness, benevolence, liberality, and the spirit of general as well as special inquiry. We know a grainer whose genius makes the graining of wood his vocation. He is led to inquire into various sciences, because the general principles of his art link it with all sciences; and from the standpoint of his own intuitions, learning, and experience in graining, he is ready to give his opinion of genius in music, painting, sculpture, poetry, and other arts. And all this we see in the light and modesty and good-will and force of his expression. Many of his brethren of the paint-brush, who fear, bear a very different expression.

The same holds with respect to all employments, teaching among the rest. One of the proofs to our mind that teaching is a science—though in general a science amazingly unstated—is that we find among teachers some whose talk is like the grainer's, and whose expression, like his, has in it light and modesty and good-will and force. Nine out of ten such are, like the grainer, working scientifically. The tenth is drudging with a dissatisfied look among his brother drudges, who are teaching solely for their bread and butter, and who do not rise in the profession above the level of a mere unscientific employment. Like the grainer's drudging brethren, these bear peculiarities which their drudgery stamps upon them. Schoolmaster-ish and schoolma'am-ish are epithets which readily explain them to the popular apprehension.

A teacher of this sort is easily recognized. His peculiarities are pronounced and aggressive. He has a look of bustling importance, a patronizing demeanor anything but agreeable to the victim, who perceives the vacancy of the patron. He is fully possessed with the belief that he is a personage of vast importance, because of a vague idea that on teachers as a class rests the responsibility of shaping the rising generation. He is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can render a reason, and jealous of anyone who knows more than he does—a peculiarity, it is true, somewhat inconsistent with the foregoing. He has a disposition to order folks around as though they were unruly boys. He has a dry, harsh tone of voice; a lack of unction in reading, conversation, and set discourse; an appear-

ance and demeanor varying from the grotesque imitation of a boy to the grotesque imitation of a philosopher. But it is needless to pursue the analysis. These peculiarities are proverbial as teachers' peculiarities. But they mark the absence, rather, of the true teacher. They have come to characterize teachers as a class, because to so many who bear this name, teaching is only an occupation. The calling suffers in reputation from the preponderating influence of those to whom it is merely a make-shift, a stepping-stone to something else, a temporary employment which unfortunately too often becomes a permanent employment. The few to whom teaching is a vocation, and who are striving in an unorganized way to raise it to the rank of a profession, are outnumbered and overborne by those who, though they prate of the dignity of the work, do little else than degrade the workmen in the public estimation. —N. Y. Teacher.

READING.

Of all the branches you will be called to teach none will be more important than that of reading. It lies at the very foundation of all learning, and all must know something of this as a key to other branches. All who enter the school-room,—from the little ones, just beginning to lip the letters of the alphabet, up to those who are about to close their school days,—all will require training in this department. How small the number of those who can be properly called accomplished readers, and how large the number who read quite indifferently or very poorly! One who can read a piece with ease and right effect will always be listened to with interest and delight, while one who reads in a hesitating, lifeless, meaningless style, will have no power over his hearers, and may even become a subject of ridicule.

As a general thing, it must be admitted that reading has not been well taught in our schools. It has received formal attention and frequent inattention. This remark may be more properly true of schools as they were a score of years ago, than of those of the present day; and yet it is, to a certain extent, true of our schools as a whole, even now. We well recollect when it was customary for teachers to hear every member of their schools read four times a day,—twice in the forenoon, and twice in the afternoon. This was the established law, and seemingly as unalterably fixed as that of the Medes and Persians. In imagination we can see the school dame of our boyhood days, as she called her several pupils and classes. First came the little alphabetarians, one by one, to whom, in regular order, the whole twenty-six letters were administered at a dose,—just four times daily;—the teacher pointing at the letter and pronouncing it, and the pupil repeating it after her,—the only variation

consisting in an occasional snay upon the ear for inattention. For days, and weeks, and months,—perhaps for years,—was this operation continued before the letters were fairly understood. Then came the little boys and girls in b-a, ba, b e, be, b-i, bi, b o, bo, b-u, et., up through BAKER and CIDER, until the oldest had received their turn. If the performance was attended to just four times daily, the requirements of parents and committees were met, and all was considered right. But so far as real benefit was concerned, it would have been just as well if the pupils had been called upon to whistle just four times a day,—twice in the forenoon, and twice in the afternoon. Really it would have been better; for if they had, each time, whistled wrong, it would have done no harm. But to be required to go through the form of reading, as it was done, without any true regard to emphasis, inflection, punctuation, or sense, was only making a bad matter worse at every repetition that was made, as bad habits were only confirmed thereby. The prominent requirement seemed to be to read rapidly,—and this was essential, in order that the regular "round" might be accomplished. The whole exercise was a formal, unmeaning affair; and the result a monotonous, blundering, unmeaning style of reading. We were, it is true, commanded to "mind our stops," but it was only in an arbitrary way, which admitted of no modification on account of the sense. At a comma we were to stop long enough to count one; at a semicolon long enough to count two, etc. The following anecdote illustrates in an amusing manner the absurdity of the old rule for "minding the stops."

"A country schoolmaster, who found it rather difficult to make his pupils observe the difference in reading between a comma and a full-point, adopted a plan of his own, which, he flattered himself, would make them proficient in the art of punctuation; thus, in reading, when they came to a comma, they were to say tick, and read on to a semicolon, and say tick, tick, to a colon, and say tick, tick, tick, and when a full-point, tick, tick, tick, tick. Now, it so happened that the worthy Dominic received notice that the parish minister was to pay a visit of examination to his school; and, as he was desirous that his pupils should show to the best advantage, he gave them an extra drill the day before the examination. 'Now,' said he, addressing his pupils, 'when you read before the minister to-morrow, you may leave out the ticks, though you must think them as you go along, for the sake of elocution.' So far, so good. Next day came, and with it the minister, ushered into the school-room by the Dominic, who, with smiles and bows, hoped that the training of the scholars would meet his approval. Now it so happened, that the first boy called up by the minister had been absent the preceding day, and, in the hurry,