

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

SIR,—As the question whether literature or science is the more effectual means in the development of the intellectual and moral nature has lately been before the public, I imagine the subject may yet be of sufficient interest to justify the expression of a few ideas through your popular journal. In the prosecution of my work as a practical educator it has often occurred to me that too much attention is paid to science. For a while science cast literature, with its life-giving and nourishing influence, completely into the shade. It was the fashion to speak of a proficiency in mathematics, and an expertness in solving problems resembling the renowned fifteen puzzle, as the great end of education. I am not opposed to science or mathematics in the work of education, but I maintain that the higher qualities of the mind are cultivated by other means, and that considerable latitude should be allowed in regard to the requirements of those studying these branches. There are persons who have a scientific or mathematical aptitude, but there are others who possess high and important qualities who look upon such studies with positive distaste. There are individuals who can see shades of thought, meaning, and humor in literature which others can never see; what if the aptitude of the one class should be the gauge to measure the abilities of the other? It would be just as reasonable, I apprehend, in a case of this sort as any other. Many men have achieved distinction in certain walks of life, and even made their names immortal, who would run a chance of being "plucked" at some of our examinations, even after careful preparation. There is, perhaps, too much difficulty in our examinations in some respects. It is right and proper for men and women to be trained for their life-work—and I believe in a long and gradual course of training—but it is in the doing of that work, principally, that they should stand or fall to a great extent, and in which they shall eventually stand or fall. The professions and occupations may be crowded, but there will be the survival of the fittest, and the only proper way to know who can do the work required of him, is to let him try it. Many a man is ruled out on account of his not being proficient in intellectual gymnastics, who might otherwise do good work in the profession from which he has been excluded. We cannot all be Hanlans or Westons, but we can row a boat well enough, and walk far enough and fast enough, to get through the practical work of every-day life, perhaps as well as they. I admit that examiners may be conscientious in prescribing such large doses of science, for the purging of the mind and training of the intellect. It depends a good deal on the opinion an educator has as to what a properly developed man should be, what means he takes to educate him. If a man is to be trained principally to amass wealth, and to get ahead of his fellow-men generally, a scientific education principally will not prevent his doing so. Science may train the perceptive and reasoning powers, but the finer forms of perception and the higher powers of reason are reached only by the lofty thoughts of noble minds. Literature is nourishing, life-giving; science is not. Literature partakes of the nature of the soul of man; science is more useful in the common meaning of the term, but lower. But the traditions and history of ages, and the natural respect and admiration of men for the literary qualities in other men, prove that literature occupies high ground, that it contains life, and thought, and power.

Port Albert, March, 1884.

T. F. YOUNG.

NOTES.—1. We welcome fresh and practical correspondence; but brethren, be brief, and strike out into your subject in the first sentence.

2. We hardly perceive what Brother Young aims at. He is not sufficiently definite, and we do not know what particular reform he wants. Literature is getting pretty fair attention, and the programme for higher certificates provides for options fairly well. Those "aptitudes" can switch off, we fancy, at a reasonably early period.

3. Examinations secure "the survival of the fittest" moderately well, even under present conditions. Brother Young should consider the misery of students who have no "aptitude" for literature, and cancel it against the other misery.—EDITOR.

To the Editor of the CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

SIR,—I wish to call attention to an article on "Pedagogics" in the Practical Department of the JOURNAL for March.

The writer remarks:—"There is in the minds of the thoughtful to-day a growing discontent with the results of our educational system." In support of this statement he goes on to say:—"A successful business man not long ago said, 'I have sent my son to school for seventeen years; he has graduated with honor at one of our most noted universities, and now he does not know how to do anything.' That father seemed to think his duty had been faithfully performed when he had merely introduced his son to this world and handed him over to the schoolmasters. The truth is that the fault in this case lay not in the school system, as we are left to infer, but in the home training; unless, indeed, nature herself was at fault, which is not at all improbable.

It is true that the results of our educational system are often unsatisfactory. There is a vast difference between our young people as they are and as they ought to be. But the writer of the article on "Pedagogics" makes the mistake of confounding our educational system with our school system. The school system is in reality only one of a system of educative forces acting on the child, the combined effects of which ought to produce a perfect man. The home, the church, society, have a work to do in the development and training of the child, which the school cannot do alone, and which ought not to be expected of it. Now, I am quite willing to admit that our school system is by no means perfect; but I am not willing that it should have to answer for sins that ought to be charged elsewhere. The province of the school is to give such training and impart such knowledge as every person, whether farmer, artisan, or professional man, ought to have to fit him for the work of life. That is to say, its training should be general, not special. The best place to learn agriculture or any of the trades is on the farm or in the shops. If a father sends his son to school expecting him to come out a thoroughly equipped business man or mechanic, and there appears a "calf" instead, that father has only himself or his son to blame for the disappointment. Parents make the mistake, I repeat, of expecting the school to do what it never was meant to do. Children ought to be sent to school for a purpose. If "nine-tenths of the human race have to earn their bread by daily toil," let parents be content with giving their children a sound elementary education at school and then put them under special training for whatever is to be their life-work.

In the last paragraph of the article in question I find this statement: "Our schools, instead of fitting the young for the practical duties of life, really unfit them. . . . The scholar goes out of school with a distaste and disrespect for honest manual labor."

Now, in as far as this is true—and I think it by far too sweeping an assertion—the cause is to be found in the home influence rather than in that of the school. It does not prove the contrary to say that the most hard-working of fathers and mothers often have idle and useless sons and daughters, who disdain to soil their hands with honest toil; for these are the very fathers and mothers