



IN THE GALLERY OF THE NORMAL SCHOOL, TORONTO.

POINTS.

BY ACUS.

To point a moral and adorn a tale!

—Johnson: *Vanity of Human Wishes.*

The health of "Her Majesty the Queen" is not likely to be seriously affected by the fact that the United States Consul at Vancouver declined to drink to the toast at a recent board of trade banquet. The health of the Consul in question would probably not have been prejudiced had he done so. As to his 'acknowledging no right of the British sovereign to this courtesy,' it might be remarked that courtesy rests upon a higher ground than the recipient's right to it. Moreover, in doing honour to a lady, a gentleman always honours himself; and in proportion he would honour himself most in doing honour to Her Majesty, who is in every respect the foremost lady in the world. But clothed in a little brief authority, the Consul at Vancouver has no doubt gained the sought for notoriety. With sensible men notoriety is a drug on the market. Anyone can have it who is willing to pay for it; not necessarily in money, but in a sacrifice of common sense, or self respect, or in some such way notoriety has to be paid for. It is, perhaps, not surprising that the Consul's conduct has aroused such hostile feeling against him that petitions are said to be in circulation asking the authorities at Ottawa to institute enquiries, lay the facts before the American government, and demand his withdrawal. It is a pity that the gentleman could not have been satisfied with the simple distinction of being "a nephew of Secretary Blaine." True, that is very like the distinction of being known as Mrs.

Somebody's husband; but it is inoffensive, and no one ever petitions the government about it.

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One of the advantages of being well up in the languages, is that one does not have to fall back upon translations. There can be little doubt that literary work must always suffer more or less in the translation. Every language has a *genius* of its own, which is incapable of translation. Figures of speech are often difficult to translate; take *paronomasia*, for example. And the sweetest and smoothest of lines in their native language, often limp most painfully when taken out of it. When recently asked if I did not enjoy a certain German author, I had to confess that I had not derived any great degree of enjoyment from perusing him; but qualified the admission by explaining that I had to depend upon translations. "That," remarked my linguistic friend, "partly explains it." No doubt the same thing will partly explain the odd criticisms, and strange misunderstandings, to which so many works have been subjected at the hands of foreigners. Of course, there are translators and translators. One of Mark Twain's droll ideas is that men who fail at other trades become watch-makers; and similarly, it may perhaps be the case that men who fail in other departments of literature try their hand at translation. Their readers may be excused, therefore, for failing to appreciate the original. On the other hand, there are translators *par excellence*, translators to the manner born. Instead of translating word for word, they translate idiom for idiom; and with consummate discernment approximate as nearly as possible the standard of the original. But no ap-

proximation can ever be entirely satisfactory to those to whom the original text itself is an open book.

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Is the old prize system a failure? The school trustees in Ottawa think that it is; and have risen to the occasion, and abolished it. Their action in the matter seemed calculated to meet with universal approval. Some little controversy has, however, arisen in the papers; and from the tone of correspondence so far, the prizes would appear to be dearer to the heart of vain and doting parents than to the children themselves. Every crow thinks its own the blackest; and the flattering unctious is emphasized by a prize or two in the family. But, on the other hand, more than once have I heard bright students say, "O, I do not study for a prize; I am satisfied to pass." In other words, knowledge is esteemed for its own sake; not for the sake of running off, at the expense of other people, with a few cheap editions of commonplace works in the shape of prizes. But even were the editions the most expensive, and the authors the best, the principle itself would remain unaltered. What standard could be more false? What could be more out of proportion than the value of a paltry prize, and the value of learning? To render talent and ambition subservient to the attainment of mere prizes, is an ignoble ambition and a prostitution of talent. The schools will do better, far better, to teach something of the intrinsic value of knowledge; and believe me the intelligent student will not be slow to grasp the idea. Therefore I am extending my humble support to the school trustees at Ottawa; and more power to their elbow, say I.