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J. E. WELLS, M.A., EDITOR.

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Editorials.

DARK DAYS IN THE SCHOOL.

EVERY teacher knows something of them, those days when everything goes wrong. The spirit of evil has taken possession. Even the good boys have become, all at once, restless and perverse. The room seems to have become transformed into a whispering gallery. The prescribed lessons have not been prepared. The usually bright pupils are dull and careless. The dullards are hopelessly imbecile. You thought you had, by dint of patient effort, succeeded in establishing tolerable order in your department. You now wonder how you could have so deceived yourself. The room is a perfect pandemonium. Sounds of all disorderly kinds are ringing in your ears till you are half-distracted, and it almost seems as if deafness would be a relief. Every effort you make to restore quiet appears but to intensify the disorder. If you are a woman you would give anything to be able to run away to your chamber and have a good cry. If you are a masculine savage you have to exercise strong self-control to keep your hands off half a score of the little school-demons who are tormenting you and seem to delight in it. On one

point you are resolved. If you can but survive to the end of the term of your engagement you will abandon teaching thenceforth and forever. Better to break stones on the Queen's highway, or go out to wash and scrub for a daily pittance, than to suffer such tortures as you are now enduring.

Well, you survive. Another day comes of a very different kind. You enter the school with elastic step and a song in your heart. The children file in with quiet movements and bright, smiling faces. Everything falls into line and the work goes on cheerily. There are no discordant notes in the general harmony today, or, if there is an occasional jar, it does not grate upon the nerves, and a little patient effort sets it right. The pupils' minds seem to be on the alert. It is no hard task to gain their attention. They are interested in their work, and act as if they both enjoyed it and loved their teacher. The hour for closing comes all too soon. You feel as if you could enjoy another hour's work when everything is going on so nicely. You leave the schoolroom feeling that yours is indeed a "delightful task," and are glad at heart that you have chosen so pleasant, so useful, so noble a profession.

Now what is the cause of the difference? Is it in the atmosphere? Is some mysterious and baneful influence generated on certain days by some new condition of the elements? There may be something in this. Our souls are in contact with air and sky and sunbeam more closely and at more numerous points than we are apt to suppose. It is very likely that the dark days are not, as a rule, the days when the sun shines brightly in a clear sky, when refreshing breezes are blowing, and the face of nature smiling.

Other disturbing causes, too, may be at work. Some special attraction the evening previous may have kept the boys and girls from their studies, and from their beds, and all who have to do with children know what these irregularities and excitements mean; or some peculiarly difficult stage may have just been reached in the work of an important class.

Mrs. E. D. Kellogg, writing in the *American Teacher* some years ago, after a graphic description of these same "dark days" when "everything goes wrong; every sound is piercing; the door slams; the boots hit at every angle; books are left at home; the ink spills; children laugh at nothing; visitors come, and drive you half-distracted with their undertone to each other; slates and pencils obey the law of gravitation with the perversity of inanimate things; and the spirit of mis-

rule reigns triumphant," adds, by way of suggestion to young teachers: "First of all, don't lose heart, and conclude you are a failure as a teacher, either then or after you get home. . . . You are in conditions you cannot analyze, my dear young teacher, when the clouds gather from all points of the compass—and don't try it. Just hold yourself with all the calmness that is possible, and be as patient with yourself as you must be with the children. Perhaps you, yourself, through that subtle action of mind over mind, are practically responsible for the complicated condition of things. That is hard consolation, but not at all unlikely to be true."

Not unlikely to be true! Far from it. It is most likely to be the very essence of the truth. On any doctrine of probabilities it is far more reasonable to suppose, when one mind comes into disagreeable contact with fifty, that the jutting angles which produce the collision have been suddenly developed in the one, rather than simultaneously in the fifty. In nineteen cases out of twenty, we make bold to say, the origin of the troublous times is in the teacher, not in the pupils. The causes are many and various, a slight attack of indigestion, too little fresh air and exercise, want of congenial surroundings, social or business disappointments, Any one of these, or of a dozen other influences, emanating from our own neglect, and—shall I say?—selfishness, may be sufficient to work out for ourselves and our pupils a day of wretchedness.

But there are other causes arising likewise from a mental condition of the teacher which is, in itself, not only not discreditable, but praiseworthy, but no less harmful in its immediate effect. Mrs. Kellogg, in the article above alluded to, deals with some of these causes so forcibly that we close by commending a thoughtful study of her words:

"Perhaps there is no greater cause for the dark days of young, normal-trained teachers than in the inability to work out the ideal plans that had grown to be a part of daily thought. Bristling individualities spring up at every step, and stand like bayonets to prevent an approach. Every child calls for separate tactics, and in the confusion of disappointed hopes the heart sinks, the head is lost, and a mild panic is threatened.

"Let me suggest the unwisdom of attempting to force any up-hill course at this juncture. There is too much demoralization to attempt any re-organization of plans on the spot. Turn the attention in another direction, and manage as quietly as possible till the day is over; then think it out alone, and be quite ready to accept your part of the blame. Fortunate will you be if it leads you to recognize the hardly learned fact that you are for the pupils, and not the pupils for you; that