

have been like improvements. The methods of instruction, in most branches, have been revolutionized. Who is there who teaches reading, or arithmetic, or grammar, as it was taught twenty-five years ago? If you can find such an one, go write the word *old-fog*, under his name. Not only have we discovered new ways of teaching these old-fashioned branches, but we have learned that reading, writing, and arithmetic no longer suffice as a liberal Common School education. Within the past quarter of a century, we have invented object lessons, and language lessons, and natural history lessons, and the Grube method, and phonics, and diacritics, and the reformed spelling, and the Quincy method, and "diagram-analysis," and, lastly, we have learned to dissect everything until nothing is left but the bare skeleton of "principles" and "elements."

When we enumerate that which has been done in the educational field, and think of that which remains to be done, we almost begin to doubt whether any further progress is possible. We are tempted to believe that, for us, the millenium is at hand, and that, save a substantial increase in wages, or in the length of the school term, scarcely anything more is desirable. Having been, like the rest of the world, awakened by the Gabriel-horn of progress, we have eagerly joined in the universal struggle to "catch-on" to the cannon-ball train of civilization. Some of us although barely securing a place on the rear-platform of that train, can scarcely be persuaded that we are only passengers; we fondly imagine ourselves, not only the conductor and the engineer, but the engine itself. We fail to perceive that everything else about us has been making substantial and very rapid progress, and that at best, we have not more than kept even pace with the general onward movement.

I would by no means disparage or decry anything that has been done by way of actual improvement in the system of Common School education, but I have no patience with that kind of self-gratulation, to which even teachers are sometimes given, which permits the contemplation of our success to eclipse or conceal the magnitude of our failures. The fact is, that the past quarter of a century has been with us largely a period of transition and experiment; and in estimating our rate of progress we are apt to forget some things. What, after all, are "palatial" school houses, and trained teachers, and improved methods, and all the elements of advancement to which I have alluded, but merely the means devised or established for the attainment of certain ends? And yet it is to these, and only such as these, that we invariably point as evidences of the progress which we have been making. We say not a word about the children in the schools? or, if we mention them at all, it is only to speak of them as necessary adjuncts to the "palatial" buildings, the trained teachers, the improved methods, or—what is more common—long and useless tables of statistics. Of course, when the matter is brought home to us, we are ready to acknowledge that all this expenditure of labour and capital, and of pedagogical brain and sinew, is made for the benefit of these children; that the object for which the Common School was established and is maintained is to prepare them to become useful citizens, strong thinkers, able doers, well equipped for life's struggles, well worthy to enjoy life's gifts, filled with noble aspirations, inspired with heavenly aims.

Judged, then, rigidly by the standard of genuine results, what progress have we made? What progress are we making?

Compare the pupils turned out from our schools to-day with those of a