

“Thus proceeds our friend, in happy reminiscence of the bygone days. We fear that many of our readers, who may have reached the middle stages of the life journey, may have less grateful recollections of the schools and schoolmasters of their boyhood. To some the retrospect brings sad visions of ignorant, irascible tyrants, who knew little and cared less about true educational processes and influences, and whose chief delight seemed to be to maintain a ‘reign of terror.’ Yet good work was done in many of those early schools. The very fact that the learner was thrown so largely upon his own resources developed often a strength and independence of mental character that stood him in good stead in all his after life.

“The graded school is undoubtedly a present day necessity. It has, too, many advantages of various kinds, for both teacher and pupil. But it is not, to our thinking, the ideal school for children. Our ideal, at least, is that of ten or a dozen—certainly never more than twenty—pupils of different ages and at various stages of advancement, under the charge of a teacher of the highest qualifications, both intellectual and moral, thoroughly acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of each, heartily in sympathy with each, unhampered by the hard-and-fast lines of any programme, free from the fear of any periodical examination, at liberty to vary subjects and methods to suit the capacities and wants of each pupil, aiming only at the fullest and most symmetrical development of the highest faculties and capacities of each, intellectual, moral and spiritual. Such an ideal is, of course, for the most part, now unattainable. But in the good days coming, when parents shall have attained larger conceptions of their duties and responsibilities in the education of their children, and of the possibilities of childhood, they will learn to discard all machine methods, and the demand created will give rise to a supply of the most highly educated and most richly endowed men and women in the nation, who will give themselves with enthusiasm to what will be virtually the duties of a new and noble profession. The cardinal fault of the graded system is that it originates and then acts upon the mischievous notion that the abilities and capacities and salaries of teachers may be graded to suit the stages of advancement of the pupils. We hold it as a theory, which will gradually be reduced to practice as the world grows wiser, that the highest abilities and attainments are not too high for the man or the woman who is to be entrusted with the moulding of the plastic mental and moral natures of a class of children, during even the most tender years of school life.”