



Life, Literature and Education.

Tuberculosis and the Fine Arts.

In a resume of Dr. John Bessner Huber's new book on Tuberculosis, which appeared recently in the New York Times Saturday Review, occurs the following paragraph:

"Had it not been for the tuberculosis parasite, Bastien le Page might have given us another Jean of Arc, Rachel might for many years have continued to permeate her audiences with the divine fire that was in her, John Keats might have written another 'Endymion,' Chopin might have dreamed another 'First Polonaise,' we might have taken another Sentimental Journey with Laurence Sterne, have had more of Robert Louis Stevenson's delicious lacework, and enjoyed more of Stephen Crane's war stories. The list is almost endless. It ranges from that splendid fighter, John Paul Jones, to Thoreau, Symonds, and Prosper Merimee."

It is true that the number of illustrious men and women who have succumbed to this dread disease is appalling, and at first glance it might seem as though "the great" have been especially sensitive to its ravages. Possibly, from the fact that musicians, literary men and students of all kinds have perforce to lead a somewhat sedentary life, there may be some ground for such a conclusion. Possibly, too, the highly-strung temperament of the real musician, the real poet, or dramatist or artist may have a weakening effect upon the mere bodily tissue, and so predispose its possessor to the disease; yet, since one human being in every seven dies of tuberculosis, the preponderance may not be as overwhelming as it seems.

A more interesting aspect from the literary standpoint is the conjecture as to what effect the disease itself has had upon the works of these men and women. Had it not been for the influence of tuberculosis, with its strange alternations of despair and almost jubilant hope; of pathetic resignation and a stubborn rebellion against encroaching weakness in which the frail strength is pushed to the limit; its periods of dreaminess, and retrospection, and almost feverish elation of mind, would we have had a Chopin at all, as we know him? Would we have had a Stevenson as we know him? A Thoreau? A Keats?

Those who have made a study of the subject say no,—that we should assuredly have had a Chopin, but not a Chopin of the weird and plaintive strain; a Stevenson, but a Stevenson of a different order; and so on throughout the list. If there be anything worth noticing in the theory—and it only seems reasonable to suppose that there may be—the characteristics of these workers have surely been paid for at a terrible cost. The supposition is at least interesting, pathetically so to the admirer of these invalid artists, psychologically so to the investigator and the theorist.

A P. E. I. Writer on the Consolidated School Question.

The interest in the Consolidated School still holds with a tenacity that proves this to be one of the live subjects of the day. The following, from the pen of Mr. Theodore Ross, Instructor in Nature Study and School Gardening in P. E. Island, has been called forth in reply to previous articles on the subject which have appeared in these pages:

The way in which an opinion can be arrived at regarding the value of a general system of Macdonald Consolidated Schools, such as those instituted by Dr. James W. Robertson, would be by noting the defects in our present system and considering to what degree these defects would be remedied by the newer system.

The chief defects in our present system are: (1) Inexperienced teachers, (2) irregular attendance, and (3) a curriculum not sufficiently articulated with the industrial needs of our community.

The causes of so many of our schools being taught by teachers of little or no experience are: (1) lack of adequate remuneration, and (2) lack of social life.

The consolidation of our schools would lead to the establishment of more schools of the first rank, the principals of which would receive a larger Government grant. It is quite possible, too, that it might lead to larger grants from the ratepayers. In small school districts it often happens that a son or daughter of one of the trustees or prominent ratepayers is a teacher, and through her relatives and personal friends will get the school, which he or she would likely agree to take at a very small remuneration, because of living at home and having no board to pay. This will not be possible to such an extent in a much enlarged district. Again, one would think that a teacher having charge of a large school with several teachers under him would receive a larger grant from the ratepayers than if he were teaching in an ungraded school, but that has not been the experience with us. It does not seem to follow that the mere consolidation of the schools will influence the ratepayers to vote larger supplements, especially if in the consolidation any additional expense is incurred, but it will lead to a larger Government grant, which will mean increased remuneration for the principal.

The presence of several teachers at one center will do much to create a social atmosphere. Around them the more ambitious young people of the district will congregate. Societies will be formed, concerts given, and programmes carried out, and the whole intellectual life of the people quickened. All this tends to raise the status of the teacher, and the experience of the past has been that the teachers in a school of several grades remain longer in the profession than those who teach in ungraded schools, even though the remuneration may be no greater.

If we look over the statistical tables of our public schools for the

last ten years, we will find that the percentage in attendance has been about ten per cent. greater at the graded schools than at the ungraded schools. The chief cause of the low percentage of attendance is that the parents do not like to compel their children to go to school when they find it so unpleasant and irksome, and when the facts through which the children are trained bear so little relation to the life of the people. The mere fact of increased numbers makes the school work more agreeable to the pupil, and makes possible the playing of more interesting games during the intermissions. When to this is added a comfortable building with attractive surroundings, and studies which appeal to the native interests of the children, and which will make a direct appeal to the parents, we have good reason to think that the increase in attendance will be very marked, as it has been, and is, at the Hillsboro and Tryon, P.E.I., Consolidated Schools.

The feeling that our curriculum has not been adapted to giving the boys and girls the best possible training for life, especially in an agricultural community, has long been growing. Many parents object to their children going to school too much, lest they should be unwilling to work at all. The charge is only too true, that our schools have been weaning the boys and girls away from the farm, and unfitting them for life in an agricultural community.

The idea that the senses need training as well as the intellect, and that a trained intelligence can be used satisfactorily in the running of a farm, if not novel with us, has not been sufficiently impressed upon us to influence our curriculum, and the reason our schools are so poorly supported by our people is that they have so little in common with our life. The introduction of household science, manual training and nature study will meet this difficulty most effectively. It may be possible that these subjects can be taught in an ungraded school; it is not probable that they would be. At any rate there can be no doubt that they could not be taught with equal efficiency.

The introduction of these subjects will increase the cost of maintenance of our schools, but our farmers, as a class, are well off and are willing to pay for a good service. In brief, a general system of Macdonald Consolidated Schools, such as those instituted by Dr. James W. Robertson, would remedy the gravest defects of our present system, giving us teachers of greater experience, a more regular attendance of pupils, and a curriculum more closely articulated with the industrial life of our people.

THEODORE ROSS.

"Let the wealthy and great
Roll in splendor and state,
I envy them not, I declare it;
I eat my own lamb,
My chickens and ham,
I shear my own fleece and I wear it,
I have lawns, I have bowers,
I have fruits, I have flowers,
The lark is my morning alarmer;
So my jolly boys now,
Here's God speed the plow,
Long life and success to the farmer."

The "Eastern Debate" Issue Develops Into a Controversy.

The writer of the present article has very carefully read the views of the different writers in the "Eastern Debate," and having had some experience in the character of the work that it is possible to do in both rural schools and consolidated schools, he may be pardoned for giving his opinion on this important question. First, however, it would seem just to those who have had the management of the finances of the Macdonald Consolidated School at Middleton, N.S., to correct the charge of mismanagement that seems to be attributed to them in one article written in this debate. The school board of this section has always used all economy possible in keeping with the school. "Macdonald's money is doing it" has never been the "keynote" of the expenditures in this place, but lives only in the imagination of some on-looker.

There are other things in the article to which I have referred that might call for some comment. While many good things are said, others are somewhat contradictory. Evidently the article was written in a hurry. The conditions here force us into "academic conditions." No school in Western Nova Scotia, with, perhaps, one exception, has had a larger number of pupils doing high-school work than the Macdonald Consolidated School at Middleton. It is true that this called for expensive laboratories to do effectually the work placed upon the school; but that the school is worth all it cost is the universal verdict of those who know.

In addition to the high-school students of the central town, sixty pupils doing high-school work have been carried to this school annually. If these pupils went abroad for the privileges they have received here it would have cost their parents more than the extra cost of this school over that of the separate miscellaneous schools. But this is only one item. The high-school pupils of the town have had more valuable school privileges, and over three hundred pupils in the common-school grades have had advantages that could never come to them in the smaller schools.

As to the salaries of teachers, the best teachers were looked for, and fair salaries were paid; but to show that no "extravagances" because "Macdonald's money was doing it" have occurred, it may just be said that the school board, now that it pays all arrearages, has increased the salaries of all the primary teachers.

The plea that one writer makes for the miscellaneous schools is simply absurd. The fact that some great men have gone out from them is no argument that they are as good as something better. The establishment of consolidated schools is simply in keeping with the trend of industrial life, providing for a division of labor that carries with it means for more effectual work. The grading made possible in the larger school is one of the first arguments for consolidation.