

Address of Th. Girardot,

PUBLIC SCHOOL INSPECTOR, NORTH ESSEX, DELIVERED AT THE TEACHERS' INSTITUTE, SANDWICH, OCT. 19TH, 1876.

For the third time we have met in convention, and it is gratifying for me, as your inspector, to see that you appreciate so well these meetings, which are so useful both to you and your scholars. I am really happy to state that I have already found a change for the better in the management of our schools. All the teachers who have put into practice those methods which have been so ably discussed at our conventions, have succeeded very well; yet there are some, I am sorry to say, who stick to the old routine, and in so doing keep their schools backward; but they are few, and I trust that they will follow their fellow-teachers in the path of progress, or else give up their places to some others, who will endeavour to follow in their schools the new and improved methods suggested by experience and modern progress.

When we first organized these conventions, some were doubtful of their success; but you have taken up the matter in such an earnest way, by seconding so nobly the views of your inspector, that our teachers' institutes are now a complete success and an accomplished fact. Experience has proved that in all positions of life he who does not advance recedes. This admitted, we find ourselves obliged to seek methods that may be employed and a path to be followed in order that we may never recede, but on the contrary acquire an instruction more and more developed, in order to attain the highest degree of perfection of which we are capable. Amongst the methods which are the most proper to attain that object, I will indicate the following:—

1st. Legal conventions.

2nd. That a teacher should frequently visit the school of another good teacher, in order to derive benefit from the latter's methods of teaching, and also that he should read special works on education, in order to advance himself in his profession.

The advantages that conventions offer can easily be seen. 1st, they contribute a great deal to draw more tightly the bonds of fraternity between the teachers. 2d, they also widen their intellectual horizon. Where is the teacher who does not see any more to be done in the wide field of instruction?

Undoubtedly you can attain a very elevated degree of instruction; but when shall you have exhausted all the sciences? Therefore you can and should still study, and these conventions which facilitate your work easier, are to you of a great utility; you find in them cultivated minds, which communicate to you friendly advice, and initiate you into varied knowledge, perhaps still unknown to you; you also meet here fellow-teachers whose judgment is ripened, and who bestow upon you the fruits of their experience, strengthen you in the path which you have just begun to follow, and caution you against the obstacles which might arise.

Young instructors of youth, what a precious occasion this is to perfect yourselves, if you prepare with care, conscientiously, aye, even with pride, the works, especially the practical works, which form the essence of conventions, if you lend an attentive ear to the judicious observations and to the well-meant criticisms which your methods of acting, saying and writing will have given rise to.

The object of these conventions is, therefore, essentially noble and practical; still, whence arises

the cause that some desire, but little if any benefit from them? Perhaps it is because some indispensable knowledge is wanting with them, but it is above all owing to the reason that they do not bring those dispositions of the heart and mind which these conventions require, and which alone can bring about efficacious and desirable results. And how can they hope for beneficial results when good will is wanting; when a serious preparation has not ripened the subjects which are there treated; when not in the least zealous of widening the circle of their knowledge? They have not at heart to profit of the observations dictated by a kind solicitude. Expect to realize marked progress in such conditions is dreaming of the effect without having produced the cause! It will be easy for me to prove it, in showing what are the dispositions required at these conventions from the good teacher, and how they facilitate his labor.

If he possesses good will, this being the first quality which it pleases to discover in him, he sees with pleasure the day fixed for the convention approach, and it is also with pleasure that he sets out for the appointed place, regardless of the length of the route or the state of the weather. As regards practical lessons, they also need a good preparation, assurance in demonstration, facility in instruction, the attraction given to teaching, the discipline in the school easily kept, captivating the attention of the pupils, deepening their impressions. Such are the effects of a serious preparation, as much for the practical exercises as for the daily lessons of the teacher.

This is not all; good will and a serious preparation do not suffice; there must be continued attention paid during the convention, with the firm purpose of deriving benefit from the observations which the discussions shall bring about.

Self-love does not blind a devoted and intelligent teacher. Far from imagining that he has nothing more to learn, he acknowledges, on the contrary, with great modesty, all that is wanting in him, and gratefully receives all advices and counsels which are given concerning his labors or lessons, whether these advices emanate from the mouth of a grey-headed teacher or from that of a young member of the profession.

He does not attempt to impose his opinions, and he bears contradictions, convinced that everything has two sides, and that it is but by comparing the pro and con that we can come to the discovery of the truth. May all teachers be guided by such principles! May all young practitioners also receive with respect and gratitude the advice of their older fellow-teachers, grown grey in the profession!

I shall add a fourth recommendation. It is plain that well-meant communications in regard to the result of the experience acquired in teaching cannot but produce results. Also that a teacher who has found either by reflection or by hard work, or still by studying the works of modern educators, a proceeding which hastens the progress of the child either in instruction or education, should immediately communicate it to his colleagues, especially to the new-comers, who will thus see the clouds vanish that heretofore had darkened their path. Thereby conventions will become true institutions, where the teacher will continue to perfect himself, and of which perfection the pupils of our schools will first feel the salutary effects.

When the convention is over, the teacher is not yet through his task; he has yet some duties to perform. Not satisfied with having shown before