

Socialism, Russian Nihilism, the Negro problem, the Chinese difficulty, the Labor and Capital question.

In our Public Schools, what are our special systems doing? They are turning out tens of thousands of animated square-finished pegs to fill round offices, or animated round-finished pegs to fill square ones. All, or most, of the same stereotyped pattern. All of the same material. All with the same fuddled mentalities—little wonder, considering the air they breathe, and the stultifying process undergone—and all more or less useless. *Here* are five-hundred boys and girls, who have been taught book-keeping in a Public School. *There* is the head of a firm, who desires a competent book-keeper. Will he engage one of the Public School certificated, or will he look for a practical and practised hand, who has learned his trade at the fountain-head of all trade, hard-headed experience, not at the morbid desk of a \$250 school-marm, or the pretentious black-board of a beardless sciolist?

*Here* are five-hundred other boys and girls with different natures, intellects and tastes, of different birth, position and prospects,—What shall we do with them? Gather them up and chuck them all into the same mill: the gentleman or lady by divine right, the pauper or vagrant *ditto*, the prospective accountant, artist, musician, litterateur, professor, tradesman, farmer, mechanic, business-man, shop-girl, waitress, servant-maid; the clown, the imbecile, the industrious, the idle, the knave, the genius, the fool. In they go. The crank is turned by the other cranks, and after the grinding process, they emerge, no longer as individualities, but a sort of concrete, hit-or-miss patterned hybrids—crushed strawberry and cream, perhaps, without wit enough to skim the cream or grow the strawberries, or do anything, but wonder what Nature intended them for, and why Education, with a big E, has made them what they are, which latter process is

*"The most unkindest cut of all,"*

for they had been early taught to look upon Education, with a big E, theoretically, as a friend indeed and in need—why then, practically, should she bear them this bitter grudge?

Again, our system or scheme of Public School education tends to subordinate the individuality, the mental liberty of the instructor, to the autocratic fiat of an almost irresponsible inspectorate, which is, at once, too numerous, too interfering, and too domineering.

The teacher is not the free agent he should be. He is a mere passive machine in the hands of his immediate superior, and that superior is his inspector. What the functions of a school-board are, or what the duties of a Secretary, is an enigma to some. Truly, our masters are many!—The teacher has to obey orders and hold his tongue. The man best qualified to express an opinion on matters scholastic, and therefore to inform the public on such matters, the true, inward working of the system, is never heard from. He is practically muzzled. The inspectors do all the talking, and of course they use their own colors in embellishing the system. If the teacher open his lips, he is banned; he may pack up his household gods and go. We are overrun with Inspectors, many of whom, apparently, have little to do but air their own pedantic notions, harry their subordinates with reports, and bully those who show signs of a desire to exercise the divine right of personal freedom in their vocation.

A rigid system of education, like any other rigid system, is destructive of liberty, of the best personal effort, of the highest results. Under it, pupils do not do their best, their special talents get no chance; teachers do not do their best, their personalities are cramped, they are simply slave-drivers, exacting the tale of bricks without straw, at the autocratic bidding of some Pharaoh of the hour.