

## Educational Men and Matters

### THE STATUS OF THE TEACHER.

Thomas Allardyce Brough

Fifty years ago, when France lay crushed and bleeding at the feet of Germany, despoiled of two of her fairest provinces, and condemned to pay an indemnity sufficient, it was hoped, to cripple her for at least a generation, her clear-sighted leaders ascribed her defeat not to the Prussian soldier, but to the Prussian schoolmaster.

To this fact Prussian statesmen were not blind, and with renewed zeal and enthusiasm they proceeded to perfect the educational systems in the new German empire, welding them into one vast machine by which they hoped to achieve world domination in industry, commerce and government.

How nearly they succeeded we all know, and shudder to contemplate, and the lesson bids fair to endure. One result is that the school and the schoolmaster throughout the English-speaking world have been brought into a prominence unique in their history. The educational conference at Winnipeg in October last, attended by fifteen hundred delegates chosen from the Dominion's best and ablest citizens, was without doubt the most momentous gathering that has taken place in Canada since Confederation. Many of the leaders were not directly associated with the work of teaching, but all were of one mind in the emphasis they placed on the necessity for greatly increased remuneration of teachers, and also for according them adequate recognition as private persons and as citizens.

That in general the teacher of today does not receive the public recognition merited by his character, intelligence and training is patent to every thoughtful observer. And when we remember the number of men holding leading places in the other professions, in business and in public life, who served their apprenticeship as teachers, we are forced to conclude that the community suffers a loss not easily measured when outside of the schoolroom it relegates the schoolmaster to an obscure corner by thinking and acting out the thought that he is "only a teacher."

But in spite of all I have seen and heard and read, I am convinced that the public in general has not wilfully sinned in denying the teacher the recognition he deserves: it has been, I am persuaded, a sin of omission rather than a sin of commission. In the past the schoolmaster in Canada has been content to work for a scanty living wage, and the public has not seen it a duty to force him to accept more. In the next place the exacting nature of the teacher's duties, and the devotion with which the faithful and conscientious teacher has carried them out, has left him little time or energy for exercising leadership in social or public life. And, further, there has been a feeling on the part of many—an entirely mistaken feeling—that one who spends so much of his time in associating with immature minds must needs lack the mental maturity and robustness supposed to be the *sure* attribute of every business man.

The remedies are apparent, and for the sake of the children, the community and the state—not primarily for the sake of the teacher—they must be applied. The first of these is the giving of such remuneration to the person who makes teaching his life work as will save him from undue anxiety regarding his old age, and will enable him to associate on something like equal terms with the physician, the lawyer and the business man. Public esteem for the teacher will assuredly rise with the increased price paid for his services. And increased income will afford him increas-

ed freedom in exercising the public spirit that is at present cramped in him by his narrow means.

In the next place the teacher himself must be led to see that he cannot attain his maximum efficiency if he spends all his nights as well as all his days on the details of classroom work. By such a course the mistakenly conscientious teacher becomes in time not a man, nor a true educator, but a mere pedagogue, unconsciously imparting to his pupils an inadequate and distorted view of life. To be the best type of teacher in the classroom he must know at first hand nature and books and his fellowman. The great Teacher knew and loved the lilies of the field; His heart throbbed at the fall of the sparrow; His wearied spirit drank in the silence and solitude and grandeur of the mountains; the choicest literature of the world had become part and parcel of His inmost being; He served an apprenticeship of many years in the carpenter shop of Nazareth; He companioned daily with the fishermen of the Galilean lake; He ate and drank with publicans and sinners; He stood unmoved in the presence of rabbi and high priest and Roman governor. Multitudes hung on His words; but His daily care for the three most fruitful years of His life was His class of twelve humble disciples. Through these He saved and transformed a bankrupt and perishing world. Through these He has become the strength and stay and inspiration of humanity unto the ages of the ages.

Remembering this great example, and realizing his high calling, the teacher will not shrink from assuming responsibility and leadership in the advancement of education—apart from his daily teaching:—in the work of the church and all other societies designed to promote social and moral and spiritual welfare; in the promotion of industry and trade; in the management of associations dealing with municipal and provincial and Dominion politics. And through work and association with all sorts and conditions of men he can scarcely fail to be accorded his proper status in the community, and he should at the same time attain maximum efficiency in his own peculiar field as a true teacher, one who shall inspire the coming generation with such ideals as shall carry humanity one step further in its upward evolution.

Vancouver, 11:10 p. m., January 23, 1920.

Dame Nature took our dwelling up  
And shook it like a rat;  
She gr-r-r-d us rudely wide awake,  
And then she gave another shake,  
And let it go at that.

—H. Beeman.

Nature has placed nothing so high that virtue cannot reach it.

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