

To the Editor of THE CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. H. B. Spotton, M.A., Principal of Barrie Collegiate Institute, deserves the thanks of the community in general and of the educational public in particular for his lately published work on the wild flowers, or rather the native plants, of Ontario—a most valuable work, useful alike to teacher and to student. It is greatly to be desired that with Part I. ("Elementary Botany") it will be in the hands of all—a strong incentive to the youth of both sexes to investigate our native flora. Two objections urged against the study of botany are—the long array of huge descriptive words, enough to deter any ordinary mortal; and the (really false) idea that only "weeds" grow wild, "flowers," with a few exceptions, belonging to the garden only. He who faithfully and conscientiously masters the two works—Elementary Botany, Parts I. and II.—above referred to, will find that the huge words are explained before their names are given, and that what he has so ungraciously styled "weeds" are plants as worthy of his consideration as his neighbour's business or his own profit. In fact, field and forest, stream and meadow, will appear to him in, as it were, a new and most attractive dress. It must be borne in mind that the outfit of the botanist is both simple and cheap—and unpainted tin box for collecting plants; a pocket lens; a few needles fastened by the eye ends into penholders (for dissecting purposes); two or more quires of soft, porous, paper; some weights, and a board or two to serve the purpose of a drying press; some cardboard or plain white paper, and mucilage for attaching thereto the dried specimens; and last, but not least, the two books above mentioned; the whole costing not more than three or four dollars. The educational value of natural science cannot be over-estimated; for it must be borne in mind that not only is the intellect trained, but the imaginative, the emotional, the religious nature developed. Flowers, grasses, ferns, and mosses adorn not merely our gardens and our drawing and dining-room tables, but also God's holy altar—a fit offering indeed to their Maker. And in proportion as they are studied one discerns not merely beauty, but plan, design, order and law in that very beauty—means to an end, Divinely-fore-ordained.

Thanking you for inserting this letter,

Believe me, Mr. Editor,

Sincerely yours,

D. F. H. WILKINS, B.A., Bac. App. Sci.,

Math. and Science Master, Mount Forest High School.

Mount Forest, August 26th, 1884.

HIS BEST FRIEND.

[The following is a fair specimen of the kind of things our friends are sending us. We value such expressions of good-will, and treasure them up in the inner recess of the great editorial heart.—EDITOR.]

To the Editor of THE CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—No doubt by this time you have taken up your quill again. May I presume to say you spent a pleasant and profitable time, if you are as practical as theoretical concerning "The Holidays." That article took the hard expression from many a pedagogue's petrified countenance. I have taken the JOURNAL since its birth in June, 1877. It has grown large and strong since then. It is now always freighted with good things for the teacher. Of late it is more sympathetic in tone, and the teacher is compelled to recognize it as his best friend. Your editorials are appreciated by the teachers in this vicinity—Peel county. Your independence and individuality are what we have looked for in the past in vain. Ex-Normalite's letter in last issue is a very faithful picture of the nonentity that reigns over the Provincial Pedagogue Factory.

I hold a Second "A" (1881) from that institution. But, dismissing preliminaries, allow me to say that a number of teachers have asked me to request you to publish the poem, "The Dignity of Labor," (a favourite recitation of Dr. McLellan's) in the JOURNAL under "Recitations and Readings," also to publish, if possible, more papers suitable for promotion in public schools and for entrance examinations. Hoping, Mr. Editor, that you may have time and patience to read this note and then consign it you know where,

I remain, sincerely,

G. H. A.

Boston Mills, Aug. 30, 1884.

[We shall endeavour to publish the poem, and public school work shall have a fair share of attention.—Ed.]

THE SCHOOL BOOK MUDDLE.

To the Editor of THE CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—I am a teacher of a rural school in the county of Kent, and am one of those who value the JOURNAL and appreciate the work of education. Being desirous of promoting the best interests of my pupils, I have been much troubled by the "Readers" difficulty. All earnest teachers must be glad that more attention is to be paid to reading in the high and public schools, but when we think of the wretched books we have had to teach from, the wonder is, not that the reading is so poor, but that it is not much worse. It is not at all necessary to mention the defects of these books, they are well known to all teachers. Yet, ruinous as the faults are, it has not hastened reform. In my school there have been three promotions since the agitation about new books began. The section consists of people of more than ordinary intelligence, who take a great interest in school matters, and desire to give their children the best advantages to be obtained; and at each promotion the question is asked, "Shall we buy the children the 'New Readers' this time?" and I have answered "No; we shall try to get along with the cast-off books of their sisters, or their cousins, or their aunts; I hope there will be a set of books ready soon." Now the supply has fallen short, and I am anxious to teach economy by practice as well as by precept. May we hope that Mr. Ross, who understands the difficulties of teaching without proper helps in a rural school, will take pity on us, and have the Readers ready by next promotion? Might I suggest that he prepare a set of tablet lessons with pictures attached. I find that I teach much better since I draw pictures on my tablets illustrating the lessons. It is, however, quite a task to draw the pictures; perhaps pasting those from the book would do as well.

It has given me pleasure to see that our arduous task of teaching history is to be lightened. The injustice of requiring young boys and girls to prepare even the outlines of the entire history of England has been apparent to all teachers, and has been a cause of discouragement to many an earnest pupil, who felt it to be useless to face such difficulties without more preparation than was possible in a given time. I am pleased to know that I shall now have some time to spare for our own history, which is so neglected as to lead many to think that it is not worth knowing.

I have a "case" to report, and would like a remedy suggested:—A little boy had been attending school some time before the teacher discovered that he is repeating, "parrot-fashion," what his elder sister has taught him of the lessons. The present teacher finds great difficulty in correcting this habit, and has been only moderately successful, for the habit is very firmly fixed.

TEACHER,

Kent County.

Tilbury East, Aug. 27, 1884.