

THE MAN AND THE SCHOOL.

IT is the man that makes the school. The kind of teacher a school has outweighs all other considerations whatever. The architecture, the apparatus, the methods, the course of study—all these are of no consequence compared with the question, Who is the man in charge of the school? This is an age of machinery and of faith in machinery. The genius of the American people is devoted to finding out new ways of doing old things. It is a time of wonderful contrivances and appliances. And now so many surprising results have been attained by ingenuity in the method, that we are beginning to have a superstitious reliance on ingenious methods. We have come to think too much of machinery and too little of men. We are apt to forget that it was in the realm of material things that invention worked such miracles. When it comes to affairs involving the work of mind with mind, and character with character, the human element is the all-important one. In all the affairs of life, in government, in education, there are no methods that supersede the necessity for men. Indeed, this is truer than people think, in all matters. No amount of new tools will build the house well. No perfection of modern improvements will fill it with peace. In all matters we are liable to the same mistake. We invent excellent governmental machinery, but it goes all wrong because we forget to see about the men. We build enormous telescopes without any fit astronomer, and meantime some trained observer is making all the discoveries with his imperfect glass.

I say people become superstitious about appliances. They come to think that ingenious mechanism or methods can supersede natural talent, energy, patient training, experience—all those

human powers that alone can move the stubborn world. The peddler brings to your door a patent drawing apparatus, promising that with five minutes' practice the clumsiest hand shall make perfect pictures. The boy believes that with his new pen he will at once write a beautiful hand; or he is deluded into thinking that the new system of mnemonics which the lecturer taught is going to supersede memory altogether. What is the need of paying a physician when the little box of pills, with its book of instructions, is warranted to make the most ignorant blunderer wise and skilful? Why study the languages for years, when you may master them in six easy lessons for twenty five cents and stamp enclosed?

The public school system is the source of most American ideas, weak as well as sound. "Let me make the songs of a people," it was said, "and I care not who makes the laws." We might better say, "Let me make the schools, and I care not who makes the laws." Now, the school system is one great embodiment of this excessive faith in machinery. There are patent blackboards, and patent desks, and the patent new name of educator for teacher, and patent new normal methods of making trained teachers in six months, and patent plans for them to teach reading and arithmetic by. But somehow the results do not seem to be so perfectly satisfactory as all this fine machinery would lead us to expect. What is the matter? There is the elegant new school-house, furnished with every ingenious piece of apparatus which the American mind has yet elaborated; and there is the elegant new teacher, trained with the utmost skill and celerity by the most rapid new methods, certified to after the most elaborate system of modern