

The Western School Journal

(AUTHORIZED BY POSTMASTER GENERAL, OTTAWA, AS SECOND CLASS MAIL)

VOL. XIII

WINNIPEG, MARCH, 1918

No. 3

Editorial

Opportunity of the Country School

This month every one has been talking about Abraham Lincoln. He was possibly the greatest man this continent ever produced. He was in no sense a school product, yet he was highly educated. By this it is meant he was well-informed on great issues and capable of exercising calm and unerring judgment, capable also of expressing his thoughts with clearness and precision. More than all this he had a will like iron, and possessed in the highest degree that moral principle which kept him true to his convictions. His character was due to the training in his home and his community, but chiefly perhaps to his own unaided efforts. Thrown upon the world at an early age, he grew strong through struggling. And it is the only way to grow strong. Possessed of the idea that a man must be just, honest and humane at all times, he never stooped to conquer, but he glorified himself by assisting others. He was in every sense a great man, even though he was patterned in no common mould. He had the one thing which counts in a world of real men—he had individuality.

Had he come through the large graded schools of our modern cities he might have missed this. Indeed, had he lived in these days he might have missed it. In the rush and strain peculiar to present day conditions, it is not easy, whether we live in country or town, to grow up alone. We are like so many peas in a bin—each a good deal like his neighbor. Yet if we would attain to power or wisdom or excellence of any kind, we must be capable

of independent action. In a democracy, every one should have some power of self-direction. He should be more than a mere cog in a wheel.

Are our schools encouraging individuality in our pupils? Are they putting a premium on difference rather than upon similarity? Do they, for instance, take pride in a pupil who is a little different from the rest in attainment and aptitude, or do they lose patience with him because he does not passively submit to the course of study and discipline laid down for the mass? Is the country school, in spite of its limitations, not a fairly good place in which to receive an early education—provided the teacher is capable? In the days when everyone is preaching the value of consolidation of rural schools, and rightly so, should we not remember that something may still be said for the little one-roomed school at the cross-roads? For some years yet, we must put up with it, and we can the more cheerfully do so if we realize its possibilities. We shall not find a Lincoln in every rural community, but we may find boys and girls with strong and loving qualities of mind and heart. It is our duty to develop the latent forces in all these. We cannot do it through repression.

The Teachers' Convention

A study of the convention programme indicates that there is much to be gained by attending the sessions. The most distinguished speaker will be Dr. Soares, of Chicago. Those who heard him during his two visits to Winnipeg, agree in saying that he is the clearest and most convincing lecturer on peda-