

exempt from them. Besides the danger of growing arbitrary and dogmatic, which he ought to remember in his daily prayer, he is particularly liable to become a *routinist*. As he obtains experience in his calling, which is as valuable to him as to the physician or the lawyer, he may sink into that state of indifference wherein his words and his acts are lifeless; wherein he becomes a machine, and discharges his duties as a grist-mill grinds corn. In this condition, he is no longer a teacher, for he does not teach; he literally only "hears lessons." He puts questions, and, by a sort of mechanical skill, determines whether the answers are right or wrong. He scolds and frets from the force of habit, rather than because he is irritated by the stupidity and carelessness of the scholar.

The calling of the teacher has been elevated to the dignity of a profession, by the high character and qualifications of those who are engaged in it. Eighteen dollars a month and "boarding round," are obsolete who think the teachers is a kind of drone, growing fat and lazy on light work and leisure time. Laboring, on an average, only five hours a day, and having six or eight weeks' vacation in a year, it is believed that he has an easy time, and gets double the pay he ought to receive. This class of persons apprehend the school-master to be a man who is paid one or two thousand dollars a year for sitting five hours a day in the school-room, and there putting questions and hearing answers; who to vary the monotony of his life occasionally flogs an unruly urchin, if he is not too lazy to exert himself to this extent; and who is never called upon to make any great exertion who is not Dombey enough to make an effort.

The teacher may be grateful that this is not the popular opinion of him and his duties. That such a view prevails to some extent, is not surprising, for there have been, and are still, many school-masters corresponding to that description—a class of teachers whom we have chosen to call *routinists*; and we expect to find the word in the new Worcester's Quarto, when it is published.

The *routinist* is an old stager. He has put out all the words in the spelling book hundreds of times. He has travelled through the reading book, the geography, the grammar the history, and the arithmetic, till he knows them by heart. He has said about the same words to class after class, for ten, twenty, and even thirty years. He has beaten out a path; and always walks in it, and never wanders from it. His mind is circumscribed by the narrow limits he has assigned for himself. He never generates an idea, and neither borrows nor steals one.

Human nature craves variety; and the teacher who has not the skill to diversify his daily path, must become a *routinist*, and be a very dull, stupid person. If he is not interested in his work himself, he cannot kindle any enthusiasm in the minds of the pupils. Many teachers believe that, when they have put the questions in the text books, and received correct answers to them, they have done their whole work. They are conscientious in the discharge of their duties, and labor faithfully, in season and out of season, to accomplish their object, which is simply to have the lessons recited with mechanical correctness. Of course, this result, though obtained only by great exertion and by the exercise of much skilful management, is only a small part of the teacher's work. The mind of the pupil is to be developed, as well as stored with facts and methods; and this is only partially done by mechanical recitations. This machine work is not only a waste of much valuable time, but it leaves the pupil's reasoning powers entirely uncultivated, and encourages a kind of systematic guessing, which throws a cloud of uncertainty around the simplest principles and processes. The scholar never knows anything but words, and his intellectual training is only the cultivation of the memory.

In many schools guessing is practised as an art. Years of experience renders scholars marvellously expert in the art; and it is surprising to observe how correctly a child can answer, and yet have scarcely any real knowledge of the subject to which the questions relate. Of course the teacher must tolerate and encourage the practice of guessing, or it could not prevail. Permitting scholars to "try" two or three times in oral spelling, or upon questions that admit of but two or three possible answers, is calculated to foster the habit. In hundreds of words in the English language, scholars above the primary school know that one of two or three methods of spelling must be right. The teacher gives out endeavor. The scholar spells it, e-n-d-e-a-r. The teacher says "wrong;" then the scholar guesses the final syllable is -or, and guesses right. The next time the word occurs, the pupil is no wiser than before, and has to go through the same guessing process. In respect to all words in *or* and *er*, the same difficulty is presented, and similar difficulties in other classes of words. Between *y* and *i*, *ph* and *f*, *s* and *o*, *ur* and *er*, *l* and *ll*, and many other combinations, there are only two choices, and a second trial renders the scholar infallible, and the art of spelling becomes the art of guessing.

But spelling is a mechanical art; at least, it is generally taught as such, and therefore the practice of guessing cannot be so injurious in this as in many other branches. In those studies wherein the answers to questions should be the result of a process of reasoning, the habit should not be tolerated. Let us illustrate with a grammar lesson.

Teacher. Children study their lessons. Parse children, Peter.

Peter. Children is a proper noun,—

Teacher. Wrong.

Peter. Children is a common noun; first person,—

Teacher. Wrong.

Peter. Second person; sing—

Teacher. It is not second person.

Peter. I mean third person; singular number,—

Teacher. Wrong.

Peter. Plural number; neuter gender,—

Teacher. No.

Peter. Common gender; nominative case to study. Rule: Propositions govern the objective case.

Teacher. Wrong rule. The subject—

Peter. The subject of a finite verb is put in the nominative.

Of course, Peter understands the matter, gets a merit, and is a very nice boy generally. Peter is a prodigy in grammar. In stating the person, he had one chance in three of guessing right the first time, one in two the second time, and was "dead sure" the third time. The number, gender, and case, were subject to similar chances.

Guessing is a bad habit, and none but a *routinist* will permit it. The teacher should seldom say right or wrong, yes or no, or indicate by looks or motions that the answer is correct or incorrect. The question should either be passed to the next, or the pupil be compelled to reason out the answer. These things encourage the practice of guessing. They are very convenient for the *routinist*, and render school-teaching a comparatively indolent occupation; but the business of the true teacher is to teach, and he has something better to do than practising his pupils in firing, chance shots.

In conclusion, we report an authentic case, in which the scholar was disposed to guess, and the teacher was not disposed to permit it. In the course of the recitation in geography, the pupils said that continents were islands.

Teacher. Are both continents islands?

Susan. They are.

Teacher. Is every island a continent?

Susan. Yes, sir.

Teacher. Did you ever see an island?

Susan. Yes, sir.

Teacher. What island?

Susan. East Boston.

Teacher. Is East Boston a continent?

Susan. Yes, sir.

Teacher. Which continent is East Boston?

Susan. The Eastern Continent.

This answer was enough to upset the throne of discipline, and it "brought down the house." Perhaps the scholar felt aggrieved, and disposed to complain that there were no such questions in the book as those proposed. W. T. A.—Mass. Teacher.

OFFICIAL NOTICES.



PROTESTANT BOARD OF EXAMINERS OF MONTREAL.

His Excellency the Governor General in Council, was pleased, on the 27th instant, to appoint the Reverend George Cornish Member of the Protestant Board of Examiners of Montreal.

SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS.

His Excellency the Governor General in Council was pleased, on the 27th instant, to make the following appointments of School Commissioners:

County of Yamaska.—St. Zéphirin. Mr. Damase Parent.

County of Montmorency.—St. Pierre. MM. François Fournier and Louis Lachaine.