

politician who simply uses the school as something to put his foot on, as a first step towards power—this is frightful. It makes my blood boil to think of it. It ought never so to be.

There should be no difficulty in getting fit and proper persons to take this office. They should be called out by requisition, and elected on the same day as the aldermen; and the very fact that a man asks anyone to vote for him should, in any proper state of things, be a sufficient and decisive reason for not giving him a vote. But to return. I was speaking of our proneness to lose sight of the end in the means. System is good as a means, but a wretched thing as an end. Drill is needful for an army, and a drill sergeant is a useful officer, but make him a general and he will probably prove that most intolerable of all bores, a military martinet—to all true soldiers a vanity and vexation of spirit. System is good, but only as a means to an end. Our educational system is a bureaucracy—the tendency of which, unless carefully guarded, is to reduce the teachers and pupils of the country to a set of mechanical puppets, who must needs dance just as their masters may choose to pull the strings, or, if I may be allowed to use the metaphor, to produce teachers and pupils of one settled type like so many bricks turned out of a machine, all of one weight, size and shape, and bearing the stamp of the manufactory. It is Dutch gardening. I think it is a very wise thing on the part of the Bureau of Education that, as an expressive and continual reminder of the tendency of system, they have caused a privet hedge to be made from the street up to the office doors. There they see an instructive emblem of that kind of perfection to which you, dear teachers, together with your pupils, might finally be brought. Nature is here very largely relieved from her duties.

No vagabond or disorderly growth is here permitted. An almost mathematical uniformity prevails.

With outstretched tape-line and official shears the garden superintendent cautions the young idea not to shoot, and clips off each exuberance. Every spontaneous outgrowth of individual development is sharply pruned; every play of original thought and fancy is checked; and all is reduced to one common type and level uniformity, which must be an object of delightful contemplation to every purely official mind.

System is good, but only as a means to an end. What we want is to draw out and apply to the greatest advantage the powers both of the teacher and the pupil. Whatever method does this best is the best method. The human mind presents inexhaustible varieties. No two teachers or pupils are constituted exactly alike. For any mortal man to sit at an office table, and thence attempt to regulate all the details of the methods of every teacher in the country, is almost like arrogating to himself the attribute of omniscience. If it happens to be a professional teacher who is seated at that table, he will be tempted to impose his own hobbies; and the modes which used to suit him best must, he thinks, equally suit every other right thinking teacher in the country. If he is not an experienced teacher, he will be apt to issue regulations which are practically vexatious at every turn, and in many cases altogether impracticable.

While I would sternly guard the grand outlines and insist inexorably upon certain simple, definite, and attainable results, I would plead for more liberty for individual teachers. Real improvements as to methods of teaching, valuable suggestions as to school organization and management, are far less likely to emanate from the official brain, than from intelligent,