

the reports of the Inspectors of Public Schools. It would not, we think, be a bad plan to circulate these reports every year, in a separate pamphlet, so that they might have a better prospect of coming before the eyes of all concerned in the facts they disclose—especially of parents. The sum of the workings of our educational machinery, as fully set forth in many of these reports, is not cheering; sectional bickerings, jealousies and struggles; teachers and trustees at continual cross-purposes; teachers ever coming and going; schools unfit for health, decency, or comfort; salaries screwed down as low as possible; thousands of children not at school anywhere; other thousands attending only a few days in the year. This last is described by Mr. Platt, Inspector of Prince Edward County, as “the greatest of evils.” Its giant proportions may be seen by a simple glance at the following digest:

Public Schools of Ontario, 1872.—School population between five and sixteen years of age, 495,756; number attending school, 454,662; number attending less than twenty days in the year, 51,075; twenty to fifty days, 93,333; fifty to a hundred days, 123,568; a hundred to a hundred and fifty days, 97,136; a hundred and fifty to two hundred days, 71,270; two hundred days to the whole year, 17,748.

Thus, out of 454,662 reported as “attending school,” 267,977 were only present for three months, and that made up of broken periods! What approach to “education” can there be under such a system? Mr. A. McNaughton, Stormont County Inspector, reports that this irregular attendance is a serious evil, “a subject of general complaint among teachers,” and “is increasing rather than diminishing.” Other inspectors make similar references. They denounce also the “cheap teacher” system, and the frequent changes of teachers, accruing from the low estimate put on teachers’ work by trustees and people, and the consequent low standard of payment. In many sections “any sort of teacher” will be engaged if his or her salary can be screwed down below that of a qualified trainer.

Doubtless, the prominent evil of irregular attendance, both in town and country, but in towns especially, is in some degree owing to the extreme difficulty of providing for a numerous family out of the father’s moderate earnings. This difficulty, like a strong *chevaux de frise*, meets the advocate of compulsory education in his first move forward, and is not easily surmounted. Dearthness of necessities, high rents and fuel, sickness, interruptions of employment, and limited earnings when employed, may account for much of the irregular attendance complained of. When the education is entirely free, the same thing happens, and owing to the same causes. The children are required for trifling errands, or work by which they can earn a small sum; or the mother goes to work and leaves an elder child to take care of the younger ones; or a child has none but ragged clothes, or the whole family is in straitened circumstances. Even if it be proved that, as often is the case, these are due to the bad conduct of one or both parents, the children are to be pitied all the same—or rather all the more—but it is still equally difficult to find a remedy. In fact, in most instances, no remedy would suffice short of taking away the children from their parents—a step which would involve the necessity of supporting them. Moreover, making every allowance for misconduct and mismanagement, we do not think it is sufficiently considered how very hard a pinch it is, at present prices, even with regular employment and wages of \$7 to \$10 weekly to support and educate a young family—especially in a large town. Thus, in a letter in a Hamilton newspaper, we read: “My husband earns one dollar and a York shilling a day. House rents are high; firewood is expensive; and with six children continually appealing to our slenderly-filled purse, you may be sure a good deal of domestic economy has to be practised before I can get all ends to meet.”

Having said this much, something has to be added on the other side. It must be admitted that much of our sad school irregularity is owing to the culpable negligence of parents, especially of the mother; for the most trivial reasons she will detain a child from school, perhaps on the first and second days of the week, and then because they have been absent on those two important days, concludes they may as well stay away the rest of the week. Often the breakfast is not ready in time, or the clothing has to be prepared, or some little errand has to be performed, and then it is “too late.” Many women are themselves so imperfectly educated, and so incorrigibly indifferent or ignorant, that at best they only regard school as a place for children to be out of the way when they cannot be put to the slightest use at home. When the mother happens, unfortunately, to be of this hopeless order the father’s wishes do not stand for much. His intentions may be good, and his views enlightened, but if thwarted by the ignorance and stupidity of his wife, the children will not get much education. We are convinced that the ignorance of the mother has much to do with the bad attendance of which teachers everywhere complain.

A woman really awake to the importance of education, so far from creating or easily giving way to obstacles, will do her utmost to remove any which may arise. And further she will endeavour in other ways, which will suggest themselves to every intelligent mind, to stimulate the children to persevere to their utmost in making the best use they can of the short time during which, in the nature of things, they can hope to remain under instruction. School reformers in England confess that the extremely low state of education there among the working classes has long been most of all owing to the deficient education of the girls. The education of boys has been admittedly neglected. But that of the girls has been far worse. When these girls become women they, as wives and mothers, perpetuate their own ignorance to another generation. It will be a bright day for the world when every mother, in all countries, has sense to see the overwhelming importance of education, and has the inclination and ability to assist in promoting it. Among ourselves a proportion of over fifty per cent. of our rising generation, growing up with about three months hap-hazard and irregular attendance at school, is a fact which we trust will never cease to be regarded as an evil calling for the serious attention of the ablest and most practical intellects of our country.—*Toronto Mail*.

A correspondent of *The Boston Globe*, who has been visiting the kindergarten in that city, thus sums up the results of the system:

Children come out of the kindergarten, if it is conducted by those who understand the science, with a good knowledge of the relation and properties of small numbers, gained by continual counting of lines, and squares, and sticks, with an understanding of the geometrical forms—squares, oblongs, clubs, and triangles of all sorts; sticks, and slat-laying, the making of transparent forms with peas and pointed sticks, with knowledge of drawing sufficient to enable them to invent symmetrical patterns on the squared slate or paper; with much facility in little arts of manipulation that makes the little fingers dexterous; with a great many pretty songs, both devotional and picturesque; with symbolical plays taught musically, with simple, easy gymnastic exercises, and above all, with the power and habit of expressing themselves clearly and correctly. Can all this be said of the first two years, or even of the three of primary instruction? Yet it is all accomplished without books or any knowledge of reading, but simply by doing.

III. Papers on Literature and Science.

1. ON SPARE HOURS AND READING.

That was a safe and happy theme discussed by Dr. Cooper before an educational association in this city, the other day. “Spare hours” was the subject, and the worthy Dr. did it full justice, enforcing the truths advanced with characteristic pungency and raciness. Knowing the benefit to our readers of any hints how to use spare hours, and sorry that Dr. Cooper’s paper cannot be reproduced at length, we content ourselves with a number of quotations.

“Every particle of gold,” said the essayist, “is deemed valuable by the Californian miner, and is therefore worth picking up and preserving. Spare hours are to young men what particles of gold are to the miner; despise the particles and they never become rich.” Too many young persons have a dream of some El Dorado, where they shall find nuggets of gold which will make them suddenly rich, and disappointment seizes them when the vision is unrealized, and they find it is by gathering the particles that riches come.

The likeness between an uncultivated mind and an untilled farm was well enforced. “It is a big common, a barren waste, where no fence guards the ground, and no waving grain or precious fruit is to be gathered.” “An unimproved mind is a stagnant pool, breeding only what is offensive.” “It is a drag on the wheels of progress.” “It is worse than a cypher in this world of improvement.” Young men, especially, will find it worth their while to ponder these thoughts, and avoid studiously what is here deprecated.

The essayist proceeds: “Cultivation of mind is a duty which every one owes to himself, and no man can neglect the duty without, in some shape or other, paying the penalty for his misconduct.” This is a *regal* truth. And the penalty is not delayed. It is prompt in its visitation. In the same season that the field is untilled, the noisome weeds abound. So in mind; the penalty of ignorance runs close alongside the possession of ignorance. Wise men reap the rich harvest of reward almost simultaneously with sowing; ignorant men have only tares to bind.

The worthy Dr. has evidently had opportunities of carefully scrutinizing the way young men in rural sections often spend their hours, and thus is able to speak as follows: “In the country, spare hours