

The Western School Journal

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

VOL. XV.

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER, 1920

No. 9

Editorial

STARTING AFRESH

There appears on another page an article from the pen of the gifted Chesterton, which, whether it be sound or unsound in its teaching, contains a moral for teachers. It may well be that "a truth dimly felt by the poor has been densely hidden from the superior." Or as a greater than Chesterton has said, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes." Carried over into the field of education it means that the common wayfaring man with his almost intuitive sense of values, may see more clearly the needs of the young and estimate more truly the work done in the schools, than he who sits in the master's chair, or he who operates the lever which sets in motion the educational machinery of the state. It may indeed, be that what is required in these days of change is not a gradual evolution, but something akin to revolution. It may be that indolent caution is not an evidence of wisdom, that thoughtless conservatism is not altogether a virtue, and that the greatest friend of humanity is not he "who hangs to the tail of progress and hollers 'whoa!'"

The most important thing of all in school education is that teachers have a right objective. In one way the most necessary aid for a teacher is a clearly defined course of study. In another way, this course of study may be the one great obstacle to true progress. The teacher who thinks only in terms of reading, arithmetic, grammar, and the like, is hopelessly wrong and he

can never be right. Nor will it mend matters much if some subjects are omitted and others put in their place, nor if the subjects are taught in a better way, and by more earnest people. Nicodemus was learned enough and earnest enough but he needed to be born again. So with many of the teaching body. Even teachers in Israel—teachers of teachers and leaders of teachers—may need regeneration. And such regeneration consists in nothing less than in turning away from the curriculum to the child. Verily he is no true teacher at all but only a blundering pedant, who thinks merely in terms of subjects. "The beginning, centre and end of all instruction is the welfare of the little child. Any study is valuable only as it ministers to his development, only as it enriches his experiences, or adds to his life-power."

A real teacher is always conscious of two things—the unfolding life in his little school, and the life into which the pupils are to enter when their school days are completed. And this is true of teachers in every Grade of school. The true teacher distinguishes means and ends. The proper ends are human betterment, social efficiency; the means are work, play, study, in the spirit of friendship and devotion.

A group of little children in a school, what do they chiefly require for their life-development? Pages of spelling, columns of figures, exercises in sitting and standing according to order? Of necessity there must of course be some-