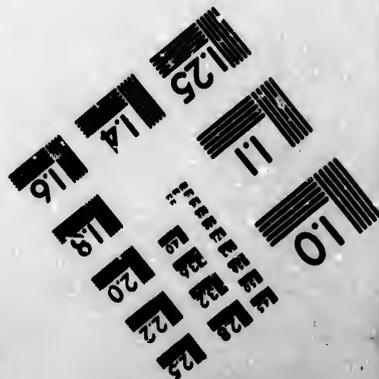
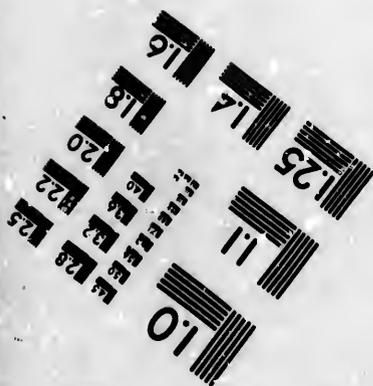
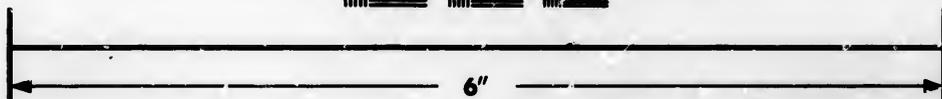
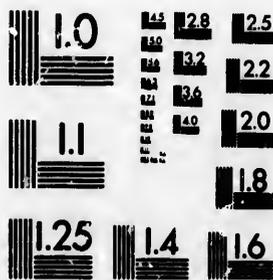


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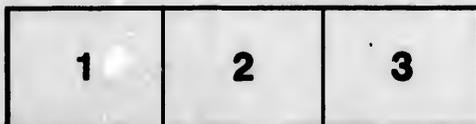
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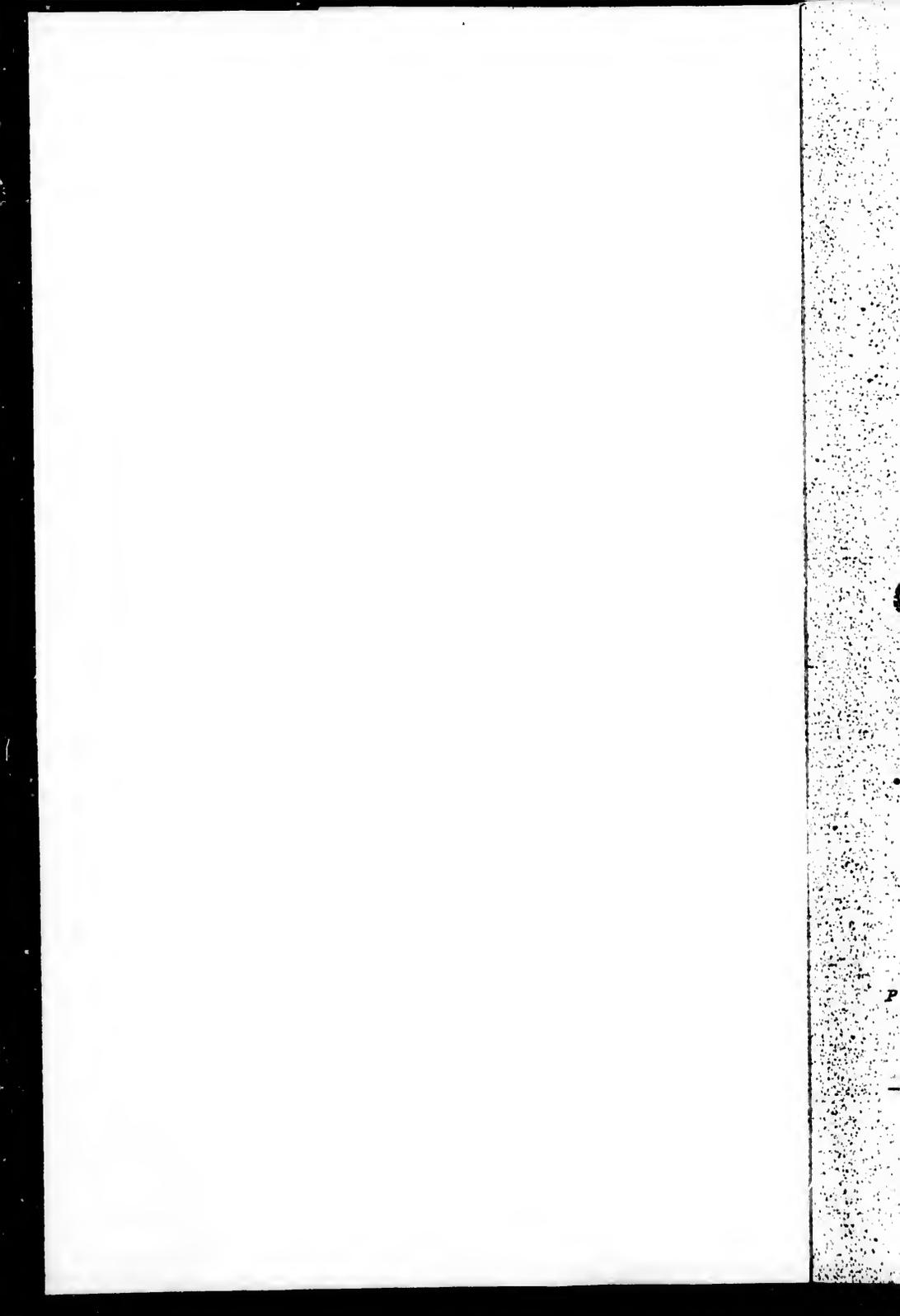
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THE
GALT PRIZE ESSAY.

AN ESSAY

ON

Common School Education;

BY

MISS MARGARET ROBERTSON.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE SAINT FRANCIS
DISTRICT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

SHERBROOKE:
PRINTED BY J. S. WALTON, AT THE GAZETTE OFFICE.

1-3,49

A N E S S A Y

ON

Common School Education ;

BY

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SHERBROOKE, C. E.

*PUBLISHED UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE SAINT FRANCIS
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The following Essay was written in compliance with an invitation given by Rev. Dr. Nicolls, President of St. Francis District Teachers' Association, announcing that two prizes, \$25 and \$10, were offered by HON. A. T. GALT, M. P. P., for the best Essay on the following subject,—“What ought our Common School system to aim at? and how can that object be most effectually attained?” The competition was to be open to all Teachers of Common Schools and Academies within the District, the prizes to be awarded by Prof. Miles, Principal Graham, and Inspector Hubbard. Ten essays were produced, which were carefully and separately examined by the judges, without any knowledge of the writers, or of each other's decisions. On the receipt of their separate reports by Dr. Nicolls, they were found to be entirely unanimous,—and on opening the envelopes accompanying the successful Essays, it appeared that the first prize had been adjudged to Miss Margaret Robertson, of the Sherbrooke Academy; the second, to Miss Eliza P. Perkins, of Hatley.

The following is the joint report of the Judges, relative to the first prize :—

To the President of the St. Francis District Association of Teachers :

—We the undersigned, judges of the essays of candidates for the “Galt Prizes,” having carefully and separately examined ten essays submitted to us, do hereby certify that the first prize is awarded for the Essay headed by the motto, “Wisdom is the principal thing,”—and that we are perfectly unanimous in our decision as here stated.

(Signed)

H. H. MILES,
JOHN H. GRAHAM,
H. HUBBARD.

December 29th, 1864.

ESSAY.

"Wisdom is the principal thing."

"What ought our Common School System to aim at? and how can the object aimed at be most effectually attained?"

The design of our Common School System is to provide the means of education for the children of the people. A few may avail themselves of the superior advantages afforded by our Grammar Schools and Academies, but the mass of the people must depend for the early education of their children, upon the Schools for whose establishment the law, in every settled District, makes provision. In them, many of those who are to enter the learned professions, must commence their course of study, while to the great number of those, who, twenty years hence, are to be the farmers, mechanics, and merchants of our country, they must afford the sole means of acquiring the knowledge, absolutely necessary to even a moderate degree of intelligence. The aim of the system, therefore, ought to be, to provide such means of instruction, as shall prepare the one class for benefiting to the utmost, from the opportunities which higher institutions of learning may afford them, and which shall best fit the other class for the intelligent use of the means of improvement which contact with the world may supply.

In the case of either class, the amount of knowledge to be imparted is not the *only* thing, nor, indeed, the *first* thing to be considered. To develop and strengthen the mental powers, to teach a child to observe, to think, to reason, must ever be the first consideration in any system of education, and the studies to be pursued in our Common Schools, as well as the method by which they are to be pursued, must be decided upon with reference to this end.

The amount of knowledge acquired must, even in the most favorable circumstances, be comparatively small, but were the amount great, it would be valuable to the child, less for its own sake, than for the sake of the mental discipline resulting from its acquisition.

The difference between the boy who has enjoyed five years of faithful instruction and discipline in one of our Common Schools, and the boy who has never entered a school of any kind, lies not alone in the knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography, that the one possesses over the other. Compared with the thoroughly educated youth, both may be considered ignorant. But in the clearness of mental vision, which rewards the patient search

after truth, in the mental strength, which is the result of difficulties fairly met and overcome, one is far in advance of the other. This difference is not always apparent in the boys. The superiority of the one over the other lies less in what he is as a boy, than in what he may become as a man. Through his books, and his skillful use of them, he has got a glimpse of a world of fact and fancy, which the eyes of the other have never been opened to see. With average ability, his course must be onward. He can never settle down into the *mere* artizan, or tiller of the soil, with no thought beyond the daily labor to be performed, the daily pittance to be earned. Whatever occupation he may choose, it will be pursued intelligently. The habits of patient attention, the ability to fix the mind on one subject, till it has been viewed in all its aspects, which must ever be the result of thorough mental training, will avail him in his workshop, or among his fields. He may forget the facts which formed the subject matter of his school lessons, rules may pass from his remembrance, he may lose his skill in solving problems, and in answering difficult questions, but the mental power acquired in dealing with these things in his youth, will not be lost to his manhood. In this mental power, and in its skillful and honorable application in the management of a man's own business, and in the performance of the duties which he owes to the community, lies the difference between the intelligent and useful citizen of a country, and the man whose only claim to citizenship is, that he earns and eats his daily bread within the country's limits.

A matter of greater importance than the imparting of knowledge, or even than the ensuring of thorough mental discipline to the young, is their moral training. Knowledge is power, but knowledge unguided and unrestrained by high moral principle, is a power for evil, and not for good. Among the schoolboys of to-day, are the Judges, Magistrates, Legislators, of the future. If, twenty years hence, the affairs of this rapidly advancing country are to be subject to the guidance of good men and true, it must be through the influence exerted on the youthful portion of the community during the next ten years. In proportion as they are successfully taught, that even with regard to the affairs of this world "goodness is wisdom, and wickedness folly," will they be worthy to take up the trust, which the future holds for them.

Among the various means to which we have a right to look for the attainment of this end, none can be placed as to importance, in advance of our Common School system of education. How can it be made a more efficient instrument to the attainment of this end?

In attempting to answer this question, it can be no part of the Essayist's duty, to point out those respects in which our school system—as a system, may be supposed, by some, to be deficient, or to suggest changes that might with seeming advantage be made

in it. Neither could there be any propriety, in regarding the subject from a point of view which shows it as a vexed question among our legislators, and a vexing question in its practical workings, in more than one municipality in the province. I suppose the question to be answered is this,—

How can the Common Schools of our own district be made most effective as a means of mental culture and moral elevation to the children of the people?

A fair and full answer to the question will, I think, go to show, that as all classes of the community are benefitted by the successful working of a well arranged system of Common Schools, so all classes are to a certain extent, though in different ways, responsible for this successful working. But it is upon those whose duty it is to decide as to the qualifications necessary for the teachers of these schools, and to pronounce judgment as to individual cases—and upon these teachers themselves—their fitness for the work, and their devotion to it, that the success of our educational system *chiefly* depends.

Much has been said of late, with regard to the propriety of gradually raising the standard of requirements in those proposing to become teachers, and a little has been done in that direction.— But far more requires to be done. It may be true, that there are few Common Schools, in which there are pupils so advanced, as to be beyond the teaching of one, who has passed a fair examination as the standard of requirements now is. It may be true too, that it is neither desirable nor possible that the children of our Common Schools generally, should be carried beyond the simple rudiments of an English education. But it is also true, that even the rudiments of an art or science cannot be well taught by one who has not gone far beyond these rudiments. Any one may teach a child his letters, or drill him in spelling words of an indefinite number of syllables, but to teach a child to read well, one must be able to do far more than to tell the letters, or put the syllables together. A limited knowledge of Arithmetic may suffice for the teaching of the simple rules, the mere mechanical work of adding or multiplying, but only one who is skilled in the art, who understands the science in its relation to other branches of mathematics, can reveal to his pupil the power of figures, or give him an idea of the wondrous secrets of time and space which they may be made to disclose. Any one with a quick eye, may teach a child to trace out on the map the outlines of the various countries, islands, oceans, painted upon it, or make him acquainted by name with the several zones and the parallels that bound them. But to put life and power into the teaching, to carry the child's imagination away from the printed and painted surface, the lines, figures, and mysterious symbols, to that which they represent—the grand real world in which he lives, with all its wonders and changes,

one must have a far greater knowledge of the subject, than a child is able to receive.

To imagine that the actual necessities of the pupil, may with propriety limit the resources of the teacher, is to take a very narrow view of the subject of education, to form an unworthy estimate of the importance of the teacher's office. A teacher, knowing only the rudiments that he is expected to teach, and who is content to know no more, must fail in the *right* performance of a teacher's duty. He may announce facts, and explain processes, in as far as he is himself acquainted with them, but he cannot make visible to his pupils—because he cannot see himself—the principles upon which the value of a knowledge of these facts and processes entirely depends.

Besides—uninfluenced himself by the inducement to progress, which an enlarged knowledge supplies, he must fail to give to his pupils the impulse toward self improvement, which is of more value than any amount of imparted knowledge can be.

In this power to influence the minds of his pupils, lies the secret of a teacher's best success. Many of the greatest ornaments of the world of science and letters, might have lived on in obscurity, unconscious of their powers, but for the onward and upward impulse given to their intellectual faculties by some scientific or classical scholar occupying the humble position of a parish school-master. An enlarged knowledge is not the sole source of such influence, but it is as indispensable to its exercise, as are the moral and intellectual qualities which, in a teacher, command a pupil's respect. It will not avail for success where the gift of teaching is not, nor will it stand instead of moral fitness, or a true spirit of devotion to the work, but through it alone can natural gifts be made really available, as a means of intellectual and moral advancement to the children of the people.

Especially is it important that those entrusted with the education of the young, should be morally fit for the office. The relation in which a teacher stands to his pupils, implies more than the mere expansion or cultivation of the intellectual faculties. Directly or indirectly he must exert a powerful moral influence upon them. If not directly exerted for good, it must be indirectly exerted for evil. He can neither divest himself of this power to influence, nor of the responsibility which attaches to it.

They whose duty it is to decide as to the moral qualities necessary in a teacher, need no hint as to what those qualities must be, and even to name them might seem impertinent. There can however be no impertinence in asserting that a departure from the letter or spirit of the law having reference to these qualities, in deciding upon the fitness of individuals for the office, must have an injurious tendency. The standard of requirements in this respect, may be sufficiently high; it must be uniformly adhered to, if

our Common Schools are to exert a healthful moral influence on the youth of our country.

That the Board of Examiners should raise the standard of requirements, is not all that is necessary to ensure properly educated teachers for our schools. It may be quite possible to make of the Board of Examiners, and the examination, a bugbear which shall be more powerful to discourage the timid, than to keep back the unprepared. The teachers themselves must have their eyes opened to the desirableness of greater attainments than any board is likely to require of them, in order that they may fill worthily, the honorable position at which they aim. They must prepare for it not merely that they may be able to pass creditably an examination more or less severe, but that they may be thoroughly acquainted with the subjects they mean to teach, and that they may ensure to themselves that mental discipline, necessary to the skilful dealing with the minds of others. They must cultivate a love of knowledge for its own sake, if they hope to excite this love for it in their pupils.

They must have an exalted idea of the teacher's office, not as reflecting dignity on those who hold it, but as requiring much at their hauds. It must not be assumed lightly, nor from unworthy motives. It must not be coveted as an easy and pleasant position. A pleasant position it is, to one who loves the work to which it introduces him, but it is an easy—an un-laborious position to none. Even when use and wont, and a consciousness of fitness for his sphere have removed out of the teacher's way the obstacles which at first encumber his path, his task is still a laborious one, requiring watchfulness, patience, firmness, and great power of endurance mental and physical. To one who has no aptness for teaching, no love for it, no success in it, teaching is a most painful drudgery.

The office of teacher must not be assumed in a mercenary spirit—just so much time and teaching given for so much money received. He who takes it in such a spirit will fail every way. He will disappoint, and he will be disappointed. If he is conscientious in the discharge of his duties, and at all successful in his work, he may go on with pleasure to himself and others for a while. But when the day of reckoning comes—when the balance is struck, he will find that the hard cash justly considered his due, will by no means remunerate him for the labor bestowed. He will say, "With less wear and tear I might have earned more at some other work," and it will be the truth. The outlay of the teacher is not of a kind that can be estimated in dollars and cents, and dollars and cents, even were they more liberally awarded to the teacher than they are among us—could never make to him a full and satisfactory remuneration.

Do not let me be misunderstood. We live in a world in which to the greater number of us, our daily bread must, in one sense,

be the first consideration. To suspect as mercenary all who look to the profession of teaching as a means of obtaining a livelihood, would be foolish, as it would be unjust. Of a more sacred profession it is said "They who minister at the altar shall live by the altar." A teacher may with propriety permit himself to look to his profession as a means of obtaining honorable bread. But he must assure himself that if to obtain bread be his sole motive in choosing his profession he need never hope to become a successful teacher in the highest sense. His success must be the result of earnest self-denying labor which bread cannot pay. Unless he so loves his work, or is so impressed with its importance that he is willing to accept success in it, as the best part of his remuneration, he will be disappointed.

Upon this part of the subject—the fitness of teachers for their work—one might enlarge indefinitely. In one sense it may be said to cover the whole ground. As soon as the majority of our common schools shall be under the direction of teachers who have undertaken the work in a right spirit, from right motives, who have thoroughly prepared themselves for it and earnestly devote themselves to it, then shall we see the object aimed at by the system in a fair way to be effectually attained.

Again, measures should be taken to make the office of teacher in our Common Schools a permanent one. In passing from the care of one inexperienced person to that of another, schools must suffer, both as to instruction and discipline. Even when the skill and attainments of the successive teachers may be undoubted, this frequent change must interfere with the progress of pupils. Time must be lost before the stranger can ascertain their standing, so as to class them properly. When his mode of teaching differs from that of his predecessor, it must be some time before they grow accustomed to it, so as to respond to his efforts in their behalf. Progress must be irregular and fitful. The knowledge thus acquired will be fragmentary, and easily forgotten. Nothing can be well learned, and what is worse no proper habits of study can be formed, no love of study cultivated.

With regard to the teachers, they can hardly be expected to throw themselves heartily into a work, which three or four months may limit. Half the time will be over before they find themselves thoroughly engaged in their duties, or before they see any real progress in their pupils. To acquire a reputation as a skillful and successful teacher, is not of course the highest motive that can actuate one in the performance of duty, but it is still a legitimate motive. A teacher who looks forward to the close of the term as the end of his connection with his pupils, can have little hope that his ambition in this respect will be gratified. The progress of a school from term to term may and ought to be marked, but it is not in the first term that the progress is greatest. In those schools, in which every term is a teacher's first, the progress can

scarcely be so evident, as to reflect honor on either teacher or pupils.

Besides, even on the minds of conscientious teachers, the knowledge of the transitory nature of their connection with their pupils, must, in another way, re-act unfavorably. It will not be unlikely to tempt to an evading of difficulties both in the government of their pupils, and in their instruction. It is often easier to endure passively what is disagreeable, or even what is positively painful or wrong, than to take a firm stand against it, and the thought that a few weeks or months will put an end to the vexation as far as he is concerned, will often to a teacher prove a temptation to overlook what merits reproof in his pupils. The injurious effects of such a course must be too apparent to require to be enlarged upon here.

Notwithstanding the very evident disadvantages which attend these frequent changes, the cases in which teachers continue year after year in the same school, are the exceptions, not the rule. Indeed the cases are rare in which young persons are found preparing themselves for the office, with any idea of making it a permanent one. No such thing seems to be expected from them. It seems to be understood, that a young man, when his own school days are over, may very well spend a winter or two in teaching, until he shall decide as to his future occupation, or in order that he may obtain means to pursue his professional studies. A young woman teaches three or four months in summer in order that she may gain money with which to dress herself neatly during the rest of the year, and it is all as it should be with our Common Schools in the opinion of people generally.

But unless that is true with regard to the profession of teaching, which is true of no other profession, that the skill and experience which is the result of long practice cannot be made available in securing success in it, all this should be quite otherwise. Our Common Schools can never become the power for good, which they might be made in the country, until the teacher's office is made a permanent one.

With this frequent change from school to school, no doubt the restlessness and incompetency of teachers may have something to do. Young people becoming teachers, with no just sense of the responsibilities which they assume, or of the difficulties which they must encounter, grow impatient of the circumstances in which they have placed themselves, and choosing to believe, that what is unpleasant in their position, arises from something peculiar to the school or neighborhood, rather than from their own incompetency, they seek new situations, only to find new troubles. Higher requirements on the part of the Board of Examiners, would tend to correct the evil, in as far as it is thus occasioned, by discouraging young persons who desire the office of teacher only that they may escape from the performance of distasteful duties at home, or that

they may enjoy what seems to them a more desirable social position than they could otherwise occupy.

But the other circumstance out of which these frequent changes seem to arise—the fact that few enter upon the work of teaching, with any thought of making it their life's work—cannot be so easily dealt with. The cause must be apparent to all. It is not surprising that few are found willing to devote their energies to a profession however suited to their abilities and tastes, which offers no reasonable prospect of affording a livelihood. This ought not to be true, of even the *Common Schools*, in the long settled districts of Canada, but true it is.

The existence among us of prosperous academies and colleges, is evidence that the cause of education has advanced with the material prosperity of the country, but it is chiefly as regards these higher institutions of learning that the advance is apparent. Many of the drawbacks incident to the schools of a new country—the short summer or winter term—the giving place of one chance teacher to another—the “boarding round” system as it is called, and many other defects in arrangement, still cling to our *Common Schools* generally, and unite to hinder their efficient working.

It is time that these drawbacks were removed from the schools of the long settled districts. It would be a step in advance if they could be kept open longer each season. A prospect of being employed during the greater part of the year, would, even at the present rate of remuneration encourage suitable persons to qualify themselves for the work of teaching. But in schools generally, the rate of remuneration ought to be increased.

While it is important that teachers should guard against a mercenary spirit in seeking the office it is equally important that their employers should avoid that spirit of false economy which inclines too often to cheapen a teacher's services. It is true of teaching as it is true of other things—that which is valuable must be paid for. And it is true also, that the cheapest teachers, like other cheap wares, often prove the dearest in the end.

Let it be repeated here. Our *Common Schools* will become the power for good in the country which they ought to be; when the majority of them shall be under the direction of faithful and efficient teachers, and that happy day will not be very distant, when the office of teacher is made a permanent and remunerative one.

What should be taught in our *Common Schools*, and what method of teaching should be pursued, in order that they may most effectually attain the object at which they aim?

While it must be insisted upon, that an enlarged knowledge of many subjects is absolutely necessary to our idea of a well qualified teacher, it by no means follows, that many subjects should enter into the course of study to be pursued in our *Common Schools*. The youth of the greater number of the pupils, the early age at

which they generally leave school, and the course which lies before them in life, unite to render this impossible and undesirable.

Reading, writing, spelling, the elements of arithmetic and geography should, with scripture history, and the history of our own and the mother country, form the chief matter of instruction. With regard to grammar opinions may vary. No doubt the experience and observation of the greater number of teachers go to prove, that beyond the mere Orthography, it cannot be taught to very young children with pleasure and success. Definitions may be learned by heart, a certain facility in distinguishing the various parts of speech, and their relation to each other, may be acquired, but any clear and appreciative comprehension of a full and elaborate system of analysis, is quite beyond the powers of children generally. Still a limited acquaintance with the principles of our language is better than none, and a knowledge of the text of some respectable grammarian may be of great use to those, who without intending to take a full classical course, yet have the opportunity of continuing in higher institutions of learning, studies of which the course pursued in our Common Schools, ought to be the foundation. It would therefore seem right that the elements of English grammar should be among the subjects taught in our Common Schools.

It does not for various reasons seem wise to include in the course of study more than these branches. As has been before intimated the early age at which the greater number of pupils leave these schools, renders an extended course impossible. In most cases, the higher branches of study could only be pursued at the expense of those which in order and importance come first. No acquirements *beyond* the simple elements of these branches, can make up for the neglect of them, or for a *superficial* knowledge of them. A thorough acquaintance with them, is the only stable foundation for education, whether it is to be pursued in our higher institutions of learning, under the guidance of skillful teachers or amid the influences of a life of business or labor.

Let it not be supposed, that the course of study being confined to these elementary branches, the teachers will find no occasion to avail themselves of their superior attainments in their intercourse with their pupils. The more perfectly that a teacher is acquainted with a subject in all its bearings, the better qualified he must be to teach the simple elements. By drawing upon his own resources, now for an argument, now for an illustration, he may throw around lessons, in themselves dry and uninteresting, a charm which shall assist the memory and quicken the other faculties of his pupils.

With regard to many subjects that do not enter into the course of study, he may present them to his pupils in the only way in which they can be of real value to them. While nothing can be less interesting to children generally, than the elements of science,

encumbered, as even the simplest text book must be, with technical terms, a skillful teacher may so present many scientific facts, as alike to interest and instruct. The air of vagueness and mystery which the necessary use of unfamiliar terms throws around the description of natural phenomena, a few clear, simple words can oftentimes dispel, and a child's eyes may be thus opened to see ever unfolding wonders in the world around him. In this way, not only may much valuable truth be imparted, but a taste for natural science may be cultivated, a spirit of investigation encouraged.

The same is true with regard to other departments of knowledge. By clear, simple, judicious oral instruction, from time to time, a teacher may do more to excite in his young pupils, a love for the study of history than could possibly be done by giving a stated lesson of so many facts, and so many dates to be learned and repeated daily. An interest in general literature—though these may seem large words to use in connection with the tastes of the children of a Common School—a love for reading, and the right kind of reading, may be thus awakened, and a higher mental and moral tone encouraged.

In another way the enlarged knowledge of the teacher may be made a means of advancement to his pupils. There is often an inclination on the part of young people, to consider their attainments satisfactory as a *result*, rather than as a means toward further attainments. This mistake a capable teacher may correct, by giving them, now and then, a glimpse into the vast domain of science, over whose boundaries, even the most learned have not advanced very far. This may be done in a manner, which, while it may rebuke undue self-satisfaction, shall not discourage the learner at the thought of advancing.

While a teacher keeps in mind, that his duty is not merely to impart knowledge to his pupils, but so to impart it, that they may receive it with pleasure, and make it their very own; while he realizes that in doing his uttermost for them, he is only laying the foundation of education, that is to be completed as the years pass on, that he is only—so to speak—putting them in the way of educating themselves, he will not feel, that he need not avail himself of any acquirements beyond the lessons which may form the daily routine, but, on the contrary, that he must use every available means to enlarge his knowledge, to extend and deepen his experience, to keep his sympathies and his conscience awake to the importance of the work in which he is engaged.

With regard to text books—uniformity is desirable and will become possible, as soon as we shall have an entire series of Canadian school-books, as good and as cheap, as those which can now be procured from England and the United States. In a country where so many nationalities are represented, it is not surprising that a great variety of school books should exist. It is an evil

that must be patiently borne with, because it cannot speedily be set right. Time is needed, as well as wisdom and enterprise to correct it. Though a circumstance to be regretted, it is by no means so deplorable a matter, but that competent and faithful teachers may do much to obviate the evils which spring from it. But while teachers are not to discourage themselves, or excuse the slow progress of their pupils, by dwelling upon the variety and imperfection of the books which they find in their schools, they whose duty it is to consider the matter and act in it, must be aware, that the sooner that an improved series of school books can be arranged for our Common Schools, and generally introduced into them, the sooner shall these schools be made available in the highest degree for the attainment of the object at which they aim.

As to the *method* of teaching to be adopted in these schools, a thorough discussion of the subject might very well occupy many more pages than can be devoted to it here. Time and space will only permit a brief allusion to certain principles the recognition and practice of which, are absolutely necessary to the successful working of any method of teaching.

Order and regularity in the recurrence of recitations, should be strictly adhered to. If a class are in doubt as to the time they are to be called, or if frequent omissions leave room for a doubt whether they *may* be called, the chances are very much against a thorough preparation of the lesson on the part of all the members. Regularity is more to be desired than frequency. A lesson regularly recurring twice or thrice a week will be of more value to a class in the course of a term, than a lesson intended to be given every day, but subject to change or omission.

Perfect recitations should uniformly be insisted upon. When the lesson consists of principles enunciated, of rules or definitions, the exact words of the text book should be required. When processes are explained, or facts or illustrations given, the pupil should be encouraged to give the substance of the lesson, in his own language. No lesson should be passed over before it is understood, or until its relation to preceding lessons is made clear to the pupil. Frequent reviews should be insisted on, as greatly assisting the pupils, both in retaining and understanding the lessons.

Distinctness of utterance in recitations should be attended to. Too great rapidity of utterance is a fault, which no degree of correctness in other respects should be permitted to excuse. It is a fault into which young people very naturally fall, and it must be guarded against and corrected at whatever expense of time and trouble. Especially should this be the case, with regard to reading and spelling. Every word in a spelling lesson, clearly and distinctly pronounced by the teacher, should be as clearly and distinctly repeated, at least twice by the pupil, once before, and once after spelling. The matter of a reading lesson ought to be so within the comprehension of the pupils, that the whole attention

may be given to the *manner* of reading. Distinctness of utterance in order and in importance, is the very first quality to be considered. Faults in utterance and pronunciation should be carefully guarded against in all school exercises, and it is in spelling and reading lessons, that the best opportunities occur, for forming good habits in this respect.

In teaching arithmetic, mental operations should be encouraged. Valuable assistants as a teacher may make slates and blackboard, in teaching this branch of study, they must not be too exclusively used. Many pupils acquire great skill and quickness in performing operations with abstract numbers, who fail utterly in applying the simplest principles of arithmetic in practice. If a choice were to be made between mental and written arithmetic, either as a means of discipline to the mind, or for use in business, there could be no hesitation in choosing the former method of teaching it. The methods must be united, in order that arithmetic may be well understood.

It must be acknowledged, that as a general thing very imperfect success attends the teaching of writing in our Common Schools. This arises in no part from the foolish idea that prevails in some quarters, that mere penmanship is a secondary matter in education. A fair, clear handwriting is admired and valued, as it ought to be by parents and children. It is justly felt, that nothing which a child is expected to learn at school, will be of more service in after life, than to write well. Several causes hinder success. The inconvenience of many of our school houses for purposes of writing, and the frequent change of teachers have something to do with it. And teachers will do well to remember, that even with the aid of copperplate copies they cannot teach writing well, unless they themselves write freely and legibly.

Both teacher and pupils may be greatly assisted in this matter, by a judicious use of the blackboard and slates. Letters, words, or sentences carefully written on the board, may be copied by a class, on slates or on paper with great benefit. Children should also be required to copy regularly from the book their daily spelling or reading lesson. This will answer several ends. It will teach them to write and spell, and it will serve to preserve order, by keeping them pleasantly employed, at times when the teacher's attention cannot be given to them.

Children should also be made to write from dictation. This will not only help them as regards the free and pleasant use of the pen, but it will be of great service to them in other respects. It is one thing to write well under a copy, and it is quite another thing to encounter the combined difficulties of composition, spelling, punctuation, and a proper use of capitals, which the writing of a legible and intelligible letter must present to one not accustomed to write. These difficulties the daily copying of lessons, and frequent writing from dictation will do much to remove.

A well prepared lesson well recited can scarcely fail to be an interesting exercise, both to teacher and pupil, and it is in the power of a well informed and skillful teacher to extend its pleasing and profitable influence beyond the occasion. It is at such times, when the minds of the pupils are most awake and active, that his superior attainments may best be made use of for their advantage.

Permit me to illustrate. Suppose the lesson to be an historical one. It is likely that some of the members of the class may have had recourse to a variety of methods to assist the memory in retaining it. Some of these may be of such a nature, as to be valuable merely for the moment. The place on the page—some peculiarity of expression—some arbitrary association of names, dates, or incidents may have been seized upon and made available for the occasion. Beyond the occasion they cannot be made available, and so far as a knowledge of the lesson depends on them, it is lost, unless it can be in some other way retained.

It is for the teacher then to disassociate from the printed pages, the characters and events which formed the subject matter of the lesson. It is for him to give form to mere names, to place them as living characters in a real world, to make visible hidden motives of action, and to point out the relation existing between cause and effect, in such a way, that not merely the pupil's memory, but his imagination, his judgment, his sympathies may be interested. Then, and not till then, will the matter of the lesson be really his own.

Suppose the lesson to be a geographical one.—A child learns with regard to Brazil, that it is a very large country in South America—that its mountains are high, its plains extensive, its river the largest in the world, its forests so dense as to be impenetrable, &c. He may remember these things as they stand in the book, but much interest will be thrown around them by a few simple words, telling of the wonderful variety of animal and vegetable life, with which these mountains and valleys, these rivers and forests teem—the gigantic trees, the treelike vines and ferns, the wondrous flowers and fruits which astonish unaccustomed eyes—the birds of brilliant plumage—the fierce wild beasts—the terrible reptiles which find a home among them. Let him get a glimpse, through his teacher's eyes, of these vast plains, where spring seems to urge on a gigantic vegetation, only for the summer to destroy, let him peep into one of these lovely valleys where it is always spring, or gaze awestruck on the mountain tops where winter ever reigns, how changed will his ideas be! The name of Brazil will no longer suggest to him merely the memory of a dull printed page with a poor little picture illustrating it. He by his teacher's aid has caught a glimpse of a new world, a new manifestation of life which must be his own forever.

To accomplish all this will not require much time, or many words, or great talent on the teacher's part. The tact, patience,

and skill necessary for the right performance of his other duties, will, with a knowledge of the subject under discussion, be sufficient for this.

The merits of the method of teaching very young children by means of object lessons, can only be fairly presented by those who have had experience in this manner of teaching, or an opportunity of observing its results. I am not one of these, and therefore I can say nothing as to the desirableness of preparing our teachers for the formal introduction of the system into our schools. But this may be said. A teacher interested in the improvement of his pupils, will find many opportunities to teach them in this way, without the formal announcement of a lesson. Especially may children living in the country, who pass daily, to and from school, through fields and woods, in the midst of pleasant natural objects, be thus benefited. By means of the flowers and fruits which they gather, the trees which they climb, the rocks over which they clamber, the pebbles of the brook, and the birds of the air, they may be taught many pleasant and useful lessons. Their powers of observation may be more happily awakened in this way than in any other. Their eyes may be thus opened to see the wonders of the world of nature around them. They will not only learn to observe, but to classify facts, and reason from them, and the knowledge obtained in this way, will be far more their own, and far more valuable to them, than it could be, if obtained alone from books.

There is another branch of education which may not be overlooked in enumerating the subjects proper to enter into the course of study to be pursued in our Common Schools.

What place should be given in these schools to moral and religious teaching?

The circumstances which in our country make the subject of Christian education, one to be approached with a certain delicacy and reserve, afford no sufficient reason for avoiding the subject altogether. For in the answer to this question, lies in some measure—let me say in a great measure—the secret of the future success or failure of these schools, in attaining the object at which they aim.

While there are few who do not acknowledge that an acquaintance with the principles of morality, and the truths of revealed religion, is of infinite importance, there are many who profess to doubt the propriety of permitting direct religious teaching in the schools of a country, where so many religious sects prevail. They acknowledge the importance of early and constantly instilling into the minds of the young, a knowledge of those principles, which shall influence them toward the love and practice of virtue, but they fail to see that this can only be very imperfectly accomplished, if it is undertaken without reference to the one standard of right, by which these principles are to be tested. This standard is

God-given, and cannot with impunity be ignored or set aside.

In a mixed community like ours, the Bible cannot be *formally* included, among the books of daily study in our Common Schools. Apart from other reasons, there may be some force in the objection that the familiar use of God's word, as a school book, may have a tendency to lessen the reverence with which it ought to be regarded.

Any force that there may be in this objection ought not to tell in a matter of such importance. Properly conducted, these daily readings may be made the means of deepening, rather than of lessening, the reverence of children for the Bible. Viewed *merely* as a reading book—a series of lessons by which children may be taught to read with pleasure and success—many of the historical portions of the Old Testament with the Proverbs, and the Evangelists, are unequalled. But a judicious teacher will be careful not to allow the exercise to become a *mere* reading lesson. The pupil must never be permitted to forget, that what is read comes to him with authority—that this is the standard with which all opinions are to be compared—the rule of life—the guide to Heaven.

It is very clear, that by means of the simple truths of the Bible—the histories recorded, the principles illustrated, the doctrines taught in it, a child can best have impressed upon his heart and mind, those truths which are rather vaguely spoken of, as the principles of morality and virtue. Separated from the Christian element, or perhaps I ought rather to say, from the truths revealed in the Bible, what is there left of these principles of morality and virtue, that can be made to commend itself to the heart and mind of a child? No sense of the unchangeable nature of right and wrong, which is the foundation of all morality, can be awakened in him, apart from the knowledge of God as the lawgiver of the world. No just ideas of our mutual relations, duties, and responsibilities can be conveyed to his mind, while he remains entirely ignorant of his relation to his Maker, or unimpressed with a sense of his responsibility to Him. Through a sense of this responsibility a child can alone be taught his highest relative duties—obedience to parents, to teachers, to the laws of his country—a love of truth, and all that is lovely in character; a hatred of deceit, of selfishness, of meanness in all its forms, can best be taught him, by inculcating the precepts, and exhibiting the life, of the only Perfect Example.

They do not speak wisely, who, while they acknowledge that the principles of morality ought to be impressed on the minds of children, yet declare that direct religious teaching is not to be permitted in our Common Schools. In their minds it is impossible to disassociate the ideas of *religious* teaching and *sectarian* teaching. They fail to see that religious teaching, in its highest sense, is quite apart from—quite beyond the mere iteration of a creed—the setting forth of a sectarian system of belief. Even if moral truth could be made available as a means of instruction, apart from re-

gious truth, is there not a strange inconsistency in this attempt to ignore the truths of Christianity, in a system of education provided for the benefit of the youth of a professedly Christian community? "Them that honor me, I will honor," is the declaration of Him who, however we may forget or disbelieve it, is in deed and in truth, the giver of success in all undertakings, having for their aim the benefit of the race.

Success in the best and highest sense, will be ensured to our schools, when the teaching shall become Christian teaching. The cultivation of the heart, as well as of the intellect, is necessary to the right forming of character, and it is only through the truths of our holy religion, that the heart can be influenced to reject the evil and choose the good, strengthened to resist the temptations of the world, endowed with wisdom to escape its snares, and made happy in the practice of virtue.

As to the manner in which religious truth is to be imparted, as to the time and place which religious and moral teaching should occupy in our schools, it may not be desirable, even if it were possible formally to decide. A perfect form of instruction, made obligatory, would by no means ensure the end desired, where an earnest spirit is wanting. It is not *merely* or chiefly by means of formal or prepared lessons, that a pure and happy moral influence is to be exerted in a school. In season and out of season, must the work be done—the guiding and restraining touch given. Here a little, and there a little, must the good seed be sown. It is now the plucking of a weed, now the training of a tendril, and again the shading or sunning of a sickly plant, that will make and keep the garden of the heart, fruitful and fair to see.

And so we come back to the point that has already more than once been touched. The school will be what the teacher makes it. It is well that our School System should in theory, and in its operations as a system, be made as nearly perfect as the circumstances of our country and our age will permit. But after all, its successful working toward the best ends, must depend upon the fitness of individual teachers for their work. *Morally*, even more than *intellectually*, the school will take character from the teacher. If he be one who needs no rules to bind him to the performance of his duties as a christian teacher, if he is enlightened to know, and earnest to impart, if his life shall teach, as well as his lips, then shall success in its highest sense, crown his efforts in his pupils behalf.

Nearly connected with the moral and religious influence which a teacher exerts in his school, and in some measure depending upon it, will be his success in governing his pupils. It may not be true, as has sometimes been asserted, that the most orderly school is the best in all respects, but it is true, that without order, no school can attain to a very high character in any respect. A teacher may be "thoroughly furnished" and have the "gift of teaching" but without the power to command the attention and obedience of

his pupils, he cannot expect success in the work of teaching. A child's school life ought to be as valuable to him for its discipline, as for the knowledge he may acquire in it, and the teacher, who, though he may teach well, fails to govern his school, does for his pupils but half a teacher's work.

While the power to govern may, as well as the skill to teach, be in some sense considered a natural gift, it is also a faculty that may be acquired and improved. Conscientiousness, common sense, patience, and a moderate degree of firmness are the qualities necessary to the proper exercise of authority in a school, and of these it is to be supposed, all to whom the office of teacher is open, are in some degree possessed.

A well governed school does not necessarily imply an open or frequent exercise of authority on the part of a teacher, indeed, it implies the contrary. The aim of a teacher in governing, should be, so to impress his pupils with a respect for authority, that its frequent exercise might not be required. When this is accomplished, the work of government will be comparatively easy. In nine cases out of ten, where the acquirements, and the moral and intellectual qualities of a teacher, are such as to command the respect of his pupils, a conscientious exercise of mingled patience and firmness, in his dealings with them, will bring about this state of things in a school. If children are uniformly treated as reasonable and responsible beings, if right motives of action are constantly held up before them, if they are taught that evil should be avoided because it is evil, and that right should prevail because it is right, and if this is taught by the teacher's life as well as his lips, his influence will be sufficient for their guidance and control. And if to the respect, which fitness for his position will generally command, be added the love which uniform kindness is sure to win, the relation between teacher and pupils cannot fail to be a happy one.

A teacher can govern well, only through the exercise of constant care and watchfulness. Not the surveillance of individuals, which comes, sometimes, to stand to a child instead of a conscience. *This*, undesirable anywhere, is impossible in a day school. But seeing many things, without seeming to see them, he must learn to judge of dispositions and character, from the trifling incidents of the schoolroom and playground, and guide himself by this knowledge in his dealings with his pupils.

A school to be governed well, must be governed by a plan. The rules must be few and simple, and they must also be absolute. Let a few things be uniformly required, let regularity and punctuality in attendance, and perfect silence during school hours be the law—enforced by penalties more or less severe, and the effect on the order of the school, will be far better, than could result from the multiplication of laws, only partially enforced. I do not think it is too much to say, that a teacher should voluntarily deprive himself of the power to excuse the breaking of these laws, whether they be

broken wilfully or carelessly. The law that can be set aside, will soon be despised. Of course there is no comparison to be made between the wilful and deliberate breaking of rules, and the same fault committed through carelessness, but in as far as example and disorder in the school are concerned, evil may follow both alike. And inasmuch as disorder in school, springs much more frequently from carelessness than from design, faults of carelessness must be punished as certainly though perhaps not so severely as faults of wilfulness. It is not meant that mitigating circumstances are not at all to be taken into consideration. The executive power is in the hands of the teacher, and very different degrees of personal displeasure, may mark his sense of the different positions in which the culprits have placed themselves. But punishment, varying in degree, must follow each. The law must be honored in one case as well as the other.

With regard to the nature of the penalties, each teacher must be guided by his own judgement, as dispositions and circumstances vary. The abridgement of playtime—an additional task—the withholding or withdrawing of rewards—a mark of demerit, or a public reproof may be sufficient for reformation. If not, severer measures must be taken for law must be sustained, if order is to be preserved.

It has become the fashion to declare that the days of the ferule and the birch rod are over. When now and then, old people venture to hint, that though the children of the present day may be better taught than they used to be, they are not so well governed, this is generally regarded as a pleasant self deception on their part, which inclines them to make good days of all the days that have passed away. The tendency of the age toward a relaxation of discipline in the family and in the school, is generally considered a matter for congratulation, and Solomon's prescription for the purging of folly from the heart of the child, is in a great measure ignored.

For my part I believe in the rod. Not merely as a last resort, a means to bring about an end, when all gentler measures have failed. It is a legitimate, time-honored, and effectual power in government second to none, and it ought to be an acknowledged power. It may be humiliating to human nature, but it is still a fact, that children generally are more speedily, more effectually, and more permanently convinced by its means, than by any other, and it is a false, and often fatal kindness, that would incline parents to dispense always with its use, in the government of their families.

Of course I shall not be understood as maintaining the rod to be the *sole*, or even the *chief* power in government. Far from it. Rightly used, the rod becomes a rare necessity. Its frequent use implies its abuse and in such a case it may be thrown away, for it is no longer effectual for good, but very effectual for evil.

What is true with regard to family government, is true with re-

gard to the government of the school, with this difference—Children old enough to be sent to school, ought to be too old to require the rod. If its use should be rare in the family, still more rare should it be in the school. But in the school, as in the family, it should be an openly and respectfully acknowledged power. Children taught obedience at home, will not require severe lessons at school, but when falsehood, disobedience, insubordination, or a frequent wilful or careless violation of rules is persisted in, they err greatly who refuse to sanction the use of the rod.

The surest guarantee for good government in a school, lies in the moral and intellectual fitness of the teacher for his office. There have been cases doubtless, where teachers worthy of respect, have failed to command a ready obedience from their pupils. Such cases may be the consequence of a more than ordinary deficiency in them, of that executive faculty, so valuable to a teacher, but more frequently they arise out of a combination of circumstances over which a teacher has no control. That these cases are exceptional, is proved by the fact, that utter failure in one school, may be followed by marked success in another. The presence or absence of this executive faculty cannot be proved by examination. But the fitness of a candidate in other respects, presupposes an ability to govern a school or at least implies a possession of faculties which by cultivation, may fit him for this necessary part of a teacher's duty.

While the success of the cause of education among us mainly depends upon the moral and intellectual fitness of teachers for their office, all the responsibility of partial failure, by no means rests upon them. Without this moral and intellectual fitness in them, the cause of education cannot advance. With it, it cannot advance rapidly in the face of adverse circumstances, which, not the teachers, but the community in general, and the educated part of the community in particular, have the power to modify or remove.

As has been before intimated, the progress of education in this part of the country is more apparent, from the larger number and the greater efficiency of the higher institutions of learning among us, than from any marked change for the better in the manner of conducting our Common Schools generally. The number of these is enlarging, and in villages and other localities, where the influence of educated persons is, with other favorable circumstances, brought to bear on them, their efficiency is also increasing. But the schools generally are very far from having reached a high standard of excellence in any respect.

The remedy lies to a certain extent, within reach of the people themselves, and by them only can it be applied. It is in the power of the people of every school district greatly to improve the character of their own school. The duty of the commissioners is not done, when a teacher has been chosen and installed in his office. The duty of parents implies more than the mere sending of their children to school, and the paying of their share of the school tax.

The authority of a teacher, worthy of the name and office, ought to be sustained by the personal influence of the commissioners of the school, and of the parents and guardians of the children. Confidence in a teacher should be manifested, as well as felt. Every parent should consider it his duty, to visit more or less frequently, the school in which his children pass so many hours daily. These visits, commenced from a sense of duty, would in many cases be continued from pleasure, and the benefit to teacher and pupils could not fail to be evident.

The fact that they have no children in the school, does not release educated men and women from the responsibility they are under to encourage in this way and in other ways, those who are engaged in carrying on the work of education in our Common Schools. The visits of any officially appointed person, or body of persons however important, must necessarily be infrequent. If the District Inspector can visit each of the schools under his care once, or at the most twice a year, he will do well. If the Commissioners visit each of the schools under their care once during a term, I suppose they think they do well. Now it is certain, that nothing which it is not within the teacher's power to control, can be more beneficial than these visits, conducted as they ought to be. In more ways than can be named they may do good. One school is benefited in one way, another in another. This teacher may be assisted by a word, as to the manner of pursuing certain studies, or of conducting certain recitations, that one may be aided by a timely hint, as to order or government. Of course all the purposes of such official visits, cannot be accomplished by others, but educated persons may do something to make up for their necessary infrequency by giving their personal influence to the work.

These visits need by no means interfere with the regular routine of school duties. They ought not to be made the occasion for exercises, out of the usual order. They should be quite informal and friendly, made with no desire to criticise or correct, but rather as an expression of interest in the school, and of encouragement to both teacher and pupils, and then they could not fail to be useful to the school and agreeable to the teacher.

It is possible that now and then, a teacher might be found uneasy, at the thought of receiving visits. This would by no means prove, that the visits might not be needed, or that in time they might not become agreeable. In most cases, where a teacher feels uncomfortable at the prospect of receiving official visitors or others, it arises from a vague dread of criticism, which a little kindly intercourse could not fail to dispel.

The success of teachers and the progress of pupils, are often hindered by the want of trifling conveniences, which a little care on the part of those interested might very easily supply. Pains should be taken to make the schoolhouse comfortable and convenient. It should as much as possible be made a pleasant place—a place a-

round which agreeable associations may cluster. The reasons hitherto, in so many cases, considered good, for placing the school-house on some waste piece of land, valueless for any other purpose of use or beauty, ought not to hold beyond the existence of those already built. In new districts, where motives of economy must necessarily be considered first, a small or inconvenient building may for a time be excused, but where the means of the people will at all permit, a consideration for the welfare of their children, ought to be sufficient inducement towards the erection of a far higher class of buildings, than have hitherto been thought good enough for the purpose.

The "boarding round" system as it is called, advisable when the country was new, and convenient still in the more recently settled districts, ought to be as much as possible discountenanced. In districts where the families are numerous, and comparatively "well off" it ought not to be permitted. The evils of the system all may see. The minds of teachers cannot fail to be unsettled, by the weekly or even more frequent change of residence. There can be no such thing as progress in their own studies, or even in general reading. An inexperienced young person may in this way be exposed to influences, far from being conducive to steadiness of character, or may become the subject of remarks, not calculated to sustain his influence for good, among his pupils. In the case of young females, health and comfort are not unfrequently seriously interfered with.

This of course is a matter which can only be remedied by the people of each district for themselves. Those who have the interest of their children much at heart, will do well to consider the advantage to be gained to them by a change in a system, which only circumstances of necessity ought to sanction.

The Principal and Professors of our Colleges, and the teachers of our High Schools may do much to advance the cause of Common School education among us. They may do so indirectly, by giving their influence to the forming and the sustaining of such associations as have for their aim the mutual improvement and encouragement of teachers, and the furtherance of the interests of the cause of education generally. They may do so directly, by interesting themselves personally in the schools that lie in their immediate neighborhood.

As regards the former of these ways, it need only be said, that this class of teachers have in our district, shown themselves fully aware of the responsibility that rests upon them and fully able to sustain it. With regard to the other method of exerting influence, assertions must of course be made with some reserve, but no reserve need be maintained in dwelling on the amount of good which might be accomplished through this means.

It seems like the mere repeating of what every body acknowledges, to say that the aim of all classes of schools is one,—that

the cause of education could no more spare the humble work, done, often painfully and by slow degrees, in wayside schoolhouses, than it could spare the efforts of the men of talent and learning, who carry on the work in loftier places. And yet, while this is generally acknowledged, and by none with more emphasis, than by these men of talent and learning, the teachers in our Common Schools do not find it always easy to realize these things as true,—and very difficult indeed do they find it, to believe in its hearty acknowledgment by men, whose labors, in comparison with their own, occupy so large a space in the public eye. Coming rarely into contact with them, seeing them only in their public capacity, as leaders in the great educational movements, agents in the bringing about of results, quite beyond the power of humble individuals like themselves, no wonder that Common School teachers may be inclined to consider themselves without the range of the others' intererlists and sympathy; no wonder that they hesitate to appropriate to themselves the title of co-workers with them in the same cause.

Yet in the work of teaching, where evident success is sometimes long delayed, and where to the young and inexperienced, the results seem often quite disproportioned to the efforts used, sympathy is invaluable, as a means of strengthening failing courage, of renewing flagging interest, and this self-isolation of Common School teachers, as a class, or as individuals, cannot fail greatly to interfere with their pleasure and their success in their work. From no class of persons could sympathy and interest come so gracefully, as from men of greater power and acquirements, engaged in the same work, from none could they be so gratefully received. For their work is the same. It may differ vastly as to its details, but its trials, its difficulties, its discouragements, its pleasures, and its rewards are the same, whether met in the wayside schoolhouse, or in lofty College halls. And though Common School teachers may hesitate to claim it as a right, this kindly sympathy—this open acknowledgment of fellowship in labor, is a gift which their more highly endowed brethren honor themselves in bestowing.

As to the manner in which this sympathy is to be expressed, this acknowledgment made, circumstances and individual opinion must decide. The visiting of schools—not formal but friendly—may, where the time can be bestowed, be of great use. All that has been said of the value of visiting in others, will apply in their case with still greater force. A little assistance in the way of advice, the loan, or even the recommending of a book, a frank word, unspoiled by too apparent condescension—a tacit acknowledgement that, as far as their work is concerned, teachers stand on equal ground—all these—mere trifles to the bestower, may yet be very powerful as helps to the more humbly placed and more sparingly endowed receiver.

Nor would this expression of interest be valuable merely as a matter of sympathy and encouragement in the work of teaching.

By even a brief and limited intercourse with superior minds, by a kindly word and hint from one whom position and acquirements command his respect, more than by any other means that can be named, may a young teacher be stimulated towards those higher attainments so desirable, indeed so absolutely necessary to full success in his work.

I may be exposing myself to a charge of indiscretion, by even *seeming* to intimate that there is not sufficient interest felt by our Principals and Professors in the welfare and success of their humble fellow-laborers. But there can be no possible impropriety in saying that the expression of this interest might, perhaps, be a little more general and cordial, could they be persuaded to regard the matter from a Common School teacher's point of view. And having said this, enough is said.

With regard to the usefulness of a well sustained "Association of Teachers" to the cause of education in any district, there cannot be two opinions. "Union is strength," "Two are better than one," "A threefold cord is not easily broken," "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety," are proverbs that apply to this, as to other matters. As a means of mutual benefit, as a means of extending and intensifying the power of teachers to do well their work in the community, they must be valuable. As a means of making teachers better known to each other, as a means of cultivating that "*esprit de corps*," so valuable in all united labor, the worth of these Associations can hardly be overestimated. By a judicious arrangement of the order of exercises, by a series of lectures, essays, and conversational discussions of questions relating to the cause of education, more highly endowed teachers may make them useful as a means of instruction to the younger and more inexperienced. All teachers, when it is possible, ought to identify themselves with such an Association. All who are interested in the progress of the cause of education, will do well to use their influence for the encouragement of those, upon whom the responsibility of sustaining these Associations chiefly depends.— Without the co-operation of teachers, and of educated people generally, these Associations must fail of accomplishing their design. They may be sustained in a certain sense by a few. That is, the meetings of the Association may regularly take place, officers may be annually chosen and the routine of business may be gone through, but only a few will be the better for it. The earnest and enlightened co-operation of all classes in the work of sustaining them, would do much to ensure to the cause of education among us, that measure of success which all good men and true earnestly desire to see.

The questions—"What ought our Common School system to aim at?" and "How can the object aimed at be most effectually attained?" having been briefly and imperfectly answered, the Essayist's work is done. It can be no part of his duty to attempt to

impress upon the various classes, who bear the responsibility of success or failure, the importance of the trust committed to them. The circumstances which unite to make the subject of Christian education, one of the vital questions of the day, to our section of country, and to Canada generally, must be seen and appreciated by all thoughtful minds. Now when the interest with which our daily developing resources is regarded, bids fair to turn the tide of emigration toward us, if the consequent mingling of new elements in society is to work for good and not for evil, as the years pass on, none need be told, that it must be through the moral and intellectual culture of the people. And all must see, that education among us must be emphatically Christian education. Amid the terrible events that are transpiring in the world, the wars and rumors of wars—the changes sudden and strange which seem to our wavering faith, to be shaking the very foundation of things, who does not feel that we need a sure place on which to rest our feet, the knowledge of a refuge which doubt can never successfully assail?

“Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people,” said the wise man, and every page of the world’s history since his day reiterates and proves the wise man’s words. In this our free country, where the suffrage is all but universal, where the humblest farmer or mechanic may indirectly by his vote influence the conduct of our national affairs, where offices of trust and emolument are in a sense open to all, it is scarcely possible to overestimate the value of Christian education to the young. In the new views that seem to be opening before us as a people in the changes which enlarging resources, and an increasing population must bring, we see tokens of advance or retrogression according as we as a people shall avail ourselves of, or neglect the means of moral and intellectual culture which may be ensured to all. For if we would have “our future copy fair our past,” if our breaking dawn is to brighten into the perfect day of national prosperity, if Canada, our land by birth or adoption, is to take a worthy place among the nations, it must be through the enlarged intelligence, the higher morality, the firmer, purer, truer Christian principle and practice of her people.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

A PRIZE of \$25, is offered by the HON. J. S. SANBORN, for the best Essay on the following subject:

“The Defects in our Common School Instruction.”

The Prize is to be open for competition to all who have, during the past or present year, been Teachers of Common Schools or Academies within the District of St. Francis, for not less than six months.

Essays are to be sent in,—accompanied by sealed envelopes containing the writer’s name and address,—a motto to be written both on the Essay and the *outside* of the envelope,—to the President of the District Teachers’ Association, REV. J. H. NICOLLS, Bishop’s College, Lennoxville, on or before the 15th of September next. A prize of \$10 is also offered for the second best Essay.

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