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Agent.

Ch'town, July 10, 1888—eod tf

—1888—

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R. B. GARDNER, Manager,
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Lewis' Wharf, Boston.

Ch'town, May 8, 1888—pat sum four

Teaching in Our Public Schools.

ITS OBJECT AND SCOPE.

The subject of this paper is more important than attractive. Its right treatment demands more time and space—not to say ability—than is at my disposal. I shall hope, however, to enlist your sympathy and develop profitable discussion.

The aim of this paper is not to criticise the defects or inconsistencies of our school system, but merely to point out a few of the difficulties under which the country teachers labor, and see if, perchance, some remedy may be suggested for their removal. In a country like ours, where comparatively few ever enter the learned professions, the majority going back to the farm or workshop, it should be the aim of every true teacher to impart to the pupils under his charge a broad, liberal, common school education, which would best fit them for the ordinary pursuits of life. If all the pupils who attend the country schools were going to follow one or other of the learned professions; or if it were compulsory that all the children in the country, at a certain age, should pass the entrance examination to the Normal School and Prince of Wales College, our system is an excellent one. But as our worthy Superintendent has told us in his last report that only one out of every two hundred ever come under the humanizing influence of Prince of Wales College, the question I would like to hear answered is: Are we, as teachers, doing the best possible for the unfortunate one hundred and ninety-nine left behind? If our public schools are to be turned into culling rooms, where we are to cull out our brightest pupils; cram them with the prescribed course of study so that they enter the Prince of Wales College, if this be the true end and aim of our educational system, it is admirably adapted for the purpose. But if our motto is as it should be—the greatest good to the greatest number, we are on the wrong track. But our teachers are powerless to prevent it. It is too often the case that teachers receive credit according to the number of pupils who succeed in passing the yearly examination from their schools. The inspecting of the schools, too, to a certain extent, follows the beaten track. Any person who was present at the last Convocation Day, in the principal institution of learning in this country, and who heard the stirring, eloquent speeches delivered on that occasion, and the tone that pervaded them—the burden of their song—could not but have been struck with this idea unless he were impregnable to the force of ideas; that it was implied and contained in those addresses that the main end and object of the work of those 107 pupil teachers was to swell the number of those who pass creditable examinations at home and abroad. This is well as far as it goes; but it stops wide of the end. It is a narrow contracted view of the teacher's work. It lacks the broad mindedness, the liberal-hearted scope, which is intended to be the scope of education; and which was the grand idea which permeated the being of the founders of our liberal education in its inception. It is not in accordance with the spirit of this age. It lacks the grand essential which must pervade our education before that time shall come when knowledge shall cover the face of the earth as the water covers the channels of the deep. All these causes act as a stimulant to the teacher, and however he may wish to do otherwise, he is forced to go on year after year, devoting his time and talents to the few on whom his reputation as a teacher depends; while the majority of his pupils have to either take up and follow the class work of the two or three, or be at least partially neglected.

Take a boy or girl who has just left the country school to begin life on a farm, or who has followed the prescribed course of study from the time of his entering the school, and I ask, in all sincerity, has that boy or girl received the instruction best fitting them for their chosen calling. A great many pupils attend school in the country during the winter only; a class may be in attendance all summer, a few of them probably preparing for the college examination. These boys then who come in during winter have either to take up the ordinary class work or be to a certain extent neglected. If they take up the ordinary class work and follow the prescribed course of studies, he may learn before spring, probably 20 or 30 exercises in Algebra, as far as the verb in Latin, 100 exercises or so in Hall's French course, and a few other wrinkles. As soon as the snow disappears they leave the school and the first spring rain washes their winter's education out of them; for it is not to be supposed they keep Latin and French verbs fresh in their memory while following the plough tail. Now, in my opinion, it is those pupils who only attend school a part of the year that should receive the most attention. They should be taught something which they could turn to practical use in their every day work; something that would not vanish from their minds almost as soon as learned, never to be recalled; but that would stimulate them to further research; and by finding it of practical benefit to them, it would be an inducement to them to continue their studies long after they had left school. I find that the present school system (or, at least, the manner in which it is carried out) has a tendency to the contrary. In talking to a number of our youth who have left school within the last four or five years, I find that, with a few exceptions, they have made no progress in their education since leaving. In fact, the most of them have forgotten what little they did know. I say to them: "Did you learn nothing when going to school?" "Oh, yes, I was in the same class in Latin, French, Algebra, Geometry, etc., with [illegible], who is now studying at McGill or Dalhousie." "Well," I say, "he [illegible] than you." "No, but since I have left [illegible] school I have forgotten it all, as I could not put it into practice; it was impossible to remember it." These, I am sorry to say, are not isolated cases; we can find too many by far in every school district throughout the Island. I believe the present existing state of things has a tendency to foster in our youth, with the exception of a few who enter college, a distaste for education in general. How, then, you may say, are we going to remedy this? Of course a somewhat rigid uniformity is a necessary evil in a public school system; without it an ever-growing complexity of machinery would be evolved, which would only end in confusion worse confounded. The ideal system would be one in which every teacher would have full liberty to choose his own text books, use his own appliances and work out his own ideas and methods. Such an ideal system postulates a host of impossible conditions, which set of conditions would, of course, be too much to assume at any stage of development yet reached. But while a good deal of machine uniformity is indispensable, and much must be conceded to the necessities of the case, it by no means follows that the maximum rather than the minimum of inflexibility should be the aim of the central authorities. There is always more or less tendency to reduce everything to routine. It is always easier to prescribe a fixed dull routine in text book examinations, etc., than it is to devise and operate methods which leave more room for adaptation to special tests and circumstances. Much can be done incidentally by the teacher. There is a part of his work—and an important part, too—which can never be brought out by the minutest and strictest examination that can be set by Professor or Inspector, or drawn out by the most careful questioning. What is it? This is the work of the silent influence of the individuality of the teacher being daily impressed upon the mind, heart and conscience of the pupil. Hints are being thrown out daily and hourly in the course of lessons, by the live and enthusiastic teacher, as to the bearing of his present school career upon the child's life, and what use he is to make of said instruction. The pupil is to be impressed with the fact that education does not end in the school room; and too much stress cannot be laid upon this, as the idea seems to have been impressed upon a great many people that a school is a place to cram the child with all the information necessary for life's work; while, on the contrary, it is only a preparation for life—a place to sharpen the tools which are to be used for carving out one's way in the great struggle for existence, and fitting him to live and compete on an equal footing with his fellows. If every boy and girl in the country could spend a time at Prince of Wales College, they would be the better for it. But as this is impossible, what the country requires is teachers who will give a more practical turn to the subjects which they teach; teachers who will not be hampered by this, that or any other system or course of studies, if it hinders him from giving the best possible education to each and every child under his charge.

CHARLES W. KIELLY,
Principal of York School.

Emperor William's Policy.

Count Douglas, a prominent Conservative member of the Landtag, in a speech to his constituents alluded to Emperor William's personal qualities and his political and religious views. He delared that when Emperor William attended the Russian manœuvers in 1886 he successfully used his influence against the policy then being followed by Russia. The greatness of Germany and the preservation of the monarchial principles are the sole objects of Emperor William's inclination and purpose. In view of the confidence felt in the Emperor the people no longer asked what would become of Germany when she was deprived of Prince Bismarck. The endeavors to attribute to the Emperor personal partisanship in favor of certain party views were mere distortions of facts. Count Douglas said that Emperor William did not favor the extreme political and religious views of Pastor Stoecker, the well known anti-Semitic. He was not identified with the High church. His relations with Pastor Stoecker were transitory and purely humane. The Emperor certainly deprecated the anti-Jewish agitation. Count Douglas also said that Emperor Frederick had authorized the wife of Emperor William to assume the head of the Berlin town mission. The speech has created a sensation on account of Count Douglas' close relations to the Imperial court.

ADVICE TO MOTHERS.—Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup should always be used when children are cutting teeth. It relieves the little sufferer at once; it produces natural quiet sleep by relieving the child from pain; and the little cherub awakes as "bright as a button." It is very pleasant to taste. It soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain, relieves wind, regulates the bowels, and is the best known remedy for diarrhœa, whether arising from teething or other causes. Twenty-five cents a bottle. Be sure and ask for Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, and take no other kind. [April 1 '88

Some New England papers are complaining that while the law provides a maximum penalty of fourteen years for his offence, Pitcher, of Providence, was only given seven. If Canadian sentences do not suit our across-the-line contemporaries, they should keep their rascals at home and sentence them themselves. The chances are about even that the Canadian Judge's term is seven years longer than a man with so much money at his back would have received in the States.

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