

ing, but for the care and condition of their buildings.

It is probably not politics, but it seems very bad management to lay off a number of teachers some little time after they have been employed for the coming year on the ground that a change in the system of teaching is required. I am informed that this has been done several times in the past few years. Then, too, a continual discussion of the cutting of wages of the teachers must necessarily be detrimental to the school. The best results can only be obtained when the teachers feel that they have stability of employment and a definite salary. As the merit system becomes more firmly established in practice and more heartily supported by all the people the evil of partisan politics will practically disappear.

**Individual Effort.**

It is absolutely necessary to arouse the curiosity of the pupil—to keep him interested—in order to obtain the best results in the school room. Individual work by the teacher with the pupil is the best way of insuring this interest. In our crowded school rooms, with from 50 to 60 pupils in a room, and sometimes even a greater number, it is very difficult, if not impossible for the teacher to give individual attention to each scholar. One of the dangers ever to be avoided by teachers with large classes is the temptation to teach the pupils in a body and not as individuals. How easy it is for a teacher to do this when all the scholars in the room are divided into one or two large classes! The pupil may not be called upon in a given study more than once or twice a week, and then if the teacher is not fully awake to the importance of the work stereotyped questions may be asked term after term which would be satisfied by formal answers and high marks given therefor. This method of teaching necessarily results in placing a too high estimate on the value of instruction and in under-estimating the value of self-activity on the part of the scholar. The most successful teacher is the one who stirs up his pupil to do the work himself, thereby causing mental activity and growth. Our common schools should not be carried on for the purpose of making our boys and girls encyclopedias of learning but rather to so train them that they can think and act for themselves.

The difficulty of giving individual attention to individual scholars is perhaps more the fault of the system of carrying on the schools in our large cities than the fault of the teachers; hence the teachers must be ever on their guard that all the pupils are not put in the same hopper year after year and the same grist in character

and education ground out. It has always been the boast of our people that you could find in any community individuals who were fitted to do any work or fill any position—that American civilization was especially adapted to develop an infinite variety of character. We all know that if we take two children of marked characteristics and strong individuality—one with a mathematical turn and the other a “dreamer”—however long we may teach them the same things in the same way to the last their distinct individualities will be plainly marked.

“You may grind them both in the same self mill,  
You may bind them heart and brow,  
But one will follow the rainbow still  
And his brother will follow the plow.”

**The School and the Home.**

Our public schools have not been established to make our children great scholars, but their highest end and aim ought to be to co-operate with the home, and with the religious and social environments, in forming and molding character, so that the great body of our citizenship may be honest, wise and virtuous. The success of our schools will depend, not upon our magnificent buildings, fortunate as we are to have them; not upon the best text-books, important as they are; not upon any course of study or system in managing schools; all of these things are worthy of consideration and can do much in assisting to bring about the best results, but after all has been said and done the final success of our schools has always depended and will always depend upon the character and ability of our teachers. The influence of the teacher upon the pupil is more than all other things combined. Personal contact by the teacher with the scholar is what we need and must have in all our schools and colleges. It was in this way that Socrates and Dr. Arnold molded and formed the minds and characters of their students; it is in this way that all great teachers have left a lasting impress upon humanity. It is this personal attrition of mind upon mind and character upon character that makes the mother so potential in home life. It is what the teachers are more than what they teach.

If the great body of our teachers are in the work simply for the money that is in it, if they are careful only to get to school in the morning as early as the rules require and leave in the afternoon as soon as the rules permit; if the work in the school room is merely routine and each day they are anxiously looking at the clock to see when they will be released from their prison; if they are not inspired by seeing boys and girls transformed

under the magic touch of a live teacher, then no matter how perfect the schools may be in all other respects, they necessarily fail in their highest objects. Give us as teachers, live, earnest, enthusiastic men and women with high ideals, who love their work, who believe in it as one of the greatest professions, then our schools will continue in the future as they have been in the past—one of the greatest influences for good in our country.

Our common schools in the great cities bring the rich and poor together. Here the boys and the girls, whatever their home life, are all on a common level. The public school system has shown itself so flexible and pliable, even with its many uniform requirements, that it has worked smoothly and successfully in the Bohemian, Polish, Italian, German and Scandinavian sections of our city, as well as in those portions where native-born alone attend the schools. Our public schools have been the greatest agency in making American citizens, and making them rapidly from foreign-born children and the children of foreign-born parents.

Go into any section of the city where most of the children are of any of these various nationalities and you can hear them sing “My Country, 'Tis of Thee” with the same spirit that we sang it in school in our young days. They take a deep interest and are very enthusiastic in the stories of Washington, Lincoln and McKinley. They are rapidly becoming American.

If it were not for the transformation accomplished by them with these children of foreign-born people, I should almost despair as to the future success of popular government in great cities.

These lasting and beneficent results have been brought about, in spite of the defects in our present school system, very largely through the earnest and unselfish work of our teachers. These weak spots have been pointed out, not in a spirit of hostility, but with a confident belief that a fair discussion of them would tend to strengthen the schools. The reforms necessary to do away with such defects can be brought about by the united and determined efforts of the members of this association. To do this you should direct your energies at a given time to one fault or defect—and that fault the one which the majority agree is the most serious. Then our schools, more successfully than ever before will give to the children “in the best manner, and at the least cost, either of the public revenue or of the time and energy of the pupils, the instruction which is needed by all as a condition to the reasonable performance of their duties as citizens.”

The past great history of our schools is secure; their future is bright with hope.