

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

---

### THE TENURE OF THE TEACHER'S OFFICE.

OF the various questions now being discussed by the educational world of to-day, there is none of such grave importance as that relating to the permanence of the teacher's position. All who have had experience in the school-room can testify that the greatest hindrance to successful work on the part of both teacher and pupil is the fact that soon as the present term is done, in all probability a new teacher will be employed, and a change of methods and plans come in with him. This is unjust to both the new teacher and the old, for each must use his own judgment, and the pupils are slow to lay aside the habits learned from the first and take up the ways of the second teacher. Not only that, but much actual damage is done by delaying their progress until the new teacher can classify the scholars, and much more time is lost while he is learning their individual dispositions.

It is acknowledged by all thinking persons that the best efforts of the laborer are not put forth if he is doubtful of his reward; if he cannot reap, neither will he sow. This principle is so well understood by employers that, as far as possible, the position of the laborer, whether he works with hand or brain, is made permanent. But while this is true in general, in the teacher's ranks all is uncertainty. A school principal or superintendent is often regarded as fortunate if he stays the second year, and most fortunate if he remains a third. "You are becoming a fixture, four years here," is a remark sometimes heard when a teacher has overrun his time. Notice the unconscious irony, "a fixture," and "four years."

Now, is there any reason why, if a man has done good work for one year, he cannot do better for another? If he has been four or five years in the school, is he not worth more than ever before to that school, and to the community as well? Yet in accordance with a custom which has come down to us from time immemorial, teachers are compelled to give place to others, who have no knowledge of the needs of the school or of the individual pupils. A merchant who would change clerks as often as some schools do superintendents, would not be regarded as capable of managing his own business.

It is probable that a change of superintendents puts back the work of the school for six months, and of grade teachers in proportion. The first change is the worst, for with it often the whole economy of the school changes—to the infinite loss of all concerned. Yet the people persist in this old custom for no other reason than that it is an old custom, and never seem to think but it's the thing to do.

It is hard work to change the established order of things, so the teach-

er's case seems almost hopeless, but a few suggestions, which if carried out would do much to remedy the evil, can do no harm.

The educational interests of our country are in the worst possible state of disorganization. Each State, each county, each district, manages its own affairs, and pays no attention to the rest. This certainly is a sad condition of affairs, and must needs be changed before any good can be accomplished. There must be a settled, definite policy for the whole country; in other words, there must be national supervision, with a national superintendent of education, who will be a cabinet officer. There must be one system, one uniform plan of instruction, modified to suit local needs, and harmonious laws all over the United States. In after years when this comes, as it surely will, people will look back with wonder upon these "dark ages," educationally, when there was no system or coherence in our schools. The only wonder is that so much has been accomplished with such inadequate means, and that so much has been accomplished is much to the credit of those engaged in the work.

Another needed reform, and this would come with national supervision, is in the direction of a thorough training of teachers. If no one was allowed to teach until he had a diploma from a government normal training school, which diploma was a life certificate, many of the difficulties of the teacher's life would disappear, for then there would be encouragement to enter the work for life, instead of merely taking it up as a temporary makeshift, as so many do at present, owing to which skilled and unskilled labor is brought into unfair competition, as most people think that anybody who can obtain a certificate, of however low a grade, can teach school; and, legally, anybody can. Experienced teachers have to compete with those who have had little or no experience, so it is no wonder that wages are low. Think of a first-class carpenter having to compete with a man who has a hammer and a saw and can build a pig-pen!

Again, the injustice of requiring a teacher to take an examination every time he crossed an imaginary line, and, no matter what his experience and success, to be re-examined at stated periods, would be done away with, for these diplomas would be good in every state in the union. The periodical examinations are the bane of the teacher's life, for when he should be broadening his outlook, he must be preparing for them, so the effect is very narrowing, to say the least.

With national supervision teaching would be a profession, and the teachers more professional in their dealings with each other, nor be so ready to take advantage of complaints about others to advance their own interests. The code of ethics among them should be as strict as that governing the medical profession, and should be adhered to as closely. With their work a profession, teachers would have heart to magnify their calling; to have an ideal, and so far as in them lay to strive to attain it, for then they would feel an energy and interest in their labor which now they cannot, for not only could the teacher lay his plans for the future and inaugurate much needed measures, not attempted now for lack of time, and the uncertainty of position as well, but he could have a home, could be a citizen, and could take a citizen's interest in local affairs, nor endanger his official head by being a man among men.

Will these reforms ever be made? Not with public opinion as it is. Teachers themselves must be roused from their apathy, must strive to "work out their own salvation," they must not be so hopeless for the future. The

people must be made to realize the frightful waste of force, the irreparable injury to their children, under the present lack of system, so that they will demand more sensible and humane management, and greater justice to both teachers and pupils. The press must be enlisted in the cause, and the great magazines, which are fairly teeming with educational articles of the rarest value, and which are always in the lead where the uplifting of the general public is concerned, will aid the movement, and all working together, these changes will come about sooner, perhaps, than we expect, for events culminate rapidly in this age of progress, and in this country of ours.

E. L. COWDRICK.

#### HEALTH AND BEAUTY.

THE household article in greatest use is probably the "looking glass." What person is there handsome or homely who does not question the mirror daily?

The love of beauty is one of the most firmly implanted qualities of the human mind, and only those who are mentally deficient fail to appreciate it.

From the human standpoint there is no edifice so beautiful as that earthly temple which enshrines the soul. Very little defacement, however, converts this beautiful structure into a loathsome thing, and to prevent it constant care and watchfulness is necessary. It needs no Roentgen ray to penetrate the walls of this edifice in order to discover the condition of the occupant. The drunkard, the roué and the sloth all show their vice indelibly impressed without.

Stamped in various places are the marks the fool has paid for his folly.

People who live without thinking why or how they live, cannot appreciate on what apparent trifles their physical and moral well being depend. The person who bolts his food and rushes off to work or exercise does not stop to think that he has loaded his stomach with a mass which will ferment or even putrefy before it can be digested.

The food must be thoroughly masticated and incorporated with the saliva before it is swallowed. Gladstone is said to owe much of his vigorous constitution to the fact that he makes it a rule to chew each mouthful thoroughly. The anecdote says he chews each mouthful thirty-nine times before swallowing. I do not know if the story is true, but it is plausible, and in a measure may well account for his splendid health and longevity.

It should be remembered that digestion takes a considerable amount of energy, and that if we work or make much effort after eating a full meal we draw away from the stomach the nervous force that is absolutely necessary to enable it to perform its function.

The result is indigestion with its train of ills. Few realize what a train these are. The food lies in "a lump," and distresses the sufferer. This distress tortures and exhausts him. The stomach walls are excited, irritated, and inflamed. After a time nature, unable to get rid of the mass by natural digestion, tries to dissolve it by fermentation, and gases are given off which distend the stomach, causing it to encroach upon the space needed by the lungs and heart. The latter is embarrassed; palpitation and strange sensations are felt; breathing is difficult. The sufferer in nine cases out of ten believes he has heart disease. Fermentation goes on to putrefaction, and poisonous matters are developed in the mass of putrefying food.