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## *THE SCHOOLMASTER AND UNIVERSITY REFORM.*

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**A**MONG great teachers, few are more deserving of honor than Friedrich August Wolf. "It was he," says the late Mark Pattison, "who created, and who himself gave the first example of, that enthusiasm for philological studies, which for sixty years — two generations — has been the quickening life of German education. \* \* \* Equally removed from the grammatical pedantry of the old schoolmaster and the superficial Schöngesterei of the French Lyceum, Wolf, at once accurate and genial, struck a new and original path." And he then quotes Wolf as follows: "If we wish to raise the universities from their present torpor, we must begin by raising the schools. The only way of raising the schools is to send them better-prepared schoolmasters. School reform means schoolmaster reform. When the masters are better able to teach, the scholars will come better prepared to the university."

I have ever been ready to accept Wolf as one of my masters, and in nothing does he seem more worthy to be followed than in the dictum just quoted. It is all very well for the university and the college to plot and plan, but they reckon without their host if they cannot command the support of schoolmasters and cannot inspire them with their own spirit of progress and reform. The relation is not one of causation, but of condition. The university and the college are conditioned by the preparatory school. The relation, indeed, is one of interaction of causes, but in this genera-

tion, when free *will* is so closely connected with free *wont*, the college must be careful to commend every step which it takes, not merely to the people, but specifically to the masters of schools. Of course, I am not playing the part of a discoverer in making this statement. I am sure that every schoolmaster has long since come to a very full appreciation of this condition of things. Indeed, it is very much better appreciated and understood in the school than it is in the college. There was a time when the college spoke with authority and when the masters of our schools, graduates themselves of this or that institution, gladly harkened unto the voice of their *alma mater*; and when the college said: "Come up higher," the schoolmaster said: "Yea, gladly." And when the schoolmaster said: "Reach out more broadly," he took it back with equal alacrity, if his venerable mother frowned but the least bit. But now that our schoolmasters are so many and so mighty in the land, and of so many antecedents, or in some cases it may perchance be of so few, and no man can tell any more than he can of the wind which bloweth whither it listeth, whence they have come, or whither they will go; it is a fortunate circumstance that associations of heads of colleges and of schools have taken in hand the great problem of giving a purpose, especially to our secondary education, and no one hails the results with greater delight than I.

Since the school conditions the college, and the schoolmaster is an invariable factor in every problem which the college has to solve, it is especially desirable that the school and the schoolmaster should be represented as a known quantity. We hear a great deal of talk at present of a good time coming, when the school and the college and the professional school shall be fitted together with perfect and unjarring symmetry; when the school will teach neither too little nor too much as a preparation for college, and the student will pass from the one to the other without consciousness of a hiatus in his training. It is sometimes a little puzzling to determine which preparation has the worse influence on a college student—the inferior or the excessive. I am sometimes tempted to believe that the average boy is better off with one "condition," than he is if one term in advance of his class. While human nature is human nature, some schoolmasters, in their over-anxiety to win repute by the excellence of the entrance examinations passed by their students, will overreach themselves

by throwing the temptation of a term of loafing in the way of students and so will lose the initial good by the decline of the student's work. Then, too, one schoolmaster complains that his boys are not doing well because the standard is too low, when at the very same time there will be a dozen others complaining that their boys were conditioned and that the standard is too high. How to strike the mean between these two extremes is sometimes difficult to determine. The friction occasioned by it is always unfortunate, and it is hardly possible to entirely eliminate it. Ambitious principals in prosperous and wealthy schools will push their standard proportionately to the elevation of the college admission; while equally good teachers, handicapped by want of means and want of good material, are inevitably forced to drag behind. Now there are three or four problems which are burning questions in the educational world, and their ultimate solution rests not a little in the hands of the schoolmasters.

In the first place, the conflict between the numerical and the intellectual standards is one of the great perils of the period. What is to become of higher education if numbers are to be the criterion of excellence? This unfortunate condition of affairs which is to be found so widely to-day, is one of the conditioning influences in the problem of the standard of admission. A great number of students slip out of school and into college long before they are ready for college, simply because the faculties lack the courage to refuse any reasonably satisfactory application. Now and again we find that boys have left their schools against their principals' desire, and the schoolmaster is naturally disgusted with the college that accepts them. They are dropped at the end of the freshman year. Dropped, not back into school where they should have stayed for another year, but into some other college deceived by the same desire for numbers, or into the world with the disadvantage of an incomplete preparation for life. Just here we seriously need a distinct and definite understanding with schools which shall be positive and negative; the college accepting the school certificate on the one hand, and declining the student without the school certificate on the other. Reciprocity is the only condition of reciprocal confidence and success.

On the other hand, when it comes to a question of raising, either actually or nominally, the standard either in school or in college, there should be coöperation. If the school wishes to raise

its standard, let it communicate with the colleges to which it sends its students, and endeavor to secure a corresponding change. And if the college wishes to effect a similar change, let it pursue a similar course. Of course, if the school suffering from the same disease of an over-desire for numbers is seeking by its change to bring about a discrimination against neighboring schools on the plea of inferior instruction, mutuality becomes impossible. But why should we not have coöperation and coördination? Surely, there is room enough and to spare for all, and the evils of competition seem to me incalculable.

One of the difficulties in the raising of the standards is the opposition of those schools which lack proper facilities to make the change. Even if schools so situated were unselfish enough to forgive the injury thus unintentionally caused, it takes quite a while for their students to get in line with their classes, thus injuring the classes to which they are received under condition. Either way there is confusion. How to prevent such a contingency it is somewhat difficult to determine. And this leads me to suggest that the college may well take care how it proceeds along the line of indefinite elevation of its standards of admission.

The recent movement for the shortening of the course has always seemed to me to be a sort of backing water rendered necessary by standards of admission fixed some time in the past. Not that I mean to say that I think the highest existing admission requirements are too high, but I do think them too difficult, not by any means synonymous expressions, as may be seen where laboratory work is demanded, for which few schools are equipped. The school must keep in view the idea "that it is not a knowledge but a discipline that is required; not science, but a scientific habit; not erudition, but scholarship." Of course, a first class man, no matter what the position he occupies, filled with the desire to do the best work, is constantly pressed on and scarcely resists the temptation to extend the field of his school beyond that of mere drill. But the man who yields to the temptation is likely to meet with the same results as the little boy who digs up the seeds in his garden to see whether they are growing or not. One of the most frequent injuries to the very best of boys is to force them into too early efflorescence. The over-mature schoolboy is apt to turn out the under-developed man. I have always thought that the course should be shortened, not by a reduction to

three years in college, but by an earlier introduction and a more steady devotion to the essential elements of a sound education. No boy, as it seems to me, should enter the freshman class later than seventeen. The majority should do it at sixteen. I am afraid this will be deemed heretical. I was early prepared for college myself, and I have seen great numbers of boys so prepared without any crowding or any injury to their health or to their mental development. I do not believe that the young child is any more hurt by being taught to think early, than the young horse is hurt by being taught to trot early, or the pointer dog to point. Thought is the proper function of the human brain, and it is rather a question as to the duration than as to the seriousness of its action, and I am quite sure that I learned more Latin between the ages of ten and twelve than I should have learned between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, had my Latin been untouched till then, and that with less effort. And moreover, when the students come to college, coming as they do from a great variety of homes and schools, they need to be unified by at least one year of additional disciplinary instruction. But what can we do if the schoolmaster does not accept our view. The German theory is the early introduction to the staples of education, but the German gymnasium undertakes to complete the disciplinary portion of the child's education. We have already accomplished sufficient evil results by our ill-considered adoption of German methods. While I yield to no one in my admiration of German scholarship, I do not believe that German scholars are the highest product of nineteenth century civilization. There is not enough of the mind with a broad outlook upon the world, with a large capacity for action and an infinite degree of self-confidence such as we find in our own college-bred men, and let me say very plainly that, *me judice*, the aim of our colleges is not to make scholars in the German sense at all, but to make men. Our colleges are intended to prepare men to become scholars, whether as teachers, as ministers, as lawyers, as doctors, or as engineers. But the average college graduate at best has only a few scholarly instincts whatever he may think he possesses.

And lastly, let me say a word as to the differentiation of courses. Emerson says that "every promise of the soul has innumerable fulfillments." The schoolmaster's duty is to let the soul find its own development, and then to help the boy to choose the highest

fulfillment. Preconceived ideas on the part of schoolmasters in regard to what is and what is not necessary, are exceedingly injurious to the young, and offer untold difficulties to colleges when a mature judgment begins to correct the unfortunate influence of an early teacher. Emerson says, once more; "A man is a method, a progressive arrangement, a selecting principle gathering his like to him. Wherever he goes he takes only his own out of the multiplicity that sweeps and circles round him. He is like one of those booms which are sent out from the shore on rivers to catch driftwood, or like the loadstone among splinters of steel." I should rather liken a man to a boy's pocket, being constantly filled up with all sorts of odds and ends and undergoing periodic disgorgings and gradually settling down to a residuum of the more valuable, the basis of selection being progressive with the development of taste and judgment. Or, to a whirlpool in the river, which is constantly drawing in all sorts of material, but retaining only that which is most weighty and sinks deepest. So the boy sees no use for Greek, and he wakes up some day and finds himself called to God's ministry; or he sees no use in mathematics and later develops a taste for physical science; or he sees no use in composition and finds in after life that he is called on to represent in public, by tongue or pen, some great cause. The schoolmaster's duty to the college, of course, is measured by the preparation demanded by any one of the courses which it offers, but it has always seemed to me that the duty of every teacher was to lay the foundation as broadly as human nature, and as deeply as the individual nature of the boy admits of.

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### *CURRENT METHODS IN BOTANICAL INSTRUCTION.*

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IN the inaugural address delivered before the Association of Economic Entomologists, last August, Mr. James Fletcher of Montreal, the president-elect, somewhat ruefully directs attention to the fact that while botanists, geologists, and chemists meet with a degree of popular respect, the entomologist is not infrequently an object of vulgar and ignorant derision.