

Teachers Institute

Federick N.B.

June 29, 32

You have asked me to speak to you about the relation between Secondary Schools and Colleges, and, in a sense, I find the situation a little humorous, - as though I were asked to speak about the relationship between parent and child, or between a tree and its leaves, ~~And yet, with the full knowledge that the relationship between School and College has been made a sort of theological mystery, or like those philosophical puzzles when we are invited to throw a bridge between thought and its object, or to travel across all the meta-physical bridges involved in such an expression as "the association of ideas".~~ *through the*

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Let us begin with the relationship, first of all, which no one denies: Almost all the material we get in the Universities has been through your hands. To that extent you teach, and we teach, the same people, and you teach them at the earlier, and consequently, the more important stage. But here the paradox enters: We, in the Universities, take up a detached attitude and treat you as though you were not engaged in the same process as we ourselves. It is, perhaps, natural that, at the first blush, we should complain if the material we receive from you is deficient in any way. But it seems to me highly unnatural that we should divest ourselves and the rest of the world from responsibility in our complaints.

The plain fact is, of course, that the material we have been getting from your hands has grown poorer and poorer in the last few decades. It is also a fact that we have complained more and more about the Schools in that period. You don't need to accept my word for that. It has been stated over and over again publicly for many years. Only last month it was stated again, by the President of the largest Canadian University, that whereas some Universities in Canada compared very favourably with Universities in Europe, it had to be admitted that the product even of our best Canadian Schools were between one and two years below the European standard. I am afraid that I, myself, should demur ~~from~~ *over* the first part of this comparison, but I must confess that I am acquainted with no person competent to judge who would demur ~~from~~ the comparison as to Schools.

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What I wish to make clear, however, is my protest against the attitude that Schools and Universities are sufficiently separate for one to say to the other "You are so-and-so, whereas we are thus-and-thus". The connection between the Schools and Colleges seems to me to be organic, and it is as silly for Colleges to blame Schools as it would be for the arm of a man to blame his leg; or if blame must be apportioned, then where Schools are at fault the Colleges and Universities are more to blame than the Schools. Let me be concrete at this point: I have lived and worked in one provincial system where the High Schools are altogether staffed with inexperienced teachers. Anyone will admit at once that however loose and disjointed the High School curriculum may be, in any case, it consists of subjects which differ extremely from one another, both in content and in the method in which they must be taught and learned. Consider Mathematics and languages, for example. After the first elementary stage of Mathematics, memory plays a very small part in ~~Mathematics~~. It is highly important in the acquisition of the elementary processes - the times-table and such things. But after that, as everyone knows, it is ~~highly~~ unimportant, and there comes into play a capacity for reasoning by symbols, and by processes that are almost occult. But, in the acquisition and employment of foreign languages, memory is highly important all the way through. The student at first is confronted with a multitude of forms which he masters by memory, and by memory alone. Later he has to memorize rules, and always he has to remember a vocabulary and idioms, and so long as he uses that language, either in reading, writing, or conversation, his skill is conditioned by his power of memory.

In History, again, a different sort of mental process comes in. Here it will not do either to reason abstractly, or to remember slavishly. In addition to reasoning, and to remembering, the student must give full play to his imagination, and to every human sympathy he possesses, or the book of the past will remain for him as Goethe said, "A book sealed with seven seals". Now, there is hardly anything in common to the teaching of these three groups of subjects, and you will observe that I have not run through the entire list of subjects which are taught in our Schools.

Now, all of us have known teachers who were able to teach these different kinds of subjects. I suppose the ideal teacher would be the one to teach them all. But, in most cases, the School Board, and the School Principal, would be content to find a teacher excellent in the teaching of say, History and English Literature, or one who could teach languages, or one who could teach Mathematics and Elementary Science.

Keeping these observations in mind, let us return now to the provincial system which I have cited as an illustration. Except for one or two imported Old Country teachers, there is not in that Province, from one end to the other, a teacher of Mathematics, who has had any special training in Mathematics; or a teacher of Classics, or Modern Languages, who has had any special training in either; and hardly any who have had any special training in any of the other subjects. Are the Schools, the School Principals, or the School Trustees, to blame for this state of affairs? I know of School Boards, and I know of School Principals, in that Province, who have again and again canvassed the Universities within its frontiers for such teachers. But the Universities in question do not produce them. Nearly all the High School teachers there are expected to have a B. A. degree. But there are no special courses for the B. A. degree. Mathematics, to take one of the most important of all subjects, is not obligatory for the B. A. degree. It is, of course, obligatory for those University students who are going to follow an advanced course in Science. But none of these students ever enter the school-teaching profession. Consequently, throughout that Province, the teachers of Mathematics have, themselves, had no more Mathematics than the pupils they are teaching in the Matriculation grade. You can call such a state of affairs incredible, if you like. It would be incredible in Europe. It would have been incredible in Canada, at least in the parts of Canada which I know best, a generation ago. And yet this scandalous state of affairs exists, has existed for years, and no one seems to be paying much attention to it - except that in that Province the Universities curse the Schools for failing to send them students who are well prepared in Mathematics. It is quite as bad in Classics. So-called teachers of Classics, in the Secondary Schools, have had no Greek whatever - though Greek in our scientific age is of the utmost importance, and though it is, for the University student, of Science, and of Mathematics, and of Literature, and of History, and of Philosophy, at least fifty times more important than Latin. But consider Latin: The Universities I am speaking of require, for the B. A. degree, one year of Latin. Consequently, the teachers of Latin in the Secondary Schools have had only one stage more of Latin than the pupils they are teaching in the Matriculation grade. Now, I think it is easy to demonstrate that the neglect of the more difficult subjects, such as Mathematics, and Classical languages, is to be ascribed to forces outside our Schools and Universities altogether. But I think you will agree with me that in the situation I have portrayed, it is utterly ridiculous for the Universities to say to the Schools, "You are to blame for the neglect of Mathematics and Classics." But that is exactly what has been happening

who was able

for many years. I think that any of you here would say, "Surely the teachers in the Secondary Schools, and the teachers in the Universities, and everyone else in that Province, interested in education, ought to be laying their heads together and re-enforcing one-another in every conceivable way, instead of indulging in mere bickering". Meantime, the parent of children in that Province realises, often in anguish, and often in the bitterest discontent, that he cannot find Schools for his children as good as the Schools he himself attended.

When things are bad, there is nothing like looking the devil in the face. I have spoken about the forces outside the Schools and Colleges which make for the complete neglect of those studies which are both more difficult and better worthwhile. Education, as you and I know, is a two-fold process. It means learning as well as teaching, and, of the two, the learning is far the more important. There are proverbs in at least half a dozen languages to the effect that a good teacher can make little out of a poor pupil, whereas a good student can hardly be spoiled by a poor teacher. Now the world today is organised against the learner. The men and women of my generation have loaded the dice against him in every conceivable way. We have furnished him with, nay, we have forced upon him, the most insidious and luring distractions. If you will stop for a moment to think of it, nearly all the difficulties between the world which our children face and the world we faced at their age, - the highly illustrated paper and magazine, the movie, the automobile, the radio, the telephone, organised athletics, - are just so many colossal hindrances to real study. It's not just the time lost for serious reading and thinking. There is an almost complete lack of opportunity for self-expression, and self-assertion. Our children know thousands of things about Hollywood, and the streamlines of automobiles, and American baseball scores, and the speed of aeroplanes, that we never dreamed of. But all this vast lore has been rained in upon them, while their minds have been in a condition of inert passivity. The boy, who, a generation ago, learned to hitch and handle a team of horses, had achieved a moral mastery over other wills than his own, that no boy can learn today by tickling a carburetor. If you stop to think of it that word "self-starter" spells a different moral world. And different moral worlds are felt overnight in the Schools. If we teachers just reflected on the difficulties, I think we should give up in despair. It is a harder world for teachers, so far as my knowledge of history goes, than any world in the past. But we must also remember that it is a harder world for students than any world that has been. It won't do for us just to tell the students all we knew and all we had achieved at their age. In their hearts they are really a little amused at us, and believe that their little fingers are thicker than our thighs. But we have the advantage of age and experience. We ought to be filled with mellow sympathy for them, as well as for ourselves, and we have, as I say, to look the devil full in the face, and make a fresh start. Life is difficult, - education just as difficult. But both are more interesting on that account.

as It is precisely ~~that~~ this, ~~is~~ ~~that~~ commonplace, ~~as~~ it is, that I venture to suggest the first step of the way out. We do all believe that a problem is more interesting in proportion to its difficulties, do we not? Very well then. Should not Algebra be more interesting than the "comic cuts"? Some of you will shake your heads over that. You will think that, much as I have moralised about them, I do not know the youth of today. A good many of you, who admit the premiss, will think that we have arrived too rapidly at the conclusion. Let me clear the ground by one or two observations:

1. The boys and girls at High School today, and I speak of them with very special opportunities of knowing them, seem to me to be bored to death by their so-called amusements. They had had a diet of spice and dessert so long

that they are surfeited and nauseated, in a reaction that is almost physical. Their whole being cries out for something to chew on.

2. Most people today, even those who are connected with High Schools, when they speak of the youth of our time, mean all the youth of our time. But I am limiting my argument to those who are capable of such things as Algebra. One of the great misfortunes perhaps about ^{giving up} Euclid is that the phrase used for generations about the fifth proposition in his first book is no longer known or recognized. It was called the "Pons Asinorum". And so long as Euclid was taught, it was recognized by teachers that there were two classes of human beings - those who could, and those who couldn't.

Now, then, to return to our argument. I say, and I know, that it is a crime on the part of his elders to offer a boy, who can do Mathematics, the comic cuts and everything else of that kind. Such a boy will thank, forever, the teacher who spreads before him the fascination of Algebra and Trigonometry.

I venture to make the simple suggestion to you, that that sort of step is the beginning of the way out. It's a simple, commonplace, suggestion. Try to use your best material, just as you select the best seeds for your garden, and later give the likeliest seedling light, and air, and space, by thinning out the weaklings. We have tried pretty nearly everything, but common sense. Why not fall back on common sense, and apply it rigorously for the next ten years? Some parents will tell you that you underestimate the intelligence of their children. Some Inspectors will tell you that you are carrying a bright boy or girl far beyond the requirements of the curriculum. You may require to be a serpent and a dove in one, and it may be wise to cherish your programme in secret with those who understand it. But the results after ten years would put you beyond the criticism of bishops and princes.

Let me tell you in a word what the practical result would be, and this brings us full circle to the problem with which we started: - the relation between Schools and Universities. The result of such a ^{sense} commonplace policy in the Schools, with say half-a-dozen children in a hundred, would be that some High Schools would be compelled by mathematical necessity to institute an Upper School or Post-matriculation School; and ~~from~~ a different kind from anything which exists in our midst today. Time and again in visiting Schools, which have no such outlet, I have remarked a boy or girl in a form who is absolutely idling, and also discouraging and bedevilling the rest of the form, through being able to do the set tasks, lightly and easily. The old way of dealing with such a boy was to shove him up one form, or two forms, to the place where he belonged. But, of course, such a common sense method results, occasionally, in finding a boy who can matriculate, or finish his High School course, at the age of 14. Now, it would be quite wrong to send such a boy to College. He has already been at certain disadvantages in mixing with his seniors in age. But whether a boy is going to go on to College or not, he has certainly made good his title to further indulgence in intellectual pursuits before he plunges into the welter of earning his living. Let him stay at School a couple of years longer, having no formal classes of the old kind, but being encouraged to study and work for himself under the guidance of his High School teachers. They will not have as much time for him as they had in the lower School, but he will be the delight of their existence by affording them an opportunity for brushing up the more advanced parts of their own particular studies. He will be a standing object lesson to the School, - that matriculation, or school-leaving, examination is not the ~~he~~-all and the end-all of the course. Two

"Oh", but you will say, "not every School has teachers competent

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to supervise such advanced studies.ⁿ Perhaps not. But at least there are several Schools in any Province with sufficient staff to do such work. And this is an economical way to do it. No School, and no system, has the right to years of such a bright boy's life by limiting him to the treadmill of his duller mates. And if it costs a bit of railway fare to send him elsewhere for a year or two, he has earned it, and shown his title to it. If three pupils in one hundred were dealt with in this way, and never went on to College at all, there would be an incredible enrichment in our intellectual standards. But some of these Upper School pupils will be able to go on to the University. I cannot imagine a Canadian University neglecting to make special provision for such pupils, if they were poor in money. And it is just these pupils that the Canadian Universities must have if they are to redeem themselves. I do not agree with the statement that the standards of our Canadian Universities are as high as those of European Universities, ~~and they are low~~ because we are not getting a few pace-setters in our classes. If we had a few boys entering who had two more years of Mathematics than is required by our present low matriculation standard we could do many things that we cannot do now. In the first place we could have honours Mathematics courses, to train mathematical teachers. And again all other courses, in Science, in Philosophy, and Economics, for which Mathematics are an indispensable preliminary, would take a great leap forward. Again if a few boys came to us who had been taught Greek as well as Latin we could have a real University course, such as only one Canadian University at present has, in Classics, and turn out the small trickle of classical scholars, which is an indispensable minimum if Literature, History, Science, Philosophy and Law, are to continue in our midst. And so with Modern Languages, and with everything else.

our standards are low,

I am making simple suggestions, I maintain, ~~None~~ of which are either impossible or fantastic. And yet you will see that I look forward to a great change, and I presuppose at every step that Schools and Colleges will work together understandingly, loyally, and with endless patience.

June 18, 1932.

C. W. Clark, Esq.,
City Editor, The Daily Gleaner,
Fredericton, N. B.

Dear Sir:

I have just learned this morning that I shall be unable to attend the Teachers' Institute in Fredericton to deliver an address to them. I am most reluctant to break this interesting engagement, but am called out of the country by very important business. I have just written about it to Mr. C. T. Wetmore, Secretary of the Teachers' Association.

I hope, at another time, to be able to visit Fredericton for the sake of the University of New Brunswick, as well as for the other educational institutions there.

Yours faithfully,

CS/LH.

President.

U. B. Pres. was able to attend meeting of Teachers Institute after all. Sent material to "Daily Gleaner" when in Fredericton.

June 9, 1932.

The Daily Gleaner,
Fredericton, N. B.

Dear Sirs:

I have your letter of June 7.

I shall be very pleased to let you have, in advance, the gist of what I shall say to the teachers. It may be, of course, that a good deal of my address will be ex tempore.

Yours faithfully,

CS/LH.

President.

The Daily Gleaner

FREDERICTON, N. B.
CANADA

June 7, 1932.

Dr. Carleton Stanley,
President,
Dalhousie University,
Halifax, N. S.

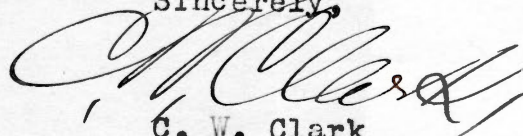
Dear Sir:

The agenda of the annual meeting of the Teachers' Institute of New Brunswick shows that you are to deliver an address before that gathering which is to meet in Fredericton, June 28-30.

It would be of considerable assistance, if The Daily Gleaner could be furnished with advance copy of your remarks, if you are to prepare such copy, publication of course not to be in advance of delivery.

Hoping that you will be in position to oblige, I remain

Sincerely,



C. W. Clark
City Editor.

CWC/VMF.