

LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS

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Libraries and Schools by Samuel S. Green

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SAMUEL S. GREEN

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AND SCHOOLS**

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PAPERS SELECTED BY

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NOTE.

THE first of the following addresses and papers has done much to convince teachers that important aid may be had, in doing the work which they have to do, by making a large use of libraries.

The others give accounts of successful experiments made in different places, by librarians and teachers, in bringing about a use of libraries which has proved valuable to schools.

These papers are all reprints, but it has been thought that a good purpose would be served by bringing them together into a handy little volume, which, if such a course seems desirable, it is proposed to issue, subsequently, as a low-priced pamphlet, to be distributed freely by librarians and other individuals, and by school-boards, among teachers and library officers.

S. S. G.

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Libraries and Schools.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

BY CHARLES F. ADAMS, JR.

As the result of a conversation I some time since had with our School Superintendent, Mr. Parker, and at his suggestion, I propose this afternoon to say a few words to you about books and reading; on the use, to come directly to the point, which could be made of the Public Library of the town in connection with the school system in general, and more particularly with the High and upper-grade Grammar Schools. I say "*could* be made" intentionally, for I am very sure that use is not now made; and why it is not made is a question which, in my double capacity of a member of the School Committee and a trustee of the Public Library, I have during the last few years puzzled over a good deal.

You are all teachers in the common schools of the town of Quincy, and I very freely acknowl-

edge that I think your course as such, especially of late, has been marked by a good deal of zeal, by a consciousness of progress, and a sincere desire to accomplish good results. I am disposed neither to find fault with you nor with our schools,—as schools go. I should like, however, to ask you this simple question:—Did it ever, after all, occur to you, what is the great end and object of all this common-school system?—Why do we get all these children together, and labor over them so assiduously year after year?—Now, it may well be that it never suggested itself in that way to you, but I think it may safely be asserted that the one best possible result of a common-school education,—its great end and aim,—should be to prepare the children of the community for the far greater work of educating themselves.

Now, in education, as in almost everything else, there is a strong tendency among those engaged in its routine work to mistake the means for the end. I am always struck with this in going into the average public school. It was especially the case in the schools of this town four years ago. Arithmetic, grammar, spelling, geography and history were taught, as if to be able to answer the questions in the text-books was the great end of all education. It was instruction

through a perpetual system of conundrums. The child was made to learn some queer definition in words, or some disagreeable puzzle in figures, as if it was in itself an acquisition of value,—something to be kept and hoarded like silver dollars, as being a handy thing to have in the house. The result was that the scholars acquired with immense difficulty something which they forgot with equal ease; and, when they left our grammar schools, they had what people are pleased to call the rudiments of education, and yet not one in twenty of them could sit down and write an ordinary letter, in a legible hand, with ideas clearly expressed, and in words correctly spelled; and the proportion of those who left school with either the ability or desire to further educate themselves was scarcely greater.

Perhaps you may think this an exaggeration on my part. If you do, I can only refer you to the examination papers of the candidates for admission during any year to our High School. I have had occasion to go over many sets of them, and I assure you they warrant the conclusion I have drawn.

Going a step further and following the scholar out into grown-up life, I fancy that a comparison of experiences would show that scarcely one out of twenty of those who leave our schools ever