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Normal Schools and Training Departments:  
Their Necessity; Their Organization.

In the paper which I am about to read, you must not expect much that is original or instructive, but a great deal that is trite and hackneyed. It would be presumption in me to try to instruct persons better informed and more experienced than myself. Indeed my intention is simply, 'under the rose', to use this convention as a medium to enlighten, if possible, a portion of the public and to remove, if I can, some of the prejudices prevailing against the normal schools.

Doubtless your ears have been regaled and your hearts rejoiced with such expressions as — 'The normal schools are expensive failures', 'The normal school graduates are conceited and idle hobbies', 'The normal schools turn out very poor teachers', and so on, ad nauseam. It does not mend the matter to know that these remarks and others of like character emanate from school officers and teachers who, to save their souls, could not distinguish the difference between good teaching and bad teaching, and who having received their own little education late in life fancied that they had discovered something new, and that all else is 'leather and prunella'. Perhaps another class of calumniators may be included, — the class who by a chain of fortunate circumstances have been forced into <sup>the</sup> high places

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in the profession of teaching, and feel in their own hearts that they are not qualified to fill them. They naturally fear that an enlightened public opinion might force them one step farther — out of the schools, on the cold charity of a pitiless world, — and put in their exalted positions trained and competent teachers from the normal schools. But we fear neither the empiric teacher nor the ignorant school officer, for they are stingless and incapable; we fear the influence of the misinformed ~~and~~ educated class who have adopted these prejudices without proper investigation, and are unable or unwilling to take the necessary time to ascertain the whole truth. It is this class that ought to be converted, and to this class in particular these remarks are directed. — With this exordium I shall proceed to the work in hand.

Every argument brought forward against normal school training might be adduced with equal force and effect against any other professional training. The foes of the normal schools say, 'we had good teachers before the normal schools were established'. — Certainly we had. And so we had good generals before the military academy at West Point was dreamed of, good admirals before the naval academy was founded, and good lawyers

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and Physicians before law and medical schools were established. If these professional schools are necessary, the professional school for teachers is equally necessary. 'But,' say the antagonists of the normal schools, 'Many of your graduates turn out to be very poor teachers'. Granted, and many of the graduates of other professional schools utterly fail, and what is worse, augment the army of failures in the teacher's profession. Does the medical faculty certify that all their graduates will become successful practitioners? Nay, they simply certify that success is attainable; that the holders of their diplomas have received the requisite education and training to enable them, with tact, discretion and industry, to succeed. — In a recent statement concerning the after life of the graduates of a London medical college, a distinguished professor made the startling announcement that but five per centum achieved a great success, ten per centum a fair success, forty per centum made a bare living, while nearly one half had to abandon the profession altogether. These figures are given from <sup>memory</sup> ~~reputation~~, and ~~may~~ are correct or very nearly so. — If the learned professor had gone a little farther, and told us how many of these miserable ~~medical~~ failures <sup>in medicine</sup> sought refuge and repose, wealth and prosperity in the teacher's chair, he might have thrown some light on the

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Causes that led to the existence of such schools as Notteboys and Salem Hall, and such school-masters as Aqueens and Creaker. — Who would be so hardy as to say in consequence of these failures, Abolish all medical schools? They are expensive failures? And yet this is precisely what is said because of a far less proportion of failures among the graduates of the normal schools.

Alexander Bain has said that if Phrenology were a science, it would be the greatest blessing ever conferred on the human race, for then it would only be <sup>necessary</sup> to place our fingers on the bumps of a child's head in order to ascertain his aptitude for some particular vocation; and thus by putting the right man in the right place avoid more than half the misfortunes and miseries of life. But since Phrenology is not a science, parents will continue to make mistakes, and boys be set to study for the learned professions, whom nature only fitted to handle the hammer, the plane and the plough. A good farmer or a skillful mechanic is often spoiled in the vain attempt to educate a youth into a professional gentleman. Unfortunately the professions are overcrowded with men of this rate talent, who might have led happy lives as artisans, traders and merchants.

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But the profession of teaching, in this respect, is in the worst condition of all; for entrance to it is so easy that it is literally overrun with the ambitious of both sexes, some using it as a half-way-house to matrimony, and others as a stepping stone to the so-called higher professions. Is it any wonder then that so many of the normal school graduates fail to achieve success? Indeed the only wonder is that, under the circumstances, so many succeed at all. Since the proportion of failures in the normal schools is no greater, but even less, than in other professional schools, there is no good reason for the abolition of one that is not equally good for the abolition of all. The adversaries of the normal schools, say, 'True; but the other professional schools are private institutions supported by private means, while the normal schools are supported by public tax'. If all schools were private schools, completely separated from the state, and if teaching were a private business like law, it must be admitted that the establishment and support of a state normal school, or of any other money-making professional school, would be indefensible and utterly unjust. But since the state has assumed the function of school-master-general, and has even compelled parents to send their children to school under

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pains and penalties, and since the state has taxed the whole people to support the common schools, it is the bounden duty of the state to furnish able teachers for its own schools. If capable teachers could be furnished in the ordinary way, the establishment of normal schools would be a work of supererogation. But experience has amply proved that they can not be obtained in the ordinary way, and therefore it is incumbent on the state to educate and train its own teachers.

Suppose a stranger in a strange town had a child sick almost unto death, and suppose he rushed into a neighbor's house and exclaimed, 'Tell me the name of some cheap physician; my child is dying'; what would his neighbors think of that man? They would unquestionably pronounce him either a brute or a fool. And yet this is what is done daily all over the country in the employment of teachers. The tax-payers, whose own children are morally and intellectually weakened and consumptive for want of good instruction and careful training, cry out, 'Give us a cheap teacher; we will pay \$20 per month and no more.' Is it any wonder then that these children

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take to dime novel reading and have their souls destroyed with literary poison? These children looked to this cheap teacher for bread, and they received a stone. This cheap teacher fed them on husks, which the very swine would refuse. There are in round numbers thirty thousand teachers employed in the public free schools of the state of New York, and it is no exaggeration to say that one third of these are miserable cheap teachers who are doing more harm than good; and if their licenses, often obtained by mere political influence, could be revoked, and the school-houses in which they pretend to teach, ~~closed~~ closed until the tax-payers were willing to employ properly qualified teachers, a great reform would be effected and a blessing conferred on the people, particularly on those living in the remote, rural districts.

The normal school is the nursery from which must emanate the properly qualified teachers. It is true that a few good teachers, like good poets, are born not made. But the vast majority of teachers must become competent, precisely as lawyers as physicians as engineers become competent, by study and practice. It becomes then the duty of the leading minds of the normal

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school system to devise a plan of instruction which shall be sound and uniform, based on the sciences of mind, and satisfactory to all logical thinkers. The definitions and axioms of pedagogy should be as concise and clear as those of Euclid; and a superstructure erected on such a foundation would command the respect of every distinguished educator in the country, and do more to advance the normal school system than all else combined.

My professional brethren will pardon the presumption if I undertake in a crude way to present what I consider, under existing circumstances, a thoroughly organized normal school with a three years' course of study.

Of course, if young men and women entered the normal school with a collegiate education, or even an academic education of a high order, the organization would be easy and simple enough. Metaphysics, pedagogy and practice would constitute the curriculum. But in the United States, certainly in the state of New York, this is out of the question. When they have received this amount of education they can obtain positions as teachers and earn money; and the vast majority <sup>will not</sup> 'waste' as they call it, three years of valuable time <sup>in learning the theory and practice of teaching</sup>. No enemy of the normal schools could advocate more strenuously



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than I, the normal work, pure and simple, if it were only feasible; but it is not feasible, and they know it. They know, too, that if the academic course were prohibited by law, the normal schools would starve and die of atrophy. Their advocacy of the impossible best thing is only a cunning blow to destroy the system. The friends of the normal schools will do the best they can under the circumstances. For the present it is absolutely necessary that the normal schools should admit students, either young and mentally immature as in cities, or indifferently educated, <sup>generally</sup> as in the rural districts. There is no other alternative. — With this condition of affairs, let us see what is the best plan of organization. To send these immature and ignorant apprentice-teachers into the school of practice is a blunder equivalent to a crime. It is this training in the theory and practice of teaching of minds undisciplined by study and instruction which has produced so many <sup>narrow</sup> cast iron, mechanical teachers who have brought odium on the normal schools. The normal school must have, then, a two-fold organization, an academic department and a school of practice. This union of the two in the same institution

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and under one head has many advantages. The students enter with the view of becoming teachers; they have before them the example of superior instructors; they breathe an atmosphere redolent of the science of teaching, and they are imbued with normal methods and principles which permeate the whole establishment. An able and conscientious principal will direct the attention of the students during their academic studies to the best methods of presenting the different subjects which are taught in their own recitation rooms.

The curriculum of the academic department should differ materially from that of the ordinary high school. Far more attention should be given to the study of the English language; for it is by means of this language that the future teachers must prove their ability; it is chiefly by means of their own mother tongue that they must become superior teachers of youth. The English language, therefore, with its grammar, its rhetoric and its literature, should hold a prominent place in the academic department of a normal school. Time should also be given for careful instruction in reading, writing and speaking English with ease, grace, accuracy and fluency. An excellent exercise to accomplish this purpose is to

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compel the students to read aloud children's stories, to shut the book and relate these stories in language suited to the capacity of children of a given age, and to invent and tell stories illustrating a principle or inculcating a moral. A little practice in this line will increase the student's vocabulary and make it sufficiently flexible for all practical purposes. In order to give a command of words, translation should hold a high place in the academic department, and Latin translation is generally admitted to be the best. Hence the Latin language should be carefully studied during the entire course. Besides enlarging the vocabulary, the mere act of translation is the very best exercise for the judgment, a faculty which bears the same relation to other mental faculties that "the staff of life" bears to the other kinds of food. History should be well taught; because a thorough knowledge of it will furnish a store house from which the future teacher can draw supplies at pleasure. The story telling, above referred to, will make the study of history much easier. A moderate, not an excessive, amount of mathematics should be taught. They should also receive instruction in one or two of the natural sciences.

During the last term of the second year the elements of moral and mental sciences and the outlines of political economy should be taught by means of lectures followed by examinations. Neither a profound nor extensive course in these subjects is necessary or feasible; but enough can be taught to enable the future teachers to comprehend their duty to themselves to their pupils and to society, to understand something of the operations of the human mind and to appreciate the rights, duties and privileges of citizenship. Free hand drawing should be constantly and carefully practised under a competent instructor. There should be no measuring, no ruling, and very little erasing. The normal school has not been established to educate artists but to so train teachers that they can make the best use of the chalk and the blackboard. Elaborate crayon drawing and map making, useful doubtless, but requiring a great expenditure of time, ought not to be permitted. The drawing most essential to a teacher is precisely the drawing most essential for the correct, elementary study of art, namely, the accurate, rapid free-hand drawing of straight and curved

lines and the application of perspective to the proper formation of solid figures. It is needless to enlarge upon this subject for every good teacher is thoroughly impressed with its importance. Such an academic course pre-supposes only a fair standard of education at the time of admission to the normal school.

It will be observed that this academic course is, in point of fact, to a great extent, normal. It is the true foundation on which a system of normal training should rest; for during these two years we train the voice, the hand, the intellect and the moral nature. We plough, we harrow, we sow, we weed; and we await the ripe harvest at the end of the third year.

Two or three months should be devoted, at the beginning of the third year, to the study of the methods and principles of teaching based on metaphysics. Then for the next nine months there ought to be unremitting practice in the training department. But the organization of this training department or school of practice is a matter of vital importance. In many places this right arm of the normal school has been abandoned because parents objected to have

their children experimented upon by young and inexperienced teachers. In the first place the school of practice should have at its head a lady of superior tact and ability who can appreciate the two-fold duties of her position, the thorough education of the little children committed to her care and the correct training of the apprentice teachers temporarily under her charge. The duties of this lady are extremely delicate; for she is at the same time, ~~at the~~ ~~same time~~ both chief and subordinate, — chief over the children's school and subordinate to the principal of the normal school. She should be a thorough scholar and a superior critic; she should understand metaphysics and pedagogy and be imbued with faith in the normal school system. In fact the most important officer in the normal school, next to the principal, is the head of the school of practice; and hence she should be a very wise and discreet woman. Having secured such a lady — and I am happy to say there are many such ladies — there should be appointed to every class in the school of practice an able, experienced and well paid teacher, qualified not only to instruct the children for whose progress she is responsible, but capable of criticising the work of the apprentice-teachers. These

critic teachers should be compelled to teach  
three quarters of the school time, and all  
the balance ought to be made because which  
the apprentice-teachers can initiate with  
profit. The apprentice-teachers under the  
direction, supervision and criticism of the  
regular class teachers, should be allowed to  
teach the other quarter of the school time.  
False notions of economy, or imperfect dis-  
cipline may cause failure at the start.  
If the children in the school of practice  
are injured or neglected, the normal school  
becomes the greatest sufferer. While the living  
class is used in a manner somewhat sim-  
ilar to the use made of the dead body in  
direction, their treatment must be totally  
different. The corpse may be hacked to  
pieces by a hanger, and little harm done,  
but it is needless to say that no training  
of teachers can justify the slightest injury  
to the smallest child in the school of practice.  
No thought of equipment of the school of  
practice with salaries teachers throughout  
and with appliances of a superior kind  
as so to ensure a better education for the  
children than could be obtained elsewhere,  
is indispensable to the success of the  
normal school. In some places through  
a mistaken economy attempts have been

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made to conduct schools of practice by means of a single, experienced teacher, using the apprentice teachers as instructors of the several classes. It is hardly possible to conduct a school successfully in this manner; for these young, unskilled teachers must blunder sadly, and they must be constantly changed from class to class. The apprentice-teachers may acquire more ~~quickly~~ <sup>rapidly</sup> the power to manage and govern, but at a fearful cost to the helpless children. It seems like sending a ship to sea on a long voyage with a competent captain and a crew of young and inexperienced boys. Better no school of practice at all than one conducted in this way. — It is not necessary that the school of practice should be a large school with all the grades. It might have a sufficient number of low grade classes to meet the requirements of the normal school.

To begin with, there ought to be a Kindergarten class, for the reason that the apprentice teachers should be taught to manage and teach the very youngest children, to combine work with the head and work with the hand, to appreciate the value of amusement as a means of instruction, and to comprehend the underlying philosophy of Froebel. A full