

# The Dalles Daily Chronicle.

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TUESDAY, - DECEMBER 18, 1894

### These Text Books.

#### EDITOR CHRONICLE:

In your issue of the 15th Inst. I note this title on your editorial page: "No Time to Swap Horses."

Notwithstanding the warm support which the good editor of THE CHRONICLE has given me in my school work, and the many kind things which he has said for and about me, I cannot help but take issue with him in the general sentiment expressed in the above-referred-to article. The sentiment is, in effect, that no change should be made in the present series of text books used in the common schools of this state. If there is no need of a change now in some of the school books used in this state, may I ask when there ever will be need of a change? If these books are good enough for the pupils and teachers of the schools of Oregon for the present and for the next six years, they are good enough for all eternity, and by all means let the state board of education enter into a contract with the publishers to that effect. To re-adopt the present series of books in use in the state is to handicap every progressive teacher in the state, and inflict a wrong on every pupil in our public schools. I will go a step further and say that the re-adoption of the present series of text books will in many instances result in many of our pupils leaving our schools with a very imperfect knowledge of the branches studied. In fact the pupils are the injured parties directly, and indirectly the parents of those pupils.

Let us draw a homely illustration: Suppose a farmer to be feeding stock for market and profit. After he has been feeding his stock for some time, he finds they are not thriving, and on investigating he finds the food is at fault. Would not that farmer be exceedingly unwise if he did not at once substitute a different kind of food, even though the substituted food cost a trifle more? If this illustration is just and applicable to dumb brutes and the money-getting side of life, how infinitely more should it be true with regard to the mental food which is given our bright boys and girls of this state. You, kind Editor, are doing your own bright lad an injustice when you argue for the retention of certain of these books, or else you heap on his teacher the task of supplying supplementary work for him in order that the defectiveness of the text book may be bridged over. And heaven knows the teacher who has any pride in his school-work can find enough to do in the supplementary work line, even with the best of text books, without having to make up for a defective or antiquated text.

You argue, Mr. Editor, that hard times and the financial interests of parents demand the retention of these present books. That is good and kind in you, and I presume parents thank you for it; but then, you must remember, in the words of the New Testament, "The poor we have with us always," and it is hardly fair to presume that the present financial stringency will remain with us for the next six years; whereas if this present series of books is re-adopted, we are "into it" for another six years. Moreover, as I am informed, the bids of different publishing houses run all the way from an even exchange to about one-third the retail price of the present books in use. This being the case, I cannot see that it will be a very grievous burden to the parents. Besides, parents have from January 1st prox. to next October to provide for this change. And as regards the man with a large family, referred to in the before-mentioned article, it often happens that a majority of the said family are in the lower grades of school, where the books used are fewest and least expensive.

As for the editorial sentiment expressed by the newspapers, backed up by testimonials of teachers, school officers and parents, I must take issue with that sentiment. Perhaps this last may appear like self-conceit or bigotry, but I hold that my smile is not overdrawn when I say that I might just as properly step into the editorial rooms of the aforesaid newspapers and dictate to the editor what were good for him to speak of in his editorial columns, or to go to the homes of the said parents and direct them as to the best manner of conducting their domestic affairs; I say it would be quite as proper as for those persons to dictate to the teacher which are good text books and which are bad ones. The workman is the best judge of his tools. There is one person before

whose judgment of a text book I shall always bow with respect, and that is the earnest, pushing, progressive, modern teacher, who has passed years in the firey furnace of the class-room. As for there being a unanimity of opinion among teachers that the present series of books is good enough, this, in so far as my personal knowledge goes, I must deny. Wherever I have spoken to intelligent teachers, since becoming a teacher in this state, concerning the truth of this statement, namely: That the language series in this state is regarded in all the most progressive schools as a lamentable failure. It consists of three books—the Barnes Language Lessons, which has some merit; Sill's Grammar, which seems to have been written without any definite aim, a ship without a rudder in the language sea; and last, Clark's Grammar, a grammar of nearly fifty years ago; a grammar all theory and no practice. There is no connection whatever between the books. This alone is a vital defect. A state language series should form one continuous chain from the lowest work to the highest, if such a thing is possible. Next in defectiveness is the Watson Speller, details of which need not be entered into, after which come these three books, in about the order of their merit, Monteith's Geography, Barnes' National Series of readers, and the Fish Arithmetic, the first mentioned having least merit.

As to whether there is a unanimous opinion, editorially and among leading educators, as to whether there should or should not be some change in text books, I refer you to the editorial page of the Oregonian of December 8th. On that page you will find an editorial, and also an article from the pen of President Van Scoy, both of which I should consider very fair and very honest articles. In conclusion, it may be said that no one book firm publishes the best set of text books forming a series throughout. The American Book Company publishes better books than they are giving us now, among which are the Appleton readers, Appleton's or Harper's geographies. The firm of Maynard & Merrill

publishes a language series, the Reed and Kellogg, which has a phenomenal run, and which seems to grow better with age. There is no better text book for mental discipline than Brooks' Mental Arithmetic, published by Christopher Sower & Co. So we might go through the whole list of school book publishing firms in the United States, selecting one branch of text books here, another there, till the list be filled. This article appears in the interest of no one, except the schools of Oregon, with their bright boys and girls, with whom the writer has had to work for the past four or five years, and his own personal interest as a teacher.

P. A. SNYDER,  
Principal Wasco School,  
Wasco, Or.

#### PERSONAL MENTION.

Louis Davenport is up from Mosier. J. C. Ward of Kingsley is in the city. Lloyd Smith and Harry and A. D. Hill are in from Moro.

Chris Fraley and T. M. Amen of Kingsley are in the city.

J. A. Thomas, the popular White Salmon merchant, is registered at the Umatilla.

Mr. F. M. Raymond, after visiting friends here, left for his home near Oregon City this morning.

Mrs. Sandrock and little daughter Lena, left last night for Blackwater, Mo., to visit her sister, who is dangerously ill.

D. C. Herrin arrived home from Sherman county last night. He reports business good, roads bad, the musical gathering a success, farmers busy, a little snow and a rough cold trip home.

Captain McNulty has resigned his position on the Regulator. His many friends regret this action on his part, for he has been so long on the river that it does not seem right that a boat should run without him.

Mr. W. F. Brock, editor of the Garden City Gazette of Walla Walla, was in the city yesterday. Mr. Brock is one of the brightest young men in the field of Washington journalism. He was a visitor at the literary society last evening and delivered a very pleasing address.

The Columbia Packing Co. are selling trimmed pork shoulders at 5 cents per pound for cash. decl3

Sauer kraut at W. A. Kirby's. tf

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