

of the most vital and important functions of a government—but we do most earnestly enter our protest against so many changes which are not reforms, which but too often have been simply introduced to be repealed before anything like a favourable opportunity has been afforded to test their efficiency. But my aim is not to scold. We believe our Minister has at heart the welfare of the school system, but good intentions do not alone suffice. It remains yet to be seen whether he is likely to take those broad and comprehensive views of systems and things which must ever characterize the patriotic legislator as distinguished from the mere politician ever on the watch to trim his sails to the rising breeze of popular caprice. We do not know whether this may come under the eye of Mr. Ross, but in the hope that it may, we would venture to speak briefly on one or two topics on which, in our humble opinion, there is room for permanent change and reform.

LEGISLATIVE GRANTS TO HIGH SCHOOLS.

This has ever been in many quarters an open sore. It would be amusing, were it a less serious subject, to recount the numerous changes in the basis of semi-annual apportionments which have taken place within the last few years. Scarcely had one system been adopted than some hidden hand struck the educational kaleidoscope and change was the word. We are well aware that the subject presents many difficulties and any Minister of Education, honest in his intentions, well merits the sympathy and support of the profession. That the problem has never yet been solved, even approximately, to the satisfaction of High School men we may safely assume, and apropos of the present system of distributing Legislative aid to High Schools there is one thing and one alone for which those at present in power deserve credit—a little credit—that the minimum grant to High Schools is fixed at \$500 per annum, provided the school of course fulfil certain conditions. Five hundred is better than four hundred, and we believe it is very near what the minimum grant ought to be. Thus far we are thankful, but far from being satisfied. A large amount of money remains to be disposed of after the payment of the minimum grant to High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, and on what principle is this grant at present allocated? On what, indeed, not the principle of payment by results, which with all its imperfections had at least certain elements of equity but, the "principle of salary." We do not know upon whom to father this modern child. For our part, and we hope we may not be uncharitable, we cannot but

think that the politician trained from his youth up was the originator. We all remember what a storm of opposition greeted it in the Local House last session, and no doubt it would have been strangled had it been fairly formulated and inserted in the Bill. As it was it was only the strength of the Government, united with the consideration that all felt was due to the gentleman who had but recently assumed the educational portfolio that saved it. One great object—perhaps the only object claimed by the admirers of this principle—in its favour was that it would provoke the liberality of trustees towards the payment of increased salaries. How far this has been accomplished the Department is best qualified to judge, now that it is in possession of the returns for 1884. We do not know of an isolated case in which the desired effect has been produced. On the other hand it would not be difficult to point to several in which an opposite result has been the consequence. But let us stop, we have no wish to be over-destructive. On the contrary, we would respectfully suggest the following for the consideration of the Hon. Minister of Education while drafting his Bill:

(a) That the minimum grant remain as it is. (b) That some portion be distributed to schools according to efficiency, the criteria of which might be the results of public examinations, or the report of Inspectors, or both. Another suggestion we have to offer to the Minister, and his history thus far would seem to indicate that he is willing to take advantage of it. Let Mr. Ross summon to Toronto on any Saturday say twelve Head Masters, whose records show that their opinions might possibly have weight. Let them be representative, that is four from each of the three classes of schools—Collegiate Institutes, three master schools, two master schools—and it would be strange indeed if he did not get some practical suggestions that would aid him greatly in drafting his Bill. According to the present mode of distributing grants, the three master schools make money at the expense of all or nearly all the two master schools, and also according to the evidence of some competent principals, the Institutes as well. On examining the Minister's Report for last year, and comparing it with previous years, it will be easily seen that I am not over-stating matters, and all this be remembered, while it is not claimed that the unfortunate schools are less efficient than in previous years. Treatment such as this can eventually have but one result. Already many are struggling for lack of funds. I hope, sir, you may not think me making use of unduly harsh terms, but I must confess that I fail to see any principle of equity in the present distribution of Government aid in excess of the minimum.