

In 1816 a praiseworthy effort was made to provide for the establishment and maintenance of common schools, and in 1824 to provide for general reading books in the schools. These early efforts met with little success, which was largely due to the inefficiency of the schoolmasters and the carelessness of the trustees. In spite of these difficulties we learn that in 1822 there were about 340 common schools in the province with from 12,000 to 14,000 pupils who were taught reading, writing, the elements of arithmetic and the first principles of religion.

Before mentioning any of the great changes in educational matters which were made toward the middle of the century, it might not be out of place to give an outline of the work in a grammar school, and for the purpose I have selected part of a course of study as given by Dr. Strachan in 1829, as follows :

FIRST YEAR—BOYS 7 TO 9.

1st., Latin—Eton Grammar, Vocabulary, Corderius, Selectæ Profanis.

2nd., English—Mavor's Spelling Book, Enfield's Lessons, Walker's Lessons, Blair's Class Book, English Grammar, Writing, Arithmetic (chiefly mental).

SECOND YEAR—BOYS 9 TO 11.

1st., Latin—Grammar, Volpy's Delectas, New Testament, Daly's Exercises, Exempli Minora, Entropius, Phædrus, Cornelius Nepos.

2nd., English—Grammar and Reading as before, Writing and Arithmetic (mental and mixed), Geography, Civil and Natural History, Elocution.

3rd., to commence French.

THIRD YEAR—BOYS 11 TO 13.

1st., Latin—Grammar, Bailey's Exercises, Cornelius Nepos, Caesar, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Nonsense Verses, Psalms into Latin Verse, Exempli Moralia, Versions of rendering English into Latin

2nd., Greek—To commence about the middle of the third year, Eton Grammar, or Nelson's edition of Moore's Grammar, Greek Vocabulary, New Testament Greek Exercises.

3rd., Arithmetic, and to commence Algebra.

4th, French.

This curriculum extended through a much longer course than is here

given, but this will suffice to give some idea of the course of study. Dr. Strachan also gives his method of teaching arithmetic, which is as follows :

"I divide my pupils into separate classes according to their progress. Each class has one or more sums to produce every day neatly wrought upon their slates. The work is carefully examined, after which I command every figure to be blotted out, and the sums to be wrought under my eye. The one whom I happen to pitch upon first gives with an audible voice the rules and reasons for every step, and as he proceeds, the rest silently work along with him figure for figure, but ready to correct him if he blunder, that they may get his place. As soon as this one is finished, the work is again blotted out, and another called upon to work the question as before, while the rest proceed along with him in silence, and so on around the whole class. Such a plan is very laborious, but it will be found successful, and he that is anxious to spare labor ought not to be a public teacher."

From 1830 to 1840 and even later, might be termed the dark ages of our public education, not because there were no able men to take up the cause, but rather that their labors were fruitless. Foremost among these was Dr. Ryerson, who though prevented from being a member of the Legislature, being a minister, did much in advancing better measures. By his writing and his skill in detecting the weak points of an adversary's argument, he was able to furnish his friends in the House of Assembly with facts and arguments which were irresistible. They passed school bills time and again only to have them rejected by the Legislative Council. But a change came in 1841, and education henceforward received more real attention.

As a means to higher education Universities were established. For the benefit of teachers, district Model