

trations of the most approved methods of presenting these subjects to your pupils, to increase your aptitude for your work.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of such meetings, particularly in Manitoba, at the present time. It is now pretty generally admitted that the teacher should be taught how to teach. Training institutions are a luxury which, owing to the smallness of our Provincial subsidy, we have hitherto found beyond our reach. I hope this will not long be the case; but if such Provinces as Ontario and New Brunswick, with their admirable Normal and other schools for teachers, deem these associations of so much importance as to demand the encouragement and co-operation of the educational authorities and certain pecuniary help from public funds, we ought to hail their organization with lively satisfaction. Obligated to take our teachers from any source from which they may present themselves, it now and then happens that persons pass into the profession with very vague ideas of their duties; and however anxious they may be to supply the defect, there is no opportunity of doing so except the partial one which experience in their own schools affords. Our meetings, conducted in accordance with the constitution, officered by persons of experience, in which every member desirous of expressing his views of his every day work and of the difficulties he meets with in its discharge, will have ample opportunity of doing so, will, I confidently expect, prove to be of very great value to all of us, and particularly to the younger and less experienced teachers of the county. It will be for us all to throw ourselves heartily into the work of the association, so that it may be instilled with life and vigor, and that we may all derive as much benefit as possible from our connection with it.

I am sure you will bear with me if at this early stage in my address I remind you of the greatness of the responsibility which rests upon you. As the teachers of our common schools you are working at the foundation, and the character of your work will determine to an almost inconceivable extent all subsequent work. Such soil as you have to work upon cannot be surpassed; such preparation for the harvest of usefulness and joy which every Christian in the land can produce, or for that desolation which the perverted use of all that is highest and noblest in a man can alone cause, few have more to do with than the teachers of our elementary schools. Failures in the early work, says the thoughtful and eloquent superintendent of the Boston public schools, are apt to be followed if, not actually repeated, in the subsequent work. The primary school trains pupils not merely for its own studies, but for those to come after. It has an almost awful grasp upon the future. Days, months, and years after its children have climbed above it, it is still reaching them, still lifting them or dragging them back according to its training; what it has taught them to seek, they continue shunning. The lessons they have learnt, the truth they have loved, the honor they have won, are controlling forces as they grow older. Or it may be the reverse. And then the weaknesses and errors of after life are explained by the unlearned lesson, the unloved truth, the unreachd honor of earlier years. Absolutely untrained your pupils never are, because home influence, has been exercising its subtle power long before they come to you; but most of them are so young and plastic that home influence whether good or bad, can be greatly modified in the school. The teacher is his pupil's model whom he must copy, whose influence he cannot help recognizing. You have it in your power to impress your character upon the children under you—aye, it will be impressed whether you desire it or not. Such being the case, the standard which those who undertake to instruct the young should set up for themselves ought to be a high one indeed.

I have always thought it a defect in our system that hitherto we

have seemed unable to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion about applying any religious or moral test to our teachers to ascertain their fitness in these respects for the discharge of their important duties, and that a certificate of moral character should be taken to cover everything except the ground covered by the ordinary examination. It is surely a matter for grave consideration that the Bible, which contains the ground of a man's faith and hope and love, and exhibits so many striking illustrations of the power and effect of good and evil on the human heart, should by tacit understanding be avoided in our examination. We require that our schools should be opened and closed with the reading of Scripture and prayer, but we have no means of ascertaining the amount of religious knowledge, if any, which our teachers themselves possess. As long as this is the case, we must not be surprised if, instead of carefully selecting a few verses and so reading them as to make the opening and closing of the school the brightest moments of the day, a teacher is sometimes found reading a portion of Scripture in such a way as to convey the idea that he thinks very little and knows less about it; and that, as a consequence, reverence for the Bible, which ought to be formed in a child almost without its knowledge, should give place to indifference and it may be to repugnance.

" Oh say not, dream not heavenly notes,
In childish ears are vain,
That the young mind at random floats
And cannot reach the strain.

" Dim or unheard the words may fall,
And yet the heaven-taught mind
May learn the sacred air and all
The harmony unwind "

Next, I would have you remember that our schools are places of introduction to the greater world of thought and act in which we live. Thirty or forty years hence the destinies of the Province will be in the hands of those who are children now. Many of us will be in our graves, and those who are now at school will be thundering in the Legislature, teaching from the pulpit or through the press or in the school, and filling all the various callings which exist in a thriving community such as this. The custom of cramming with mere book learning, the going through a given part of any given subject without any attempt to assimilate the knowledge therein contained, is the utmost folly. You are not pouring liquor into a jar through a funnel, or packing sardines in a box, but training those who will shortly be men and women for the active duties of life. The child is not better nor wiser or having become acquainted with a quantity of surface learning or bare accomplishments. The mind must be expanded, the attention arrested, and, above everything else, a capacity for receiving and assimilating knowledge must be engendered. With the number of subjects which modern ideas require to be found on the programme of studies for our public schools there is much danger of mere surface knowledge. It is a well-known fact that children who have for years attended school are often sadly nonplussed when they are brought face to face with duties which involve a practical test of what are supposed to be the most familiar branches of a common school education. The training which fails to fit the boy or girl for the stern realities of life is to a large extent a failure. Life is too short, time is too precious, for any part of it to be spent uselessly. We must not have to sow when we ought to be reaping the harvest, nor should we have to learn how to do this or that, when not to do it almost unconsciously and from habit is to fail. It is a question if we are not requiring too much from both teachers and scholars, and if we may not yet have to go back and give more attention to first principles, leaving the details of knowledge to take care of themselves. Some books, says Bacon, in his essay on studies, are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few