

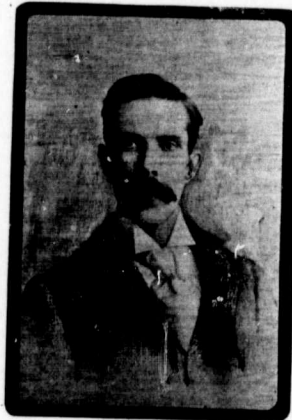


THE NEW PRINCIPAL OF THE NORMAL SCHOOL.

WORACE has described in one brief phrase the admirable man, *in se ipso totus, teres atque rotundus*.

The editor of the *BLUENOSE* allows me a few hundred words to sketch another. And yet when I have reached my limit, I shall still feel that I have not described David Matthew Soloan more adequately or accurately than I would have done by simply borrowing the words of the old Roman poet: "complete in himself, polished and without ragged edges." Let me say at the outset I make no attempt at biography. I do not know the date of Mr. Soloan's birth—he must be about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age; I know nothing of his parentage, though from certain marked qualities I am satisfied there is at least a strain of the rich Celtic blood in him; whether he went to a little red schoolhouse in early life has not been revealed to me; and imagine, if one can, a biography on orthodox lines without such details. To point out those chief characteristics of mind and conduct that have raised Mr. Soloan, while so youthful, to the splendid position he now occupies at the head of the teaching profession in this Province, should be, if I understand the *BLUENOSE*'s object, my sole duty. To each one who knows him intimately, Mr. Soloan will no doubt appeal differently. I asked a friend yesterday what he thought was the secret of Soloan's success. "Soloan succeeded," he replied, "because he always saw a little farther than anyone else." Apart from the great ability which it is apparent he must have, it seems to me the striking qualities or features of Mr. Soloan's character are his industry, his independence and above all, his many-sidedness. He is never idle. *Dulce est dissipere in loco*—so no one realizes better than he. Any who have been present at the rather Bohemian gatherings, which at least once a week used to fill his rooms, know that Soloan was the life and soul of the party, but his pleasure never interfered or was allowed to

interfere with his work—it was merely the spice that kept the appetite for work from cloying. Grant, as every one must, great ability, would even greater ability without patient hard work have achieved at thirty-three what Soloan has done? The fingers of one hand will not suffice to count the languages he writes and speaks as fluently as his mother tongue. Could ability alone have enabled him to do that? And then as to his independence—the time may come when he will take something for granted, but that time is not yet. Not



MR. DAVID SOLOAN.

only is he "not such a gosling as to obey instinct," as Shakespeare would put it—he will not yield to authority unless that authority has sufficient reason behind it. His mind is of that questioning kind that is never satisfied—is uneasy, indeed, unless *for itself* it has reached conclusions. Macaulay saw in the propositions of Euclid only subjects for debate—similarly, in many questions of politics and morals that we of ordinary minds regard as axiomatic and are disposed to grow dogmatic over, Soloan finds ample room for doubt and dis-

ussion. Independence in many is to often linked with intolerance, but it is not so with Soloan. He carries the open mind and extends in the fullest degree to others the privilege he asks for himself. But, as I have said, of all his qualities, that which most impressed me was his many-sidedness. It would be silly to say that, like the ancient philosopher, he took all knowledge for his province. But there is absolutely no department of knowledge in which he is not interesting and in which as opportunity offers he is not only willing but anxious to learn. I do not mean that he is merely versatile—he is that of course,—I mean that he is interested in everything human and desirous of knowing all he can of every matter with which men concern themselves. He is a musician of a high order—a keen discriminating judge of good pictures—a clever writer of short stories—a devoted student of English literature—a distinguished linguist—an excellent mathematician; but he is in addition fond of all kinds of sport; he realizes his obligation as a citizen and is no mere observer in national or civic politics; he has read widely upon questions of education and social economy. The courses he followed when studying at Berlin University are alike proof of his versatility and desire for knowledge along every line. He took regularly the work of the old Norse and one of the Germanic seminaries; one course each in French, Phonetics, Anglo-Saxon, Pedagogics and University Studies. Besides, he attended regularly the lectures on the music of the Nineteenth Century, those on the music of the Middle Ages, those in Political Economy, and those of the celebrated Harnach and Weiss in Theology. Less regularly, but as occasion permitted him, he listened to the lectures in Law while at the same time he was making a close study of the German school system. This attitude of mind, this love of knowing not only what is to be found in books or taught in the schools, but of everything in which one's fellowmen have an interest, has a reflex influence—it keeps him who has it intensely human, and prevents degeneration into that student type we all know, and which George Elliot has so capably portrayed in *Casaubon*. It is evident from what I have said that for one of his years Mr. Soloan has acquired a vast fund of knowledge. Let no one, however, for a moment suppose that it is ill digested and not assimilated. On the contrary, it is well ordered and arranged, ready for instant and accurate use.—G. P.