

## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

**Boston Schools—Popularity of the Kindergarten—The Status of Teachers—Manual Training.**

BOSTON, Nov. 19th, 1898.

Readers of the REVIEW may be interested in hearing something of Boston schools. Of the nearly 2,000 teachers employed within the limits of that city—more than in the whole province of New Brunswick—scarcely more than twelve per cent. are males. As might be expected, the seven hundred teachers employed in the kindergarten and primary schools are all females, but one learns with some curiosity that even in the high schools there is an excess of female teachers. Many believe that this preponderance of female teachers is too great.

Boston requires each year five new school buildings, containing on an average over fifteen departments each, to accommodate the three thousand and more additional pupils who demand entrance to the schools. This means an increase of more than three quarters of a million dollars each year for school purposes on this account alone.

The city has 4,000 children in public kindergartens, out of a population of 7,000 of kindergarten age. This is an increase of 1,500 in the past four years, and speaks volumes for the importance of such training in the eyes of the people.

To look after its educational interests Boston has an elective school board of twenty-three, a superintendent, and six supervisors. The appointment of teachers is vested in the superintendent, subject to the approval of the board, or school committee, as it is called. How far the influence of the board is exerted to secure the appointment of its favorites is known only to the initiated; but it is evident that this influence is less here than in many places. This is a wise and liberal policy, the value of which in educational results can scarcely be estimated. Dr. E. P. Seaver, the superintendent, is a man of sound judgment and wide experience. Acting with a free hand, with the advice of his supervisors and principals, and choosing the best available teachers, there can be no doubt that this is a distinct gain for education.

All candidates for position have to pass the supervisors' examination. A regulation has also been recently made by which a teacher, after appointment, has to pass a period of probation of two years. If the teacher during this period of probation gives satisfactory proof of ability to teach, she is placed on the permanent staff. This is another important step in advance. The ability to pass a successful examination does not

always, as everyone will admit, ensure competent teachers. This period of probation is expected to prove the safeguard against the admission of those who have no gift for teaching, and who do not show any special fitness from the experience gained while on trial. There is a large proportion, nearly one-fourth of the teachers of Boston, whose work is classed as "inferior." Many of these have devoted their lives to teaching, and would be fit subjects for pensions, if Boston pensioned her teachers, which she does not. A practical suggestion has been put forward to retire these teachers on reduced pay for such efficient services as they may be still able to render. It is estimated that this plan would impose but little additional burden on the taxpayer, if these teachers were replaced by younger ones with minimum salaries.

It is instructive to notice the attention that is given to manual training in the Boston schools. While it is perhaps not carried on to the extent that it is in other large cities of the United States, certainly not to the extent that it is in the schools of Germany, France and England, it is producing the most satisfactory educational results. The system is no longer on trial. It is an accomplished fact. From the kindergarten to the high school the education of the hand, and through it the mind, is kept steadily in view. Manual training is regularly begun and carried on in the grammar schools, where all pupils receive a certain amount of manual training—wood-working for the boys, and sewing and cookery for the girls. It was a surprise to me to find some of the best taught classes in wood-working under the instruction of women. No instance of men giving instruction in cookery and sewing was observed. There are special instructors in all these departments where hand work is taught. This of course adds to the cost for such instruction. The public school teacher in the near future will probably be given the option of either giving instruction in manual training or paying for the same out of his own salary. This suggests that manual training will form an important part of the training of teachers. And why not? No woman would care to acknowledge that she could not prepare herself to teach sewing, cookery, and even wood-working, scientifically, especially if the added cost for such education meant an increase of salary. And men teachers would make their services of more value if to their qualifications for general teaching they added at least one of the specialties named above.

Instruction in manual training may end at the entrance to the high school, which has three divisions: the Latin high school, where preparation especially for