

views or personal interests to interpose barriers to the healthy development and free expansion of the High any more than the Public School, department of our educational system.

THE EDUCATIONAL ANACHRONISM OF 1807.

The early promoters of education in this Province—though it was with a laudable zeal they acted—perpetrated a memorable anachronism, the effects of which, on the character and popularity of our Grammar Schools, it has taken years to moderate and in part to remove. Even now we suffer from the untoward bias which that educational mistake gave to our High Schools as “Class Schools,” in after years.

In 1807, or nine years before a single public elementary school of any kind (except some small scattered private schools) existed in the country as a feeder to a higher class of schools, the Legislature was induced to authorize the establishment of “District” Grammar Schools in different parts of the Province. These schools under the circumstances of their establishment, necessarily partook somewhat of the character of class schools (as we have indicated); and, for that reason, having no hold on public sympathy or support, they were never popular, except in a few individual cases. They continued to exist without much change or improvement in their condition for years; nor were there any efforts made to popularize them until 1853. In that year legislation took place, by which their character was somewhat improved, their condition elevated, and they themselves were incorporated into our educational system. Owing, however, to their continued unpopularity they were not well sustained, and the county councils declined, except in a few cases, to support them. Various plans were from time to time adopted by their friends to keep them in funds, but they maintained a bare existence, and struggled on for years in poverty and consequent inefficiency.

CHARACTER OF THE EFFORTS MADE TO SUSTAIN THE HIGH SCHOOLS.

One fatal cause, which has operated of late years to paralyse the healthful growth and natural development of the High Schools, has been the anxiety, chiefly on the part of the friends of the weaker ones, to force into them the greatest number of pupils, so as individually to absorb the largest amount of the Legislative grant. The friends of the High Schools generally (with some honourable exceptions) quietly laboured with increased earnestness in this direction, in the hope that their neighbours would not take the alarm and outstrip them, and that a larger grant would be the reward of their increased exertions. But in this they were disappointed. The vigilance of the rival schools for an increased grant was also aroused; and the numbers of ill-prepared pupils which were crowded into these rival schools also were found to have so far exceeded what was anticipated, that the enlarged Parliamentary grant, (when apportioned on the basis of the average attendance at each school), was actually found in individual cases, even with their increased attendance, to be less than what the school had received under the old system of apportionment which had been so strongly denounced. Much chagrin was felt at the result, and much unjust odium fell upon the Education Department, on the ground, as was stated, that the grant was not fairly and equitably divided by it. But for this reproach there was not a shadow of reason. In the scramble for the grant, the less unscrupulous were generally the winners, and the Department was powerless to prevent the unseemly strife, although it was held responsible for the alleged losses to individual schools.*

OTHER STEPS TAKEN TO INCREASE THE GRANTS TO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS.

In carrying out this suicidal policy for increasing the funds of individual schools, the first step taken was to attack the classical character and standard of the High Schools; the next was to assail as a grievance the policy of the exclusion of girls from these schools. Both points were at length conceded.

The main purpose however for which these attacks were made having signally failed, others followed with more or less success; but the final step taken was to object to the supervision of the High School Inspectors over the admission of pupils to the schools.

This official supervision was urged to be an unjust interference with the schools themselves; and it was even held that it cast a slur upon the character and impartiality of the local examiners! At length even this necessary and wholesome restraint was removed. No one pretends to say that the character or standard of these schools has been improved by these successive assaults on the system—assaults made chiefly with a view to better the financial condition of the schools—or that the schools themselves, as “higher” educational institutions, have benefited by these downward changes. Combined (as these changes unfortunately have been) they have almost indefinitely postponed the reasonable chances for improvement in the schools for some time to come. The opinion of our best High School masters and educators, so far as we have heard them, unite in deprecating in the strongest terms the destructive character and demoralizing influences of these recent changes and levelling “ameliorations.”

OBJECTIONS TO THE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMME.

Again, objection has been made, and is still strongly urged to the programme itself, and to the necessity of employing a sufficient number of masters in the High Schools to carry out that programme.

To these objections we propose to reply separately.

First, as to the programme itself. This has been objected to as quite too “high” and exclusive in its character.

Those who urge these objections forget two things:

First, that High Schools are not, and cannot, under the statute, be made elementary schools, any more than can Colleges and Universities be legitimately made High Schools; and secondly, that it is the Legislature, and not the Council of Public Instruction, which has prescribed what subjects shall be exclusively taught in our High Schools,—that the programme is not an arbitrary dictation of subjects on the part of that Council, but is simply the mere arrangement, in a convenient and intelligible form, of the subjects which the Legislature itself has decided to be the essential subjects of study in High Schools. The Legislature has declared that in each High School there shall be taught “*all of the higher branches of a good English and commercial education.*” As an evidence of the flexibility of the High School law, the Legislature has further provided most liberally that some of these schools may be classical, and some of them English High Schools. No provision has, however, been made by the Legislature, nor authorized by the regulations for giving instruction in the elementary branches, either in “preparatory,” or other unauthorized classes in the High Schools. The Legislature has already made such ample provision in our Public Schools for teaching these subjects, that to teach them in the High Schools would be an interference with the province of the Public Schools. It has, therefore, wisely restricted the teaching in the High Schools to “*all the higher branches of a good English and Commercial Education,*” etc. The Council of Public Instruction, if it has erred at all, has done so in the direction rather of lowering than of maintaining the proper standard of High School instruction which the Legislature has set up. Thus for instance the Legislature has declared that in the High Schools shall be taught “*all the higher branches of an English and Commercial Education,*” &c. And yet the Council has fixed the standard of admission to High Schools quite below these “higher branches;” for it has permitted pupils to enter High Schools from a point midway between the 3rd and 4th (out of the six) classes which are prescribed for the Public Schools. Formerly pupils were only admitted to the High Schools after they had completed the public school programme, now they enter after they have only little more than half completed that programme. We have, therefore, the singular fact presented to us, that both Public and

* For List of Apportionments to High Schools in 1872, see page 29.