

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE NORMAL SCHOOL IN THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

From an Address by S. S. RANDALL, Esquire, Deputy Superintendent of Common Schools, to the Students of the Normal School, at the close of the Summer Session, ending the 27th September, 1849.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Normal School,—The expiration of the term of five years for which this Institution was originally chartered, and the auspicious circumstances under which we have now assembled, in this new and beautiful structure, erected by the enlightened liberality of the State, for the education and preparation of Teachers, affords a proper opportunity for a brief review of the past history and a glance at the future prospects of the Institution. Having participated to some extent in the movement which originated this policy; and having been familiar with the early history of the school, the reminiscences thus called up, though not unmingled with painful ingredients are full of interest, and the labor imposed upon me, on the present occasion, is emphatically a "labor of love."

For several years prior to 1844, the attention of the friends of Common School education in this State had been strongly directed to the inadequacy of the existing agencies for the preparation of duly qualified teachers for our elementary institutions of learning. Liberal endowments had, from time to time, during a long series of years, been bestowed upon the Academies in different sections of the State with a view to the attainment of this object; but the practical inability of these institutions to supply the demand thus made upon them with all the resources at their command, soon became obvious and undeniable. The establishment of Normal Schools for this special and exclusive purpose in various portions of Europe, where popular education was most flourishing, and in the adjoining State of Massachusetts, long and honourably distinguished for her superior public and private schools—and the manifest tendency of these institutions to elevate and improve the qualifications and character of teachers, had begun to attract the regard of many of our most distinguished statesmen.

On a winter's afternoon, early in the year 1844, in a retired apartment of one of the public buildings in this city, might have been seen, in earnest and prolonged consultation, several eminent individuals whose names and services in the cause of education are now universally acknowledged. The elder of them was a man of striking and venerable appearance—of commanding intellect and benignant mien. By his side sat one in the prime and vigor of manhood, whose mental faculties had long been disciplined in the school of virtuous activity, and in every lineament of whose countenance appeared that resolute determination and moral power, which seldom fails to exert a wide influence upon the opinions and actions of men. The third in the group was a young man of slight frame and pale thoughtful visage; upon whose delicate and slender form premature debility had palpably set its seal: yet whose opinions seemed to be listened to by his associates, with the utmost deference and regard. The remaining figure was that of a well known scholar and divine, whose potent and beneficial influence had long been felt in every department of the cause of popular education and whose energy, activity and zeal had already accomplished many salutary and much needed reforms in our system of public instruction.

The subject of their consultation was the expediency and practicability of incorporating upon the Common School system of this State an efficient instrumentality for the education of teachers. The utility of such a measure, and its importance to the present and prospective interests of education, admitted, in the minds of these distinguished men, of no doubt. The sole question was whether the public mind was sufficiently prepared for its reception and adoption: whether an innovation so great and striking, and involving as it necessarily must, a heavy and continued expenditure of the public money, might not be strenuously and successfully resisted: and whether a premature and unsuccessful attempt then to carry into execution a measure of such vital importance, might not be attended with a disastrous influence upon the future prospects of the cause of education. These considerations after being duly weighed, were unanimously set aside by the intrepid spirits then in council; and it was determined that, backed by the strong and decided

recommendation of the head of the Common School Department, immediate measures should be forthwith adopted for the establishment of a STATE NORMAL SCHOOL. The men who thus gave the first decided impetus to the great enterprise, whose gratifying results are now before us, were SAMUEL YOUNG, CALVIN T. HULBURD, FRANCIS DWIGHT, and ALONZO POTTER.

Mr. Hulburd, the able and enlightened Chairman of the Committee on Colleges, Academies and Common Schools of the Assembly, visited the Normal Schools of Massachusetts, and after a thorough examination of their merits and practical operations, submitted an elaborate and eloquent report to the House, in favour of the immediate adoption of this principle in our system of public instruction. The bill introduced by him, and sustained in all its stages by his powerful influence and indefatigable exertions, and the co-operation of the most zealous friends of education throughout the State, became a law, and appropriated the sum of \$10,000 annually for five successive years, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a State Normal School in this city. The general control of the Institution was committed to the Regents of the University, by whom an Executive Committee, consisting of five persons, one of whom was to be the Superintendent of Common Schools, was to be appointed, upon whom the direct management, discipline and course of instruction should devolve.

In pursuance of this provision, the Board of Regents, in June, 1844, appointed a Committee comprising the Hon. SAMUEL YOUNG, then Superintendent of Common Schools, the Rev. ALONZO POTTER, Rev. WM. H. CAMPBELL, Hon. GIBBON HAWLEY, and FRANCIS DWIGHT, Esq. This committee forthwith entered upon the execution of their responsible duties; procured on very liberal and favorable terms from the City of Albany the lease for five years of the spacious building in State-street recently occupied by the Institution; prescribed the necessary rules and regulations for the instruction, government and discipline of the school, the course of study to be pursued, the appointment and selection of the pupils, &c., and procured the services of the late lamented and distinguished Principal, then of Newport, Massachusetts, together with his colleague, the present Principal, as teachers. On the 18th day of December, 1844, the school was opened in the presence of a large concourse of citizens and strangers, by an eloquent address from Col. YOUNG, and by other appropriate and suitable exercises. Twenty-nine pupils, 13 males and 16 females, representing fourteen counties only, of both sexes were in attendance, who after listening to a brief but clear and explicit declaration from Mr. PAGE, of his objects, views and wishes in the management and direction of the high duties devolved upon him, entered at once upon the course of studies prescribed for the school. Before the close of the first term on the 11th of March, 1845, the number of pupils had increased to 98, comprising about an equal number of each sex, and representing forty of the fifty-nine counties of the State. During this term the musical department of the school was placed under the charge of Prof. LESLEY, of this city, and instruction in drawing was imparted by Prof. J. B. HOWARD, of Renaselaer.

On the commencement of the second term, on the 9th of April, 1845, 170 pupils were in attendance, comprising a nearly equal proportion of males and females, and representing every county in the State, with a single exception. Of these pupils about nine-tenths had been previously engaged in teaching during a longer or shorter period. The term closed on the 28th of August, with a public examination and other suitable exercises, and thirty-four of the students received the certificate of the Executive Committee and Board of Instruction, as in their judgment well qualified in all essential respects, to teach any of the Common Schools of the State.

On the 15th of October succeeding, the school re-opened with 180 pupils, which was increased during the progress of the term to 198 from every county, in the State but one. The death of Mr. DWIGHT, which took place on the 15th of December, and the transfer of the Rev. Dr. POTTER to the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, created vacancies in the Executive Committee, which were supplied by the appointment of the Hon. HARMANUS BEEBOKER, and the Hon. SAMUEL YOUNG, the latter gentleman having been succeeded in the office of Superintendent of Common Schools by the Hon. N. S. BENTON of Herkimer. The sudden death of Mr. Dwight who had taken a deep interest in the prosperity and success of the Institution, and had given to its minutest details the benefits