

# JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

## OUR ACADEMIES.

WE would like to call the attention of the friends of education to the condition and prospects of those higher class schools of this Province which we designate academies. It appears to us that they really demand that attention. The columns of this journal have, for the most part, been occupied with matter, the object of which, was to advance the interest of common school education in every legitimate way. The collegiate system of the country has not indeed been lost sight of; and, in a recent number we endeavored to point out what we thought were very necessary reforms in that system.

There is, however, an intermediate class of educational institutions, scarcely less important in the interests of the general public than our common schools are, and perhaps of more importance than our colleges. These are the "Academies." We presume our readers all know that the legislature of Nova Scotia makes a special annual provision of \$600, for each county, for the support of an academy in the county town, or in some central locality, wherein the classics—at least, the elementary classics—and the higher branches of mathematics, and, where desired and when possible, some of the modern languages, should be taught in addition to the more elementary branches of English education. This has been made the rule throughout the various counties of the Province; but there are exceptions. Those counties in which there are colleges have no such special provision made for county academies, it being considered that the institutions bearing the same title, or known as collegiate schools subordinate to those colleges, afforded an ample substitute for the county academy proper.

We feel assured that this system is not working well, and that it will require to be revised, or very much stimulated, before it will produce results altogether satisfactory. In the first place it is unfair to those counties in which there are colleges. Pupils for higher class instruction in those counties are excluded from all the benefits of the free school system, and are consequently at a great disadvantage compared with those of other counties in the Province. This is a real hardship. Hants and Kings Counties, for instance, so far as the more advanced branches of education are to be considered, are no better circumstanced than they were before the Free School System was introduced. In Hants and Kings, the college within whose shadow he may have been born, is inaccessible to the Common School pupil, without incurring the same expense in preparation that he would have had to incur twenty years since: not so with the aspirant for matriculation and college honors in Queens, Guysborough, or any other county in the Province,—with one exception. We cannot but think that the facts referred to are the result, not of any deliberate intention, but of an oversight, on the part of our legislators; and we trust that, at no distant day, the oversight will be rectified.

The one exception we have referred to is that of Halifax. It seems an anomalous state of affairs that Halifax, the political and commercial capital of the Province, which necessarily contributes so largely to the treasury from which our general education fund is drawn, and which, for many reasons, might be supposed to enjoy superior advantages to those of any other county, should yet be less favorably circumstanced than any other. Yet, unlike any other county, there is not, in all Halifax, any public institution whatever, intermediate between the college and the common school. If a young man in Halifax wishes to prepare for college, he finds himself under the necessity of placing himself under a private tutor, a class of men who scarcely

exist in this community; or of seeking admission into a private, classical school, a step which he may find it difficult to achieve; but either alternative will be found very expensive. This is a real hardship upon Halifax; for there is more need here for a high school just beneath the grade of a college, than any where else in Nova Scotia. In this city, probably equaling in population any other two counties in the Province, there is a very large number of young people who eagerly desire to study branches higher than are taught, or than can be taught in the common schools, but who do not think of going through the protracted collegiate course. No facilities have yet been provided for them. They are worse off than if they lived anywhere else in Nova Scotia. This is another defect in the academical branch of our educational system, which we earnestly hope will soon be rectified.

To return to the county academies proper—it may be remembered that in the last Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education, it was remarked, in effect, that as a general rule, these institutions were not, within themselves, performing their allotted work very satisfactorily. We have to reiterate that expression of opinion. The most of those institutions, whilst drawing their proportion of the academy grant, have sunk, or dropped to, or have always held, a position little superior to that of the Common School of the present day. Perhaps this is nobody's fault in particular. It may be due entirely to the force of circumstances. We are casting blame in no particular direction; but simply stating a fact. As these institutions are always located where the people are well able to maintain common schools of the best class, it is manifestly unfair to comparatively poor sections, where school-houses can be built and efficient schools maintained only through a great struggle on the part of the people, that this academy grant should be appropriated to practically reduce the common school tax in the particular sections where they happen to be located. Such, we fear, is, in too many instances, virtually the case.

In speaking thus of county academies, we must advert to two notable exceptions. We mean the special academies of Pictou and Yarmouth. Both are deserving of high commendations. In both, there is evinced an earnest disposition which appears to be attended with great success, to make these institutions in reality that which they purport to be; and also to keep steadily upon the path of progressive improvement. In both instances too, the schools are fortunate in being cordially sustained and encouraged by the people whose children profit by their teachings. We suspect indeed that this is the principal secret of their superior comparative efficiency.

It would be but natural to anticipate, from what we have said above, that we are disposed to suggest some remedy for this lethargy or misdirection, in one department of our educational system upon which we have been dwelling. It would be a pity to abolish our county academies—a pity, that is, if, within any reasonable time they can be stimulated into increased and satisfactory activity, and if the people for whose especial benefit they were founded, think, or can be induced to think, that they really want them. If such results are not to be hoped for, there are two courses with reference to them, one or the other, of which it would be just and politic to pursue. The money now voted to these inefficient county academies should be allowed to common schools in order to increase their general efficiency and elevate their tone. Or, since we cannot but think it of vast importance that we should keep up a class of educational institutions intermediate between the college and the common school, we believe it would be better, in the event of the county acad-