

and confusion, that ignorance was their normal condition, and any departure from that would increase their misery and discontent. Those notions have, happily, been exploded, and it is found that education is the best correction to the evils that used to afflict society and disturb the general peace. It goes hand in hand with religion and good order, and so convinced have our rulers become of its importance to the general weal, that not only free but compulsory education has become the law of the land. It is not to be wondered at, that half a century ago our school system—if we could be said to have had one—was defective, our situation and the circumstances in which we were placed were not favourable to the promotion of general education. The sparseness of the population and the extent of territory over which it was scattered increased the difficulty; but its importance was not overlooked, and in the early days of the Province grants of land were made for educational purposes. The first classical—indeed, the first school of any kind, was opened in Kingston, by Dr. Stuart, in 1785, and the first common school was taught by J. Clark, in Fredericksburgh, 1786. In 1807, an Act was passed to establish grammar schools in the various districts, with a grant of £100 to each. But it was not until 1816 that the Government took any steps towards establishing common schools. The Lieutenant-Governor, in his Speech from the Throne on opening the House, in January, 1830, said: 'The necessity of reforming the Royal Grammar School was evident from your Report at the close of the Session.

'The establishing a College at York, under the guidance of an able master, the object which we have in view will, I trust, be speedily attained.

'The delay that may take place in revising the charter of the University, or in framing one suitable to the Province and the intention of the endowment, must, in fact, under present cir-

cumstances, tend to the advancement of the institution; as its use depended on the actual state of education in the Province.

'Dispersed as the population is over an extensive territory, a general efficiency in the common schools cannot be expected, particularly whilst the salaries of the masters will not admit of their devoting their whole time to their profession.'

As far as my recollection goes, and I think I shall be found correct in saying, that the teachers were generally of a very inferior order, and rarely possessed more than a smattering of the rudiments of grammar and arithmetic. As the Governor points out, they were poorly paid, and 'boarded around' the neighbourhood. But if the scale of wages had been graduated by their qualifications, it is not improbable that they received all their services were worth. In those days most of the country youth who could manage to get to school in winter were content if they learned to read and write and to wade through figures as far as the rule of three. Of course there were exceptions in this case as also with the teachers, but generally this was the extent of the aspirations of the greater proportion of the rising generation then, and it was not necessary for the teacher to be profoundly learned to lead them as far as they wished to go. I knew an old farmer of considerable wealth who would not allow his boys to go to school, because, he said, if they learned to read and write they might forge notes. He evidently considered 'a little learning a dangerous thing,' and must have had a very low estimate of the moral tone of his offspring, if he had any conception of morality at all. However, the safeguard of ignorance which the old man succeeded in throwing around his family did not save them, for they all turned out badly.

The books in use were Murray's Grammar, Murray's English Reader, Walker's Dictionary, Goldsmith's and