

When this Association began its labours one of the first things it attacked was the method of granting certificates to teachers. There were then as many centres of examination for certificates as there were counties, and the County Boards had the power of granting all grades of certificates, from the lowest to the highest, with this restriction, that they were legal only in the county in which they were granted, while those granted by the Normal School were provincial in their character. It will be at once perceived that there could be no fixed standard for County Board certificates, so long as they varied with the character of the Board which granted them, and indeed one of the facts which used to be stated in argument against this system was, that while in some counties the standard for first class certificates was as high as that at the Normal School, in adjoining counties it was almost as low as that for third class Provincial certificates. As early as 1862 the crusade against this defective plan of certifying teachers began, and it continued year after year, with concentrated effort, until a Central Board of Examiners was at last appointed, and a plan of granting certificates, upon which the present one is based, was inaugurated. By this the two higher grades of certificates were made Provincial, and tenable during good behaviour, whether the recipients were trained at the Normal School or not, the only requisite, as a set-off to Normal School training, being experience in teaching.

This is not the only matter that was then taken up. It was a subject of complaint that the inspection of schools was doing very little to further educational progress. The inspectors, or local superintendents, as they were then called, were not, as a rule, men connected with education, but consisted of a motley company of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, etc.,

who in many cases used this position to eke out a scanty livelihood. It would be quite wrong to say that there were not a number of men among them who did excellent work. Indeed, the records of this Association, and the presence still amongst us of men who served the country as well when local superintendents, as they do now as inspectors, prove the contrary. Nevertheless, as a rule, the work of inspection was done in a perfunctory manner, and when the Ontario Teachers' Association began to call for a reform in the method of granting certificates, it felt it necessary to agitate for a reform in the inspectorate also; its main contention being that every inspector should be a practical teacher. This point was at last conceded, and reform both in the method of granting certificates and in the qualifications of inspectors were inaugurated at the same time. The result of requiring inspectors to be practical teachers is seen in the immense improvement of our schools to-day. Had the Association secured no other reforms than these two, it would be entitled to our gratitude and the gratitude of the country at large, for the improvement produced in the standing of the teacher in the one case, and the immense benefit conferred upon public school education in the other.

It may surprise some of our younger members to know that when the Ontario Teachers' Association was inaugurated, if we except the Normal School, there was no public provision for the education of girls beyond what the public schools afforded, and of course in the Normal School the training was of a special character. Girls had no legal standing in our Grammar Schools, as they were then called, nor, need I say, in our universities. As early as 1865 the Association took up the question of the higher education of girls; in 1867 it was