

The Earl of Dalhousie became its patron; liberal donations on the part of leading citizens supplemented by legislative aid soon sufficed for the erection of a suitable building for its accomodation. It was soon deemed advisable to depart from the English practice of confining the instruction entirely to elementary subjects. Accordingly the course of study was extended by the addition of such subjects as "Grammar, Geography, French and the higher branches of Arithmetic and Mathematics." In England the practice had been to confine the instruction to the children of the poor, but it was found necessary at Halifax—as afterwards at St. John, to depart from English precedent in this particular "as children of the first respectability whose parents were desirous of benefiting by the establishment frequently applied for admission."

The Madras school in its origin as well as in the character of the religious instruction imparted was always a distinctly Church of England institution; but the merits of the system were so superior to the primitive methods hitherto in vogue and the education afforded so inexpensive that a natural desire was speedily manifested by the people at large to share in the benefits irrespective of religious denomination. This led to some slight modification in the rule of church attendance whereby the children of Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc., were allowed to attend their own places of worship. The Roman Catholics, after acquiring the method, in some instances removed their children to schools set up under their own management.

However, all these modifications and extensions did not materially affect the principal object of the National system, namely, gratuitous education for the poorer classes.

Immediately after the establishment of the Central School at Halifax, Mr. West began the work of training school masters and mistresses in accordance with the new method.

The Madras school was so ably conducted by Mr. West, and by his successor (in 1820) Mr. Abel S. Gore of Sackville, N. B., as to excite a genuine "sensation" throughout the land. Even the staid and sober newspapers of the day grew quite enthusiastic upon the subject. Here is what the *St. John Courier* of January 17th, 1818 says:

"The Madras system is the result of an experiment made at Madras to render easy, pleasant, expeditious and economical the acquisition of the rudiments of education and to combine in harmonious union the progress and amusement of the scholar, the ease and satisfaction of the master, and the interest of the parent. * * * The school, how numerous soever, is taught solely by the pupils (under a single master) which has put an end to the race of dunces, superceded the necessity for

punishment, and given the same interest and delight to the school-room as to the play ground."

How curious is the swing of the pendulum in educational methods. The system of Bell and Lancaster after due trial is apparently found wanting and abandoned even by the Madras school itself. Yet in modern days the principles underlying the system are coming again to the fore. Bell's idea that the school is an organized community whose members have much to learn from each other and who should therefore be placed in helpful mutual relations, is now deemed not unworthy of serious consideration, and Lancaster's dictum "let every child have for every minute of his school time something to do and a motive for doing it" is accepted without demur. Kindergarten methods for small children, calisthenics and military drill for larger ones recall the exercises of the old Madras school.

Mr. West's training school at Halifax was well patronized. School masters and mistresses from various parts of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick eagerly sought instruction in the methods of Bell and Lancaster. But it is a remarkable fact that the first Madras schools of this province were not established in the principal towns, this honor was reserved for two comparatively obscure settlements in what is now the county of Kent.

Anthony R. Truro taught one of these schools at "Kitchibigwalk" (Kouchibouguac) early in 1817, the other was opened the same year at Buctouche. The year following Madras schools were taught in St. John by George Bragg, in Sackville by Abel S. Gore and at Miramichi by John Smith. Soon after we find them established in nearly all of the principal towns and settlements of the province.

The S. P. G. afforded material assistance in the extension of the National system by the grant of a sum of money "for the encouragement and support of school masters while receiving instruction from Mr. West in the National System of Education." The S. P. G. also from time to time voted considerable sums towards school masters' stipends. In the year 1827, for example, that society expended about \$1600 in this way in New Brunswick, which was divided among some twenty school masters each pursuing his calling under the supervision of the parish clergyman.*

* After 1833 the S. P. G. grants for primary education gradually decreased and ceased in New Brunswick in 1836 although they were continued in Nova Scotia till 1858.

Mr. Murray, the head of the famous London publishing house, holds that novels should not be admitted to public libraries until, by having lived five years, they have proved their permanent value.