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THE HISTORY OF NORMAL SCHOOLS.

As the question of Normal School Instruction is attracting some attention at present, we give the following sketch of the "History of Normal Schools" taken from a recent New Jersey Report on the subject. The Report was drawn up by the Principal of the New Jersey State Normal School and embodied in the annual Report of the Board of Trustees to the Legislature, for the year 1855.

The sketch may be more especially interesting to the Members of the Legislature and others who have so lately witnessed the Examination of the Students and Pupils of the Provincial Normal and Model Schools which was held during the present month. (See page 58.)—The Principal remarks :

Before proceeding to detail the progress of the institution committed to your care, it may not be improper, to sketch briefly the history of this important class of educational facilities, and to indicate a few of the fundamental ideas upon which their organization is based. The original signification of the word *Normal*, as applied to schools, was that of *Pattern* or *Model*. A Normal School was therefore a *Pattern* or *Model* School. It was an elementary institution, in which the best methods of instruction and discipline were practised, and to which the candidate for the office of teacher resorted, for the purpose of learning by observation, the most approved modes of conducting the education of youth. Of this class were the schools of Neander, established at Hefeld, Germany, as far back as the year 1570, as also those of the Abbé de Lasalle, at Rheims, France, in 1681. These establishments, with numerous others of a similar character, successively established, prior to the beginning of the eighteenth century, were not simply schools for the education of children, but were so conducted as

to test and exemplify principles and methods of instruction, which were perpetuated and disseminated by means of books in which they were embodied, or of pupils and disciples, who transplanted them to other places.

These schools served as a kind of a forerunner, to prepare the way for the more efficient and perfect institutions of the same designation, at a later day.

According to the present acceptation of the term *Normal School*, as used in many of the European countries, it denotes an establishment composed of young men and women who have passed through an elementary or even superior school, and who are preparing to be teachers by making additional attainments, and acquiring a knowledge of the human mind, and the principles of education as a science, and its methods as an art. The Normal School of the present day, includes also the *Model* or *Pattern* School of earlier times. It thus combines theory with practice, there being Model Schools, "Experimental Schools," or "Schools for Practice," as they are variously called, established in connection with them, to afford an opportunity for testing practically, the modes of instruction which they inculcate.

The first regularly organized Teacher's Seminary, or Normal School, as at present understood, was established at Halle, in a part of Hanover, about one hundred and fifty years ago. A similar institution was opened at Rheims, in France, in 1794, by ordinance of the National Assembly, to furnish Professors for Colleges and Higher Seminaries. But the first Normal School for the training of Elementary Teachers in France, was organized at Strasbourg in 1810. Now, each department of the Empire is obliged either alone, or in conjunction with other departments to support one Normal School for the education of its schoolmasters. In 1849, there were ninety-three of these schools in France, and ten thousand five hundred and forty-five of their graduates were actually employed in the Primary Schools of the Empire.

Says M. Guizot, in a report to the King, in 1838, on the state of Primary Education in the departments constituting the Academy of Strasbourg: "In all respects the superiority of the popular schools is striking, and the conviction of the people is as general, that this superiority is mainly due to the existence of the Normal School."

In a powerful speech before the Chamber of Deputies, in 1832, on the occasion of the introduction, by him, of a bill providing a great and comprehensive system of Elementary Education for France, this great statesman and profound philosopher remarks:

"All of you are aware that primary instruction depends altogether on the corresponding Normal Schools. The prosperity of these establishments, is the measure of its progress. The Imperial Government, which first pronounced with effect the words 'Normal Schools,' left us a legacy of one. The restoration added five or six. Those, of which some were in their infancy, we have greatly improved within the last two years, and have at the same time established thirty new ones, twenty of which are in full operation, forming in each department, a vast focus of light, scattering its rays in all directions among the people."

The bill introduced by M. Guizot, provided for two degrees of primary instruction, viz: Elementary and Superior; in speaking of which he remarks: "The first degree of instruction should be common to the country and the towns; it should be met with in the humblest borough, as well as in the largest city, wherever a human being is to be found within our land of France. By the teaching of Reading, Writing, and Accounts, it provides for the most essential wants of life; by that of the legal system of weights and measures, and of the French language, it implants, enlarges and spreads everywhere, the spirit and