

the study of grammar and arithmetic were curtailed? And could not text books be constructed that would exercise the pupils' minds in arithmetical calculation in more profitable and practically useful directions, especially in connection with mensuration and natural philosophy, than is done by the present ones?—ED. *Massachusetts Teacher.*

### Teachers' Annual Convention.

(From report of the *Montreal Witness.*)

The Fourth Annual Convention of Teachers, in connection with the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Lower Canada, was held in Montreal on Friday and Saturday, 18th and 19th October.

The attendance of teachers and friends of education was but moderate.

Principal Dawson, the President of the Association, occupied the Chair; and on the platform were the Venerable Dr. Leach; Professor Miles, D.C.L., Secretary of the Board of Education for the Province of Quebec; Mr. Scarlett, delegate from Ontario Provincial Association of Teachers; Professor Wilkie, Principal of the High School, Quebec; Professor Howe, High School, Montreal; Professor Hicks, Professor Robins; Mr. Hubbard, Inspector for the District of St. Francis; Professor Darey, Secretary; and Mr. A. C. Williamson, Secretary of the Local Association.

Proceedings were opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Leach.

After some discussion relative to the establishment of a teachers' journal and the possibility of forming one teachers' association for the whole Dominion of Canada, the Chairman introduced to the notice of the meeting a paper by Prof. Roux on what might be called civic education, or the teaching of their rights and duties to scholars, in view of their position as future citizens which elicited some discussion.

Dr. Leach held that a system of school education should include some simple instruction in the moral duties, and also, to some extent, in jurisprudence. He had no doubt that these branches would yet be made parts of a common-school curriculum.

Prof. Robins complained of the want of a text-book for such teaching.

Prof. Hicks considered that the subjects already taught were so numerous that time could not be found for these subjects. He asked, were they not now taught indirectly in connection with history.

Prof. Howe deemed that, in common schools, arithmetic and writing were of more importance than moral philosophy and jurisprudence. He would leave these latter to the college, and the more advanced institutions meant for students of a riper age.

Prof. Robins remarked that now-a-days the newspapers were great instructors, both in morals and jurisprudence.

Dr. Wilkie coincided in the general idea of giving instruction in these, and thought it was desirable to have a sort of catechism thereon prepared, even for the use of teachers themselves; such catechism to treat not only of government in general, but to teach them something of the changes in the spirit and form of the Government of Canada, from its arbitrary manifestation in the days of Dalhousie and Craig to the present time, when we enjoyed a responsible Government, and a freedom of which all might be proud.

Prof. Hicks wished to know whether it was proposed to teach political economy.

Prof. Howe said this was a proposition to add another subject to those taught in the school, at the very moment when there was a cry for the shortening of the school-hours.

Mr. Scarlett thought, if the people were indoctrinated at school with the first principles that lie at the root of government, there would be less foolish wrangling and ill-feeling at elections. He thought that such a catechism or book as had been spoken of would be a gain to the country. He thought, also, that an inculcation of the principles of morality should lie at the root of all education.

Prof. Howe did not think the school was exactly the place for a special teaching of morals.

Mr. Featherstone said they did already teach morals there; but to introduce anything like moral philosophy into the small schools could not be done.

The President then reviewed what had fallen from the speakers on the question. He himself thought that such a teaching in schools respecting the constitution both of Britain and Canada was feasible with the more advanced classes, and in the High School. It was desirable that the minds of the scholars should be directed to the subject of morals, also of government. He would like to see a

manual prepared for this purpose, especially if it were written in good English, which was not the case with all their text-books.

The discussion of this topic was then declared to be closed.

Prof. Hicks introduced the next question as to the length of school-hours. It was, he said, engaging attention in England, where there was a tendency to shorten the daily hours of school from six to three or four. He objected to this. They could not teach all their present subjects and yet shorten the hours. Indeed, if teaching were properly conducted, children would like to be in school better than out of it. In large cities and towns, the chances were that when the school was thus early over, the children would be in the streets, learning only evil.

Prof. Howe held with Quintilian, that children could receive instruction only at a certain rate. The mind, as Quintilian had long ago observed, was like a narrow-necked bottle,—if it was attempted to be filled too fast, the liquid only ran over and was wasted. He (Prof. Howe) did not think five hours a day too much for boys of fifteen or so.

Mr. Hubbard thought the shortening of the hours would be detrimental in country schools. Education was not altogether pouring into the mind. It was also a straining up of its powers.

The President reconciled the somewhat conflicting views of the last two speakers.

Dr. Leach gave the result of some experiments, showing how long the earnest attention of a child might be secured. It was about ten minutes.

Prof. Howe—No teacher ought to expect strained attention from a child.

Mr. Hubbard showed that six hours' tolerably close attention might be obtained in one day, if the subject were properly varied.

Prof. Robins contended that, in considering the shortening of hours, they must look to the different ages of the children, and must make a corresponding difference in the time of their remaining in school. He had taught the alphabet at the rate of only one letter a day, and found the whole was thereby acquired with greater certainty and rapidly by the child; and arithmetic would be taught with greater rapidity if the quantity were graduated to the amount of attention that would be given. He had also found, when teaching a common school, that he could give a good deal of instruction in geography and in morals, in five minutes, without the aid of any text-book. He had sometimes spent a forenoon thus, but oftener half an hour or a quarter; and these short lessons to which he had referred, had an incidental advantage, in that they taught the child to pay attention. The advocates of shorter hours in school did not want to curtail the time of learning to five hours, for it must be remembered that much solitary study was done at home. The lessons themselves ought to be short. He did not think that what the scholar got in school was really the most important part of what he learned. The time and the attention of the scholars were too much frittered away in *minutiae*, instead of being engaged in learning to take broad, general views.

Mr. Scarlett had known the best effect arise from the plan of proportioning the school-hours in accordance with the ages of the scholars, even in the same school.

The discussion lapsed into a desultory conversation, in which it seemed to be generally agreed that the amount of attention that could be secured from pupils ought to govern the length of lessons.

Prof. Howe suggested that, instead of shortening the hours, half-holidays should be given more frequently.

The President reviewed what had been advanced during the discussion. All the points of school reform which had been touched upon were being taken up in England and in the States, where society were beginning to wake up to the idea, that instruction in things which belonged to the business of life was not given in schools. The consideration of this matter was therefore forced upon teachers; and if they would say, we will not budge, we have got all that is necessary for teaching, both in subject and form,—them in ten years, they would all be swept away.

Prof. Robins then delivered a dissertation on the teaching of elementary arithmetic. It was philosophical, and showed a searching attention; not content to take things upon trust, or to receive illustration as a substitute for proof. Prof. Wilkie coincided with Prof. Robins; and the same ideas had also struck him as to the unsatisfactory nature of the text-books in treating of rudimentary arithmetic.

Mr. Williamson was afraid that Prof. Robins' plan, of going into the first principles of these things connected with the science of calculation, would be too abstract for children.

Mr. Scarlett thought children were hurried through the rules of arithmetic, and that it was not taught with sufficient profoundness.

The President adverted to the improvements in teaching it since the time when he was a scholar. Calculation was naturally pleasant