

❁ Special Papers. ❁

LOOKING FORWARD.

SYNOPSIS OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PRINCIPAL KIRKLAND AT THE OPENING OF THE TORONTO NORMAL SCHOOL SESSION, JAN., 1891.

From Daily Globe.

HON. G. W. ROSS, the Minister of Education, occupied the chair. There were present 120 students, the full number that can be accommodated at the Toronto Normal School, and of these fully 75 per cent. were young ladies, the proportion being about the average of some years past.

The principal, after welcoming the students to the Normal School, observed that although their professional studies should mainly occupy their time and attention, still it should be their aim to avail themselves of the various means of culture afforded by a large city.

Comparing the progress of education in the past, he pointed out how the old schoolmaster, who was such because he had failed in everything else he had tried, had given place to the well-trained and cultured teacher of the present day, and he asked whether the next fifty years will show as great progress as has been shown during the last half century in our Public Schools.

TEACHING JUNIOR PUPILS.

He said that many things which obtained in the schools of the present day would not be found in schools of the coming century; that the youngest, the cheapest and often the poorest teachers would not be employed to teach the youngest children. The most accomplished and best paid teachers will be employed to teach junior pupils, for if bad teaching is mischievous in the higher classes it is ruinous in the lower. The mental powers are as sensitive to neglect as the physical. If the dormant faculties are not aroused at the proper time the neglect cannot be atoned for afterwards. In the coming century, more attention will be given to the cultivation of the child's faculties and less to the mere acquisition of knowledge; and these faculties will be exercised on objects of nature—more on things, less on words. The child is a born naturalist. In the schools of the future the teacher will avail himself of this tendency, carefully direct it and make it the chief means of the child's early education. Reading and arithmetic will be taught incidentally, as is now done in Col. Parker's Normal School in Chicago. History will be taught on the principle of "from the known to the unknown." The present age is the known, therefore history will be taught by beginning with the present and going backwards from effect to cause. The elements of the physical and natural sciences will then be taught in all the Public Schools; for the faculties used in obtaining a knowledge of these subjects show themselves at a very early period, and it is the proper time to cultivate a faculty just when it shows itself. The lecturer quoted Faraday as saying that it is difficult to make adult minds comprehend simple explanations, which if addressed to children are intelligible, interesting and profitable.

ENGLISH LITERATURE.

English literature will not be taught by means of annotated editions of English classics. Pupils will be led to form their own opinions from reading and studying the author himself, and not receive them ready-made at the back of the book. The teacher will make the pupils feel that he attaches more value to an unfledged, artless criticism of the pupil's own, than to a *rechauffe*, however well served up, of the lordly generalizations of even a Matthew Arnold.

EXAMINATIONS.

Although many hard things have been said against them lately, still they are likely to be vigorous and flourishing even when Macaulay's New Zealander will take his stand on a broken arch of London bridge and sketch the ruins of St. Paul's. When well conducted they are an important process of teaching as well as of testing. They are a stimulus to study. They encourage thoroughness. They afford one of the best means of reviewing the work passed over in a given term. They reveal to pupils their own weaknesses. They call for concentration of mind and sustained mental effort. They reveal to the teacher the result of his own teaching, the failure or success of his methods, and thus afford an opportunity of mending where wrong. They are, therefore, too valuable to be dispensed with. But they will be used sparingly. They will be educative, not competitive.

SCHOOL GOVERNMENT.

in the coming century will not be as recommended by Rousseau, "letting pupils have their own way." The old-fashioned dominie is well known to every reader of English literature. The rod was the sceptre of his kingdom. But in the course of time there appeared prophets of a new dispensation. These preached that knowledge should be made easy and inviting; that teachers should govern by love and kindness. The tendency of the greater part of their preaching was good. At the same time, in moving away from the stern old ways of our fore-fathers, may we not go too far on the other side? The old-fashioned schoolmaster was severe; may not the modern schoolmistress be too lenient? The world was not made solely for pleasure; nor can the modern schoolmaster of the coming century altogether change the arrangement. The lecturer quoted John Stuart Mill as saying that he did not believe that boys can be induced to apply themselves with vigor and, what is much more difficult, with perseverance, to dry and irksome studies by the sole force of persuasion and soft words. Amongst the methods of

SCHOOL GOVERNMENT

now in vogue the "promise and reward method" holds far too prominent a place. It is a bargain between teacher and pupil. The system has little to recommend it. Its motive power is low. The moral suasion method has many warm advocates. This system proposes that the child should be made to see and do what is right by argument and exhortation. It has much to recommend it, but it cannot be made to take the place of all other forms of school

government. What Matthew Arnold calls "sweet reasonableness" should be a prominent element in school government, but although this may bring compliance with our wishes it does not bring obedience. Obedience is submission to authority, and this the pupil must be taught. In short, to teach children to do their duty they must be put to it and kept at it till habits of thinking and acting are formed and character becomes fixed. There is good in all the foregoing systems, and the teacher of the future will base his system not on one but on all the facts of human nature. Work will be mingled with play, authority will be tempered with love, that which is easy will be mingled with that which is difficult, and the disagreeable will be blended with the agreeable. But, above all, the teachers of the coming century will take as their model that great Teacher, and devote themselves more earnestly to the study of that One who so blended gentleness and authority as to remain the admiration of all who have come after Him.

But after all the progress that can be made in methods and management the teacher will be the indispensable element. For, notwithstanding all that may be said in favor of system, we must still be educated by persons more than by things. Looking forward fifty years, what can be affirmed of the teachers of that period? The feminine pronoun only might be expected to be used in educational writings.

THE TEACHER OF THE FUTURE.

But in the coming century good teachers will be so appreciated and paid that no one will desire to leave the profession of teaching for trade, law or medicine. There will then be a sufficient number of male teachers qualified by ability, learning and experience to give tone and dignity to their vocation. As to qualifications, it is safe to say that no one will enter the profession without a natural aptitude for the office, a knowledge of things far beyond what he is required to teach, together with temper, tact and judgment. As he will be a member of a learned profession, he will possess a professional training. He will be a diligent student, never asking his pupils to drink from a stagnant pool. He will be familiar with the latest thoughts of the best writers on the nature of the mind they have to train. He will not only know what has been in the way of educational effort, what plans have succeeded and what have failed, but the causes of success or failure. He will not only be acquainted with the great educators of the past, but also with the experiments of the successful living teachers. He will also himself be an experimenter, watching, noting, recording, formulating and generalising all the results of his own observation and experience. With regard to the time for all this, the answer is in Wordsworth's lines:—

"Yes! they can make, who fail to find,
Brief leisure e'en in busiest days."

In conclusion, the lecturer hoped that the students would endeavor to anticipate the changes that must surely come to pass, and bring themselves and their schools to the highest perfection in the present century.