

### CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF COLLEGES.

In our present issue there will be found a report of the deliberations of the Heads of Colleges in the Maritime Provinces, at Wolfville, on the 3rd and 4th July.

Some of our readers, and many of those who were present at the Interprovincial Convention which was held at St. John last year, will remember that one of the most notable and immediate results of that gathering was the informal but most interesting meeting of the presidents of the colleges in the Maritime Provinces. The morning session of the second day had been set apart for the teachers of the various grades to meet in sections and read papers and discuss them. It happily occurred to some of the college representatives that they might profitably devote the same morning to an interchange of views and experience on matters relating to college work. All the presidents and professors who were present at the Convention heartily responded to the proposal, and so pleased and satisfied were they with the result that they resolved to repeat the experiment next year.

Accordingly, on the invitation of Dr. Sawyer—the chairman of the improvised meeting referred to above—a good representation from the colleges of the Maritime Provinces met at Wolfville, in July, constituted themselves a Conference of Heads of Colleges, and proceeded to discuss questions of great moment, not only to the well-being of the colleges but to the advancement of educational interests in general, and to devise means by which the highest institutions of learning in the provinces and the high schools and academies of the government systems might be brought into proper relationship.

From an examination of the business transacted we observe that the first resolution is directed against an anomaly which has long existed in the irregularity of the standard of the examination for entrance at the various colleges. Manifestly to remedy this defect in our educational procedure and to establish a uniform condition of admission to all our colleges would not only do much to systematize our higher education but simplify and render more efficient the work of the high schools and academies. The intention of the matriculation examination is that the faculty may be satisfied that the candidates who present themselves have a requisite amount of knowledge, and that they are capable of participating in the higher studies of the university. To the high schools and academies the university looks for the performance of this preparatory work of fitting pupils to undertake its more advanced academic pursuits. And surely it

is only reasonable for the intermediate schools, on the other hand, to expect from the universities a well adjusted, comprehensive and precise statement of what they think necessary for the purpose. But, above all, they are justified in looking for unanimity in the demands which are made upon them, that their teachers may feel that the studies in which their pupils are engaged are such as shall meet the requirements of any university in the Maritime Provinces.

But these secondary schools are not merely fitting schools for the university but are intended to complete the education which, in its earlier stages, has been received at the primary schools. To the great majority of the pupils who attend the high schools, the education which they there obtain ought to be of such a nature as to be immediately available for the purposes of life. And hence the curriculum ought to be broad enough to be serviceable for the immediate and prospective needs of the pupils who then complete their education, as well as adapted for the qualification of such of their number as desire to proceed to the university. And here the co-operation of the superintendents of education is both necessary and valuable. And we doubt not but the representatives of the colleges and the superintendents together will agree upon such a test for matriculants as shall stimulate to greater efficiency the intermediate schools of the provinces, and that without impairing their value as final and finishing schools for the boys who have in prospect such a career as is opened up to them through the farm, the machine shop, or the counting house.

In the second resolution we welcome a very opportune and somewhat emphatic opinion respecting the conferring of degrees on candidates who have prepared themselves for examination by private study. The university degree is not only an expression of satisfaction with the knowledge of the student as exhibited by him in his examination papers, but it also certifies to the fact that he has pursued his studies under the direction of qualified instructors, that he has passed through a course of severe and salutary discipline, that by the constant contact with superior minds his character has been formed and his intellect brightened, and that he leaves the university stamped as qualified by the culture and training of the schools to employ advantageously the faculties with which he has been endowed. If, therefore, the university degree be obtainable by examination, without attendance on lectures, it ceases to provide a guarantee for the possession by the student of that culture and discipline which are the highest aims of university teaching.

The subjects of athletics, examinations, and the standard adopted at the various colleges in the