

attendance. Some other incorporated towns might, perhaps, do as much towards the support of their own schools; but it looks as though any change in the system that would throw more of the expense upon the people of the smaller communities would be a step backward rather than in advance. The present system seems well adapted for all out-lying districts since it provides them with school privileges almost, if not quite, as good as are to be had in the larger centres.

Nor is local interest in the schools impaired by this system. Boards of trustees are elected to expend the school funds, to engage and dismiss teachers, and to have a general oversight of the schools. But since the teachers are paid from the provincial treasury, trustees are never influenced by a false idea of economy to retain any but competent teachers; and underbidding among teachers is, in this province, a thing unknown.

But this ever-varying and cosmopolitan character of the communities presents many difficulties to the teachers, as well as to the legislators. And here the grading of the schools is far from being an easy question to solve. It is not uncommon to find schools of several hundred pupils, not one of which is a native of the town in which he lives, and of which scarcely two have come from the same school. There are some advantages to be derived, however, from such a composite school. The pupils have learned many things by travelling. They have had their minds quickened in many ways. They have seen different places, and are usually more interested in geography and kindred subjects than are the pupils in more conservative communities.

The matter of grading the schools is left more in the hands of the teachers than in the eastern provinces. The Council of Public Instruction determines what subjects shall be taught to each grade; but the construction of the time tables is the duty of the teacher. This, of course, produces a lack of unity among the schools; but on the other hand, it removes the evil of over-crowding, of which we hear so many complaints from other sources. There is another thing that produces a lack of harmony among British Columbia schools, and that is that this province has no normal school of teachers; consequently those teachers who have been educated here have not had the advantage of special preparation, while the many others have come from such a variety of schools, that their methods have little in common. It is believed, however, that a normal school will soon be established at which those who wish to enter the profession will have an opportunity for preparation for the work.

Another need is a good educational paper, that will

understand and be prepared to meet our peculiar conditions. As we have none devoted to our interests, some—perhaps many—of our teachers do not take any such paper at all; and so fail to keep in touch with the great educational world. But we hope that this want will soon be supplied.

There is one more matter that should be referred to in this paper. That is the action of the government in providing at a nominal expense circulating libraries for the rural districts. These libraries consist of a number of well selected books relating to subjects of interest to the people of this province. They are neatly arranged in suitable cases and cost the community practically only the expense of shipment. While these libraries are altogether separate from the schools, they form an educational factor in the province.

Although there are many things yet needed, it appears, after considering the difficulties to be overcome, that the educational puzzle has been as well solved here as in any portion of our Dominion.

Trail, B. C., May 1899.

R. E. ESTABROOKS.

Some Notes on Milton's *Lycidas*.

A couple of score of questions on *Lycidas* have been sent to me recently from a school in a neighboring county. It is impossible to deal with all of them within the space allowed for this sort of thing by the editor, so I shall select the ones that seem to offer a chance of being generally interesting to students of the poem.

Line 1. "Yet once more," refers to some other poem; which one?

It depends on which of at least two different interpretations of the introduction is accepted by the reader. Perhaps Milton means: "Ay me! here's another of my friends dead, and I must go to work and drop another 'melodious tear' in memory of him." If so, the "other poem" is his "Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester" in 1631, six years before.

But perhaps he means: "I hoped to rest from verse-making until I felt fit for that supremely great poem which it is my ambition to make my life's work, but here is a case which calls me from my preparatory studies for the great work, and I must do by my friend what I hope 'some gentle muse' will do by 'my destined urn.'" If so, the "other poem" is "Comus" in 1634.

Line 8. Where did Milton get the name *Lycidas*?

Where he got the names *Corydon*, *Thyrsis*, *Phyllis*, *Thestylis*, *Damoetas*, *Amaryllis*, *Neaera*, etc. Virgil uses them all in his *Eclogues*, but he did not invent them. He borrowed them from his shepherds and shepherdesses from the pastoral poems of the Greek idyllists.