

COMPANION AND TEACHER

We Study to Instruct; We Endeavor to Amuse.

Companion Publishing Co., }
Publishers and Proprietors. }

LONDON, ONT., JANUARY, 1877.

{ Volume II., No. 3
{ Publish'd Monthly

Editorial.

Means of Training Teachers.

In the December number we discussed the paramount importance, we should say the absolute necessity, of professional training for public school teachers; we have now to consider the practical question, "How can teachers secure this much needed training?"

If admitted that the preparation of the teacher for his work is all but indispensable, there need be no debate as to the time he should receive the training, notwithstanding that a respected educationist, perhaps more than one, has recommended young aspirants to teach (?) for a year or two before going to the Normal School. This advice is given in sole consideration of the interests of the individual, to the sacrifice of the interests of the many in the "year or two's" bungling to which the school is subjected. Consulting only individual interest, this advice is erroneous, for although a young and untrained teacher's first experience, inseparably connected as it must be with easily obvious as well as unconscious blundering, does better prepare him to receive and apply the Normal professor's lectures, and gives him confidence for his trials in the Model School, yet the greater value of experience after a course of training more than compensates for the improvement of the training by its coming after the "year or two's" experience. A model school is supposed to act as a kind of sieve to sift out candidates who show decided natural inaptness to teach, and lack of the elements of character indispensable to the successful teacher. These are to be strongly advised to pursue some other avocation, in fact compelled to do so, because their model marks are too low to allow granting them certificates. If a man has not natural aptitude the shorter he teaches, and the sooner he engages in a calling for which his talents adapt him, the better for himself and infinitely the better for the school. But when we think that even one who has this rare combination of natural qualifications necessary to the successful teacher, through ignorance of the matter or art of teaching may be very inefficient, and in consequence forty or fifty children suffer the inestimable and irreparable loss of time and opportunity, every other consideration sinks into insignificance, and we exclaim with Guizot, "Let no schoolmaster be appointed who has not himself been a pupil of the school which instructs in the art of teaching, and who is not certified after a strict examination to have profited by the opportunities he has enjoyed."

The best means of training teachers is a course of instruction given by qualified professors in institutions called *Normal Schools* (*norma*, a pattern or model). According to Dr. Ryerson, the original Normal Schools were institutions in which the best methods of instruction and discipline were prac-

tised, 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. The present acceptance of the term *Normal School* supposes an establishment of men and women who have passed through a course of instruction and are preparing to be teachers, by making additional attainments, and by acquiring a knowledge of the human mind, and the principles of education as a science, and its methods as an art, including the *Model School* of the earlier times, and thus combining theory with practice.

We said the best means of training teachers is the Normal School system, under certain circumstances it is the only possible means. In a country where the schools become once filled with trained and efficient teachers, the pupil-teacher system can be made the means of supplying the vacancies as they occur with trained teachers. It is reasonable that only trained teachers should be expected to train monitors or pupil-teachers. Associations or institutes are practicable and important aids to the training of teachers, although they can by no stretch of reason or imagination be substituted for training schools. Institutes are indispensable adjuncts to a live and efficient school system, and are productive of most good when their members have had special preparation for the profession. Their value in imparting to the fully awakened and deeply interested teacher a knowledge of the details of the philosophy of pedagogics is inestimable. Properly conducted institutes will be attended by the people, and thus result in the establishment of a common sympathy between teachers and people. Public interest thus enlisted will enter with zeal into the routine of the school-room, along with co-operation and desire for the success of the teachers' plans. The teacher being *de facto* autocrat in his school room is liable to intellectual inflation, but at the institute he measures himself, and perchance may catch the spirit of the earnest minded, indefatigable teacher. Institutes, too, kindle among teachers an *esprit de corps*, increasing their spirit and true dignity, and pressing more vividly on their attention the exceeding responsibility and rare opportunity of the teacher of youth—they bring teachers into contact with distinguished scholars, they sometimes make public the talents of superior teachers who are thereby introduced to wider and more useful arenas of labor, and last—but by no means least, they furnish opportunity of readily introducing new improvements in the science and art of teaching. Even more advantages than those enumerated are surely derivable from the teachers' association or institute, and so great are those benefits that no school system can afford to be without so useful a concomitant.

We ask you to review the situation in our own Province—

The first Normal School for Upper Canada was opened on the 1st Nov., 1847, in the old Govern-