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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF ONTARIO.

HON. G. W. ROSS, MINISTER OF EDUCATION FOR ONTARIO.

THE School System of Ontario includes the Kindergarten, Public and Separate Schools (Separate Schools being both Protestant and Roman Catholic) High Schools and the Provincial University.

As a system of education it might be regarded as an organic whole; a distinct unit. The Kindergarten course looks towards the University and the University course looks back towards the Kindergarten. A vertical section, using the methods of Geology, would be as follows:—

The University.
The High Schools.
The Public Schools.
The Kindergarten.

Do not suppose from this illustration that our system is a mere stratification; we regard it as a development. The pupil, four years of age, who starts with the Kindergarten and follows the curriculum prescribed by our system, will reach the University in the natural order of things, just as the early discoverers of Canada reached the lakes separating the Dominion from the United States by sailing through the waters of one into the waters of another. I may say more. The course of study in the Kindergarten is intended to prepare the pupil for thoughtful observation in the Public School. When the pupil exhausts the Public School course (if he has capacity) he is prepared to enter the High School; when he exhausts the High School course the examination which he meets by the way admits him into the University. So much for the organic unity of our system.

Its administration.—The school system of Ontario is democratic. Every ratepayer, male or female, is an elector, and eligible to hold the office of public school trustee. The area of school sections, the location of the school-house, its size and cost, the salary to be paid the teachers and the standing of the teachers to be employed, the amount of money to be expended for improvements on the Public Schools are all determined by the trustees, within certain limitations to be referred to hereafter. Each Board is a corporation in itself, deriving its power from the Legislative Assembly of the Province. The executive authority in educational matters is vested in the Education Department, presided over by the Minister of Education, who is practically the chief executive officer of the whole system.

While the Legislative Assembly is primarily the source of all legislation affecting the school system of the Province, the Minister has power under the statute to make regulations affecting the qualifications of teachers, the standard of certificates, the authorization of text books and such matters of detail as will readily occur to every educator. It is the duty of the Minister to direct all the educational forces of the country; first, from his place in the Legislative Assembly, secondly, through the officers of his department. From the wide sweep of the legislation which he is expected to direct, and from his position as a member of the Government administering

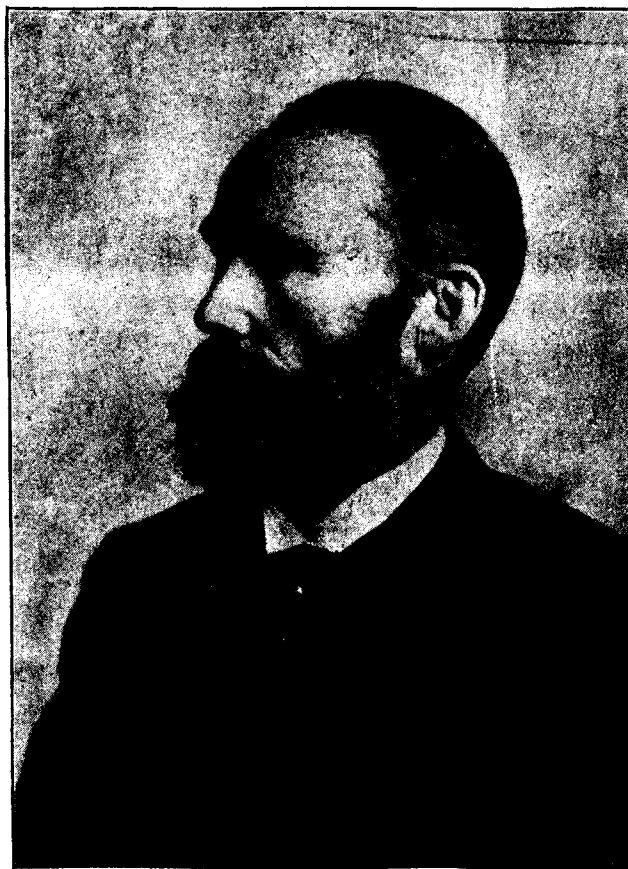
first four forms, which includes ninety-eight per cent. of the entire school population of the country, consists of reading, writing, geography, grammar and composition, history, arithmetic, temperance and hygiene, drawing and agriculture, all of which are compulsory in the form to which they belong. In the fifth form, embracing about 10,000 children in the Public Schools of the Province, are taught euclid, algebra, physics, botany and chemistry.

The classification of the school is intended to serve the great mass of our school population who leave school at about fourteen years of age, and as their necessities are so urgent it is deemed of the first importance that no part of their time should be occupied except with the essential branches of a good English education.

The High School course of study includes the higher mathematics, the sciences, with abundance of laboratory practice, classics and the modern languages, with a comprehensive course in English literature and composition. Several options are allowed to meet the circumstances of pupils, some of whom may desire to enter the teaching profession, or some other learned profession, or whose objects are merely to obtain the advantages of an English education with a view to citizenship or commercial life. The High School course practically extends over three years. Ninety-nine per cent. of the students attending our Universities take their matriculation course in the High Schools. High Schools are managed by trustees with powers similar, in a general way, to those which Public School trustees possess.

The Provincial University is under the direction of the Senate, partly appointed by the Government, partly ex-officio, and partly elected by the alumni, but the action of the Senate is subject to the approval of the executive government. The University provides an Arts course with a considerable number of options, and has the right to grant the usual degrees. It is open to matriculated students of both sexes. The Province of Ontario has five Universities in addition to the one supported out of the Provincial endowment, they have a common standard for matriculation and all admit their students by one examination, conducted on their behalf by the Education Department.

So far I have been considering the non-professional or literary side of our system. To many of you, no doubt, its professional side will be even more interesting. For the purpose of providing efficient teachers the Province of Ontario has four classes



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the affairs of the country, he is able to advance such legislation as will preserve the unity of the system and maintain its symmetry as well as prevent any needless innovation from pseudo-reformers or visionary meddlers.

Course of Study.—The course of study for the sub-division of the system is framed with a view to the age and mental limitations of the pupils ordinarily ranking under that division. For instance, in the Kindergarten the course is purely Fröebelian; in the Public School division the course is suited to the capacity of children from five to sixteen years of age. The course in the