

THE NECESSITY OF NORMAL INSTRUCTION.*

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THE art of teaching is as old as the human race, and the school-master, whatever his social or intellectual status, has always been one of the main influences in improving the civilization and increasing the intelligence of any community. His influence, exercised at a period in the life of the individual when his mind is plastic, his habits unformed, and his capacity for receiving impressions consequently large, is a greater power in shaping the character than any other brought to bear outside of the parental relation. The recognition of this influence underlies the efforts put forth by nearly all intelligent Governments for the efficient training and instruction of teachers—efforts whose earnestness and magnitude correctly indicate in each instance the degree of appreciation felt as to the importance of their results. A review of the history of the art of teaching reveals a rate of progress, especially during the last forty years, that may be almost termed revolutionary. In looking back even to our own youth, many of us smile and wonder at the effete and clumsy methods then in vogue; and we often reflect with indignation that mental growth was cramped and hindered by the lack of what seems to us now to be the first principles of the art of imparting instruction. At the same time, we may reasonably anticipate that the future will be as fruitful in progress

and in surprising results as the past has been; for a glance at the present state of the art will show that reform in some departments is but in its infancy, and that many of the most difficult problems to be solved in making the school teacher a skilled workman, have not yet been vigorously dealt with. One of the most notable of these problems is that of requiring from every candidate for the teaching profession, some preliminary training previous to his assumption of responsible duty in teaching. Normal Schools are provided, and the machinery necessary for conducting them; but a little inquiry into the statistics of States and Provinces, where they exist, show a surprisingly small proportion of the teaching staff of the country who have received the benefit of full attendance at these institutions. New York, with seven Normal Schools, supplies the cities of the State with trained teachers, but only a comparatively small number of the rural districts have the benefit of trained instructors. This can hardly be attributed to the poverty or sparse settlement of such an old State, but to the failure of school commissioners to realize what they lose by failing to secure a trained teacher. In the Province of Ontario, where so much has been done, especially in the last ten years, the great majority of the teachers are but rated third class, with only such training as may be secured from a short attendance at the County Model School. Previous

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