

We have refrained from comment upon the project of University confederation, which has been, for some time past, the subject of earnest conference between representatives of the various Colleges and Universities of the Province, pending the publication of the scheme which they may finally agree to recommend. It is idle and might possibly be mischievous to discuss rumours, or even facts, in regard to the state of negotiations, so long as no definite conclusions have been reached. Some of the questions to be settled are delicate, and difficult of adjustment. Upon a few important points a compromise of conflicting opinions or interests is, perhaps, the best result that can be reasonably hoped for. But the great educational and moral ends to be attained by the proposed confederation, are so valuable, so intimately related to the highest well being of the province, that it is eminently desirable that the union sought should be consummated at any cost, short of the sacrifice of efficiency, or conscientious conviction, on the part of any of the confederating institutions. There is, however, one broad principle which should, we think, be kept steadily in view by the representatives in conference. The confederating Colleges should reserve full liberty of action in regard to the range of their respective courses of instruction. Any compact involving the surrender of the right on the part of the Colleges to found professorships in any department of study, seems not only wholly unnecessary, but might become at some future time a millstone about the neck of the voluntary College. There is no known limit to the extent of the endowments which may, in time, be created for these institutions by private munificence. We can see no good reason why any College should be asked to surrender its right to establish chairs of instruction in any branch of liberal education, whenever it may be able to find means for endowing such chairs. Honourable competition, or let us say a noble emulation is, or should be, the basis of confederation, and this would be so far hindered by the operation of any clause restricting the teaching of certain classes of subjects to the Government College.

Since the foregoing was in type the schedule agreed upon by the representatives of the various colleges has been published. We will give it with comments next week.

"Overwork," "underpay," "constant re examination"—these are the woes to which the teachers of Philadelphia are obliged to submit. So says the *Telegraph* of that city. We should not have dared to have said that ourselves, for we should have expected a suit for libel on the fair fame of the city of rectangular brotherly love, but since it was written by one to the "manner born," we can comment thereon with safety. Look at these words—"Overwork," "underpay," "constant re examination,"—human, God-fearing Christians of America! They mean—weariness, poverty, anxiety. They mean—oppression, debt, death—what more can be said? Let us turn to the bright side. President Eliot of Harvard, is the friend of the teacher. He publicly advocates long tenure of office by teachers, implying intelligent selection with strict examinations and a probationary service. He also asks for a retirement of teachers on pensions or annuities, with absolute security against a reduction of salaries, thus freeing the teachers from anxiety, and leaving them to devote all their powers to their work. God speed the day!—*New York School Journal*.

Special Articles.

INDIVIDUALITY IN THE TEACHER.

A somewhat rigid uniformity is a necessary evil in a public school system. Without it an ever-growing complexity of machinery would be evolved, which could end only in confusion worse confounded. Any effective supervision of the work done, any reliable testing of its thoroughness, would become impossible, and the public funds would have to be given over to the distribution of favouritism or caprice.

The ideal school system would be one in which every teacher should have full liberty of action. Individuality would have free play. Each would regulate his own hours, choose his own text-books, use his own appliances, and work out his own ideas and methods. But such an ideal system postulates a host of impossible conditions, amongst them an ideal army of teachers, every man and woman of whom should be not only devoted heart and soul to the profession, but also qualified by culture, experience and personal character to be a law unto himself, and a model for other educators.

Such a set of conditions, or anything approaching to it, would of course be too much to assume at any stage of development yet reached. But while in its absence a good deal of machine uniformity is indispensable, and much must be conceded to the necessities of the case, it by no means follows that the maximum rather than the minimum of inflexibility should be the aim of the central authorities. There is always more or less tendency in this direction. To reduce everything to routine, makes things easy for officials, and hence becomes the goal of aspiration for those who lack either disposition or ability to grapple with the trouble—some questions that are pretty sure to arise in the working of a freer, more flexible system. It is always easier to prescribe a fixed dull, routine in text-books, studies, examinations, etc., than it is to devise and operate methods, which leave more room for adaptation to special tastes and circumstances, just as it is easier often for the teacher to enforce the stillness of death in the school room, than to preserve necessary order without repressing the natural flow of youthful life and energy. When an educational system begins attempting to have every detail of school management cut and dried with the exactness of a mathematical formula, when it undertakes to prescribe the exact kind and amount of work to be done by each pupil, and the exact text-books, and method of instruction to be used by each teacher, it has got on the wrong track, or the wrong engineer is in charge.

The aim of the present paper is not, however, to criticise the defects or inconsistencies of our school system, but to urge upon teachers the duty of preserving their autonomy under difficulties, rather than suffering themselves to become mere involuntary operators, mere parts of the machine. Indeed, the truth evidently is that the more complicated and intricate the machine, the greater the need of strong individuality; of marked, developed personal character, in those who work it. We had almost added, the better the sphere for the outworking of these traits. Nothing but the life-giving spirit of a living teacher can breathe the breath of life into the dry bones of the Public or High School programme. The man who submits to be run by the machine, and to become a volitionless part of it, instead of himself so running it as to stamp all its products with the impress of his own individuality, is a failure. Intellectual and moral power are prime requisites of the genuine teacher. A strong, developed manhood or womanhood will infuse its own energy into all instruction. It will inbreath its own vital force into the driest routine. It will