

mistaken idea that they are Free Traders. He also states that the *vast majority* of economists are in favour of Free Trade; he makes a statement which requires more substantiation than his mere assertion. I claim a knowledge of the subject fully equal to his, and have come to a different conclusion. He says that no one who has not thoroughly studied political economy has any right to hold an opinion on the subject; as he writes on the subject, and evidently holds an opinion, it is to be inferred that he has *thoroughly studied* political economy,—a modest statement, when the whole world is studying it and endeavouring to learn more about it. Has not a merchant, with great interests to look after, a right to hold an opinion, even if he has not studied Ricardo, Smith and others? The merchant is probably the best judge of his own interests, and generally has a better knowledge of these commercial principles than any theoretical authority such as Adam Smith, who “was led into many errors by theorizing without sufficient practical knowledge, he deduced many of his facts from his theories instead of deducing his theories from a knowledge of the business of his country.” I would humbly ask “Roswell Fisher,” who has thoroughly studied political economy, to admit, that a person may have studied it as well as any ordinary mortal can and still be a Protectionist.

Marilh.

THE TEACHERS' CONVENTION.

On Tuesday, the 15th, a large party of teachers, two hundred and twenty in number, set out upon a journey to the ancient city of Quebec, for the purpose of attending the Annual Convention of Teachers of this Province. Of these, the larger number embarked upon the steamer “Montreal.” The foggy prospect on the river made somewhat doubtful the chances of an uninterrupted journey; and, as it happened, about five miles from the city, the engine ceased its pulsations, compelled by the unheeding fog which utterly disregarded the wishes of the pedagogues; the chain rolled out and the anchor held us fast, in such condition to remain for ten hours. But the best was made of the situation; much good-humoured grumbling was heard at first, but the advent of Terpsichore and her sister succeeded in keeping dull care out in the cold and the fog, proving that those of whom we expect prim decorum and austere behaviour, are far from being unsusceptible—the professional mantle being cast off—to the mirth and laughter-provoking influences which love to dwell with the cheerful in mind and heart. Hope revived when, on Wednesday morning, at 6 o'clock, the good steamer again essayed to pierce the frail but all embracing mist that so gently and so quietly opposed progression, but sank again when the announcement was made, at Batiscau, the hour being 2.30 p.m., that further progress that night was impossible. The ladies looked blue; the officers of the Association held frequent consultations; the worthy Captain Nelson was appealed to, but the quiet fog was unyielding. There was no power mighty enough to lift the cloudy curtain from the river which it enveloped. Whereupon, as the shades grew darker, and the mist no lighter, there re-entered upon the scene the spirits of music and of mirth. The ladies, first in every good work, beholding with pity, the sorrow-stricken visages of their brother pedagogues, and having compassion likewise upon themselves, organise a programme, in which the instrumental, the vocal, the elocutionary, the dramatic and the enigmatical participate. A senior dominie rises to propose votes of thanks to the Captain and his officers for their attention, and a member of the fourth estate, with characteristic gallantry, invites his fellows of the male persuasion to tender a similar compliment to the ladies.

On the arrival of the party at Quebec, it was found that the arrangements for their reception were sadly wanting in method and completeness; but after some hours' delay all were provided for, and the work of the Convention was begun in earnest. It is not our intention to follow the Convention in all its discussions, but simply to note the most important transactions. The paper of Mr. Geo. Murray on the study of Etymology was not what some would call a “practical” paper, but practical papers are usually as remainder biscuit. Mr. Murray's paper was practical in the highest sense, and refreshing to listen to both as a literary production and as a work of scholarship. It would be impossible to give our readers an idea of its many beauties without reproducing it in many parts, and this we are obliged to refrain from; but we may remark that such papers should be heartily welcomed and more frequently produced at Teachers' Conventions. Teachers would thus learn something more than mere routine, methods and educational politics—things good enough in their place, perhaps—and would have an opportunity of assimilating knowledge that would feed the imagination and heart and infuse a warmth and refinement which mark the higher mind. The Rev. Mr. Rexford read a paper on the district schools of this Province, revealing as the result of personal examination a sad state of affairs. Frequent change of teachers, defective organization, multiplicity of text-books in very small schools, absence of written examinations, insufficiency of apparatus, absence of any definite plan of instruction, were all among the evils complained of. While it was asserted that school affairs were not in so bad a condition as some years ago, it was also confessed that the education given was very defective. Careful enquiry discloses the fact that outside of our cities our educational system is a disgrace to our Protestant population.

And the Government are not alone to blame. The people are lethargic, and their political leaders are more anxious, and find that it pays better, to direct their attention to proposed railway schemes which are warranted to fill the purse, than to rouse them to their duty in the matter of education. Our inspectors, in our opinion, are in the majority of instances unfit for the positions they occupy. We need men of scholarship, men of experience, men of executive ability, men fired with a noble resolution to accomplish a noble work. These men we have not as yet, and until they arrive educational progress will be slow. We would favour, not the abolition of inspection, for a system of inspection is indispensable, but a discharge of the many inspectors who are incompetent to hold office, and the appointment of capable men—men who would educate teachers and communities by word and by work.

A very interesting paper was also read by Mr. C. Thomas, of Waterloo, his subject being “The Moral Support given to Teachers.” Mr. Thomas, in forcible and elegant diction, referred to the total absence of support received from patrons or school boards in establishing and maintaining that discipline, without which the labours of the teacher are useless and his school a farce. The main idea running through Mr. Thomas's paper was the duty of parents and guardians to sustain the authority of the teacher, and to refuse to listen to the many idle complaints made against him by frivolous and headstrong children. In conclusion, the essayist, addressing himself to parents and guardians, reminded them that “in the moral and mental mechanism of their children were keys capable of sending forth diviner music than ever swelled at the touch of Handel; it is in the power of that teacher who is so often disregarded to turn them to discordant notes, that will render their possessor wretched or to draw from them a real soul-inspiring melody that will cheer their possessor on all his march from the commencement of active life up to the throne of God!”

The last session of the Convention was held in the Music Hall at 8 p. m. Dr. Miles, the retiring President, delivered his retiring address, his subject being “Superannuation.” From what was heard it would appear that the inducements held out for the adoption of the teachers' profession, as regards superannuation, when the natural forces begin to abate, are few indeed. The fund consists of the money contributed by the teachers themselves, augmented by a small grant from the public chest. The contributions are proportionate to the salaries, and the pension received by the majority who are on the list, after twenty or thirty years service, does not exceed forty dollars. Many other dismal features of the present system were alluded to, and a suggestion that teachers be made employees of the Department of Public Instruction, and thus entitled to the provisions of the Civil Service Pensions Act, was approved.

Reflecting on this matter, it seems contrary to all custom and rule, that teachers who, as all know, receive very small salaries should expect very large pensions. At the same time, the fact that the salaries are small, might seem a reason for establishing, by way of compensation, more generous pensions; but such a scheme is not likely to be adopted. But, to strike at the root of the matter, it is doubtful whether superannuation is a good thing to inaugurate. For those teachers who have been teaching up to the present, and who are old and feeble, something undoubtedly should be done; but to lead our young teachers to enter this profession, having ultimate superannuation in view, has many objectionable features. It destroys the independent feeling, inseparable from manhood; it makes a man appear a feeder upon the bounty of the State; it classes him with paupers and such like, and the members of the leading profession need not expect their profession to attain to the dignity and respect which others enjoy. We do not superannuate the physician, or the lawyer, and only occasionally the minister; why the teacher? Teachers should strive to obtain an increase in salaries, and salaries are usually proportionate to actual qualifications—ability and scholarship. Then they will be able to put by for the rainy days, and will be independent of the meagre grants of the State.

At this session also, the Rev. Dr. MacVicar addressed the audience. The subject of this gentleman's remarks was “The Teacher in his study and in the class-room.” Not being familiar with the whole of Dr. McCosh's works, we cannot say if these remarks were entirely original, but we presume they were. The paper was vigorous, and contained much that no one would feel inclined to dispute. It dwelt upon the importance of the teachers work, “the necessity of a thorough acquaintance with the science of teaching, the science of what might be a grand ‘national policy’ to elevate the standard of morals and honesty among the people, and to diminish the number of those who become first class public frauds and robbers of banks.” The lecturer also discoursed about the home duties of teachers, their school duties, the importance of truthfulness in a manner which seemed to us very strange. The lecturer spoke as if the whole body of teachers, and those in attendance at the Convention included, had hitherto been wandering in the dark, and were deserving of reprimand; as if he were positively angry with somebody. The utter absence of genial, generous sentiment, such as that which glowed in Dr. Dawson's address, for instance; the utter absence of encouraging, soul-inspiring words was remarkable, and the general tone of the whole paper severe and bitter to such a degree as to border upon the disrespectful and offensive. Not that vigor or even vehemence is always objectionable, but a generous appreciation of the subject taken in hand, and a feeling of respect and love for those whom it