

THE CANADA
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY
AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

OCTOBER, 1884.

THE COMMON SCHOOL OF A QUARTER CENTURY HENCE.*

BY JAMES BALDWIN.

I TAKE it for granted that the subject which interests us most to-day, is not a question of prophetic verity, but rather a discussion of facts and principles having a present practical value and application. The common school of the year 1884 is much nearer to us than the common school of a quarter century hence; and, bearing this thought in mind, you will pardon me if, while depicting in this paper a somewhat ideal but altogether possible future, I direct your attention primarily to certain features in the work of the common school of to-day.

To establish a basis for our speculations and inquiries, let us briefly notice the progress which has been made in educational matters during the quarter of a century just past. Within that time we have seen the inception and growth of the graded school idea; the county superintendency has been established; the system

of examining and licensing teachers has been improved and perfected; the State Normal School has been founded, and its necessity fully demonstrated by the efficiency of its work; county institutes and township institutes have been established by law; private normal schools, and so-called normal institutes, have sprung up in almost every county, annually affording instruction to thousands of preparing teachers; in nearly every city and town "palatial" school buildings have been erected; the village and district school-houses have been very generally improved; the length of the school year, in most localities, has been doubled and even trebled; the salaries paid to teachers have been steadily—but oh! so slowly—advanced; the demand for trained workers has been constantly increasing; the opportunities offered to teachers for acquiring a professional education have become almost unlimited. Then, too, as regards the internal economy of the schools, there

* An address delivered before the State Teachers' Association, Indiana.