

PERMANENCY OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

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THE subject of this paper is more important than attractive. Its right treatment demands more time and space—not to say, ability—than at my disposal. I shall hope, however, to enlist your sympathy and develop profitable discussion.

Where thoroughly qualified persons are employed continuously in any calling, the results should be more satisfactory to themselves and to their employers. On all hands it is admitted that better work and better returns are secured when skilled workmen perform the same duties in the same office year after year. Change of office or officer of necessity implies initiation into the peculiarities and specialties of the new office or officer, with corresponding loss of time, efficiency and progress. Change, of necessity, implies a period of disquietude and friction, of anxiety, if not mortification, to employer and employed; and these disadvantages are intensified as the nature of the work involves more of the intellectual and moral, and less of the merely mechanical.

It is not risking much to affirm that in no occupation are the evil effects of change more likely to be serious than in teaching. The material with which the teacher has to deal is the most precious and enduring of which the earth has knowledge, and its essential nature is so delicate and full of far-reaching possibilities, that to transfer its management from hand to hand, year by year, in its plastic condition, makes it certain that great loss must follow. A plant cannot

thus be transferred from soil to soil and climate to climate without a serious dwarfing of its powers. Neither can the young mind, learning to observe, reason, act, to know and love truth and beauty and power, after the training and individuality of one teacher, in the atmosphere and soil of which he is the sun, be transferred to the hands of another without serious loss.

Even in a pecuniary aspect, frequent change involves no small loss. Under favourable circumstance, the new teacher cannot readjust the mental and administrative machinery of a school and have the whole moving on harmoniously from the point his predecessor left it at, in less than two months—not always so soon. It may be allowed that, in ordinary circumstances, three months are nearly lost to a school. When the change is a bad one, which too often is the case, a year and more, with all its outlay, is lost.

It is frequently affirmed and universally believed that, in Ontario, much is lost through lack of permanency in the profession to which we belong. To reach, as nearly as may be, the actual state of the case, I have grouped statistics bearing on this point as I could gather them from official returns. These cover thirteen years, beginning with 1871 and ending with 1883, the last that has been fully reported. If all the generalizations reached are not absolutely correct, they are at least approximately so.

In 1871, 5,036 teachers were employed in Ontario, and 2,236 certificates (including 390 interim) were issued by the Education Department

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