

a County Convention was not thought of. Each teacher stood apart from his fellow. He had no interest in common except as a rival to outbid another in a descending scale of miserable pittance, called "wages," for decidedly inferior services. The very class of persons employed as teachers in these days forbade the idea of a gathering together for the purpose of mutual counsel on the subject of teaching, or rather of discussing the manifold question of "how to teach." Those men who had failed in every other pursuit of life, and who were not yet utterly discouraged, were sure to adopt teaching as a *dernier ressort*; every old soldier, whose standard of discipline was derived more or less from the practice of an indiscriminate tyranny in a barrack room, was considered the ideal of a man who would be successful in maintaining "order" in school. Beyond this, and the monotonous drill then in vogue of the rote system in mastering the three R's, no one aspired to go; or, if he did, and ventured to suggest the desirability or wisdom of a teacher availing himself of the German system of Normal School training for his work, he would have been considered as conspiring to undermine the time-honored institutions of learning in the land, or as plotting to introduce into the country an uncontrolled system of "Prussian despotism." But these days, with their characteristics of inefficiency and unreasoning severity, have happily passed away, and with them the reproach of persistent ignorance of the details of a calling which, for its successful prosecution, requires the combination of many rare qualities, with that of an intelligent discrimination of character, and a ready tact in the art of governing children.

Notwithstanding our educational progress, the efforts put forth to get teachers together, so as to induce them to feel a common interest in their work, have, after all, been attended with far greater difficulty than was at first apprehended. This arose chiefly from two causes: First, teachers had never regarded their calling "a profession." It was an "occupation," it was true, one which could be taken up at any time and as readily relinquished for something else. It required, as was often asserted, no particular kind of preparation, and none was demanded by employers. Not only was a person who had received no professional training as a teacher acceptable to many trustees, but in some of our cities and towns a marked preference was actually given, down to a late date, to teachers who had never been trained in a Normal School at all! A smattering of "book learning" of the most elementary kind was, in the estimation of the teacher himself, all that was necessary; while with many trustees a very modest demand for remuneration, coupled with ability to wield a "rattan," or a "blue beech," or a "hickory" with promptitude, and impartially on defiant or timid boys alike, were indispensable qualifications. Such were some of the traditions of the "calling," which had to be swept away, or entirely ignored, before even the first step could be taken towards organizing the profession of teaching.

The second barrier encountered in the organization of the profession was the fugitive character of its members. This difficulty still exists, and will always exist more or less, but is modified, and, under the new regulations, greatly lessened. But before the present periods of service between the grades of the certificate were fixed, teaching at any stage was considered a mere stepping stone to something else. Many persons came formerly to the Normal School merely to get a cheap and good education, so as to enable them the more readily, within a short time, to prepare for the legal and medical professions, and even for the sacred ministry.\* Hence there was no substantial permanency in the profession, and there could be none while the process of disintegration in it went

on so rapidly. This drain on the profession was rather promoted than otherwise by the facilities for merely scholastic education, instead of purely professional training, which the Normal School, in common with High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, afforded. The persistence with which teachers some years ago resisted the idea of placing the Superannuation Fund on a co-operative and satisfactory basis was an outgrowth of this state of things, and showed how strong was the opposition, especially of younger teachers, to this incident of the organization of their "calling" into a permanent and recognized profession. They did not desire to follow the profession, and hence this opposition was justified on two grounds:—1st, that the "subscription" impost was "forced" and therefore "tyrannical"; 2nd, and chiefly, that the opponents to the scheme never expected to avail themselves of the benefits of the fund. This opposition has since given place to an enlightened appreciation of the benevolence of the provision for the superannuation of worn-out teachers. The next step, taken some years ago, with a view to promote a professional *esprit*, and to encourage the professional intercourse of teachers with one another, was the adoption of a regulation, giving to teachers the right, without loss of salary, to devote a week in each year to visiting other schools, so as to observe the best methods of teaching pursued therein, with a view to profit by the experience gained by other and older teachers. Provision was also made many years ago for the establishment of teachers' purely professional libraries in the various counties. The final step taken in the direction of building up the profession and cementing its members together for the promotion of a common interest was the adoption, as a recognized part of our educational system, of the law and regulations relating to Teachers' Associations. This would have been comparatively useless had not provision been previously made for the elementary and higher professional training of teachers for the various grades of certificates; for their employment and protection as "public officers" (*vide* regulations), and for their conditional superannuation at any time, if disabled while teaching, and their non-conditional superannuation at 60 years of age. The right of the teacher to payment for holidays and vacations has also been secured to him by statute, as well as provision for the payment of his salary during illness up to a certain time and beyond it, at the pleasure of trustees.

A point thus was reached when the intercourse of teachers with one another could be made pleasant and profitable. The profession itself has now been finally organized, and it has at length a distinct and legally recognized status in our educational system.

The policy of the Department in these matters has been for very many years both fostering and paternal in its character. It was felt that the boy was no less the "father of the man" than was the school the creature, or rather the creation, of the teacher. It was also felt to be essential to the efficiency of our schools that teachers should not only be educated but systematically trained for and in every grade of their profession; that their interests should not only be protected while under engagement with trustees, but that they should be assured of their right, without diminution of salary, to enjoy holidays and vacations; and also to be paid when laid aside by sickness; but they should without similar loss have a right as individuals to see how their more skilful brethren conducted their schools and administered discipline; and that collectively they should have the right and opportunity of meeting together (under the experienced presidency of their Inspectors) and of comparing notes and discussing, as well as illustrating in various ways, the many-sided questions of practical education, which constantly present themselves as problems to the younger teachers.

From these remarks it will be seen that the Education Department has, during the last twenty years, even more than done its part in organizing the profession of teaching, and of giving it a dis-

\* I do not say that by this change the country suffered a wrong; but while it gained, the teaching profession suffered serious loss.