

### Teachers' Institute of Cumberland and North and West Colchester.

On Wednesday, May 6th, the delegates to this institute gathered in the little town that lies beautifully situated between the Cobequids and the Basin of Minas. The bright sunshine whitened over the houses of the contented community of Parrsboro. The fine weather continued throughout the convention. In the evening the delegates proceeded to Smith's Hall, where they were received by the local teachers and the citizens. A welcoming address was given by Principal McKay of Parrsboro, and was replied to by Inspector Craig and Mrs. Leonowens. Music, readings, refreshments, and the flow of social intercourse, all contributed to make the evening a very enjoyable one.

The eight departments of the school were held in session for a short time on Thursday morning that the visiting teachers might learn some of the methods of the local staff. After Inspector Craig had formally opened the institute, he called on Principal Ruggles of Acadia Mines, to read a paper on the "Practical Teaching of Grammar." He deplored the fact that the necessities of examination by the education office required the use of the text-book in grammar. However, let the definitions be studied orally, and the reading book be used to illustrate the various parts of speech. Let the pronouns be studied with especial care in order to elicit rules of government and syntax. It is essential to give abundance of written work in order that the pupil may have a practical grasp of the subject. Five minutes in writing sentences containing past tenses and past participles will be more helpful than half an hour of study of the text-book. Only the most general principles of parsing and analysis should be taught in grades VII and VIII. As there are many debatable points in grammar, these may be used for the purpose of inducing the pupils to weigh facts pro and con, as he must afterwards do in real life. Other speakers forcibly condemned the use of the text-book in grammar. Some thought that English could be taught more effectually on the play-ground and at the breakfast table than in the school-room. One speaker dwelt on the desirability of inspectors putting into practice during their visits to the schools the above theories, on which they had set their mark of approval.

The rest of the morning was devoted to methods of teaching English composition. Miss Archibald's method was as follows: During the reading of Mr. Ruggles' paper, she had dictated a passage of simple English to a class of pupils in another room. She then brought these before the institute, had two of the best compositions read, and noted from the exercises of the others

some of the principal faults to be avoided. She wrote the faulty sentences on the board, and made the pupils notice the errors and suggest the correct methods. In the discussion one teacher explained a convenient method of calling the pupils' attention to errors in their exercises. In correcting them use abbreviations such as W. S. for wrong spelling, W. F. for wrong form. This both saves the teachers' time, and arouses the scholars' interest by making them find out through the symbol what the mistake is. The too frequent use of the conjunction can be avoided by means of frequent drill. After practical work in English in the common schools, the study of grammar will be a pleasure to pupils in the high school. The council of public instruction should proscribe grammar up to grade VIII, instead of prescribing it.

The afternoon session was opened by an address on drawing by Mrs. Leonowens, of Halifax, formerly governess in the imperial court of Siam. Enthusiastically and eloquently she discussed her great subject. Cave dwellers, she pointed out, were known chiefly by their drawings of objects. Adornment came before writing. Decorative art has been developed in every pre-historic race before the useful. The first writing of the Egyptians was by means of hieroglyphics. The hieroglyphic for a young man is the figure of a goose. All this is evidence of a most conclusive nature that drawing is an instinct in the human race. Pupils can be taught to draw before they write. Drawing from flat representations destroys the power to draw. Let us then take advantage of the inborn instincts of our children which are inherited from European ancestors, to whom great works of art were familiar, and begin in the kindergarten to draw objects. Our system of drawing from the flat may be compared to the Chinese custom of binding their women's feet. Raphael made his first drawing by sketching his sister's shoe. The Boston schools after fifteen years of drawing from the flat, have cast away this plan and have taken models. We should make our drawings from fruits, vegetables, busts, etc. The teacher should be able to draw every object he or she sees. Training might be given in the Summer School. The Boston national drawing course has a course of models. The expense in the long run would be much less than that of the present drawing books. A farther result would be the transformation of our villages with architectural buildings. There is, moreover, a great demand for boys who can draw, as skilled workmen. Such are led into every art and industry. Teachers in Germany and Russia, in teaching their nature lessons, cover the boards with the drawings of insects and dissect the same on the board to the intense delight of their child-