

FORESHADOWED CHANGES.

No one can think of charging the educational department of Nova Scotia with a lack of caution in the introduction of reform. Not only has the goodness of the change to be thoroughly demonstrated, but the readiness of the people to receive it must be understood. While this procedure may appear too slow for those who feel the pressing need and the evident advantage of a change to put us in harmony with our changed environment, it is, nevertheless, the only safe method. Nothing is more necessary than faith in the stability of order. Change, when predicted and expected, is simply adaptation. It is the jar of the unexpected that strains the social fabric. Here is what is foreshadowed. We quote from the report of the Superintendent of Education for 1888:

In my last report I suggested the desirability of importing into our standards of license more distinctively professional features than they now contain, and in the same connection submitted in outline a scheme for the reconstruction of our examination system, which has remained practically unchanged for upwards of twenty years. The general purpose and plan of this reconstruction have met with a very considerable degree of approval. Still, as the changes proposed are important and somewhat far-reaching in their consequences, I am not so anxious to press them forward for immediate adoption, as to prepare the way for their successful introduction when matters of detail have been carefully worked out, and a still stronger public opinion created in their favor.

Scholarship, though of prime importance, is not in itself a sufficient preparation for the highly complex work of training youth. Our existing tests should be taken to prove, not that a successful candidate is qualified to assume charge of a school, but simply that he has intellectual acquirements and culture qualifying him for entrance on a special course of preparation for that duty. Scholarship, in short, is but one of a number of essential qualifications. A too common experience proves that even a high degree of it may co-exist with fatal incapacity to realize in practice the most commonplace ideal of a successful school.

I respectfully re-submit for consideration the substance of the recommendations contained in my last report.

1. The awards of the Annual Provincial Examination shall be simply certificates, according to class, of sufficient general scholarship, but shall in themselves confer no authority to teach.

2. This authority must be acquired by adding to a general scholarship certificate graduation at our own or other approved normal school, or a diploma certifying due professional competency, obtained at a properly searching and comprehensive examination in the theory and practice of teaching.

I am convinced that every sphere of educational activity would be benefited by the differentiation thus proposed. The various classes of schools—normal, academic and com-

mon—freed from hurtful competition, would each have its proper work to do in training teachers for our youth. A powerful check would be given to the excessive and injurious influx into the teaching body of half-grown boys and girls, many of whom now enter, with ignorant indifference, a profession for whose duties they have made no proper preparation. As to the beneficial bearing of the proposed changes on the dignity, permanency and emoluments of the teacher's own position there can be no doubt whatever.

It is natural that inquiry should be directed to the ability of the normal school to meet the increased burdens likely to be laid upon it by the proposed re-adjustments. Considering this question, we should bear in mind that in any given year, the number of persons seeking professional preparation would fall very much short of the number who at its commencement had obtained non-professional certificates, which no doubt would be sought by many as valuable testimonials of scholarship, without any intention of putting them to an ulterior use. While it would not be in the interests of education that very extensive advantage should be taken of the alternative professional examination, that provision would meet the convenience of some, especially of teachers applying for advance of grade, and would so far lessen the strain on the normal school facilities. Further, I am of opinion that some separate or special arrangement should be made for the professional training of teachers of the third class, so long as the retention of that class may be deemed necessary. In Ontario, where first and second class diplomas can only be obtained by classification at one of the two provincial normal schools, the training of third class teachers is effected by an arrangement with the managers of high schools, one or more of which in each county are organized for professional purposes for an annual term of ten or twelve weeks as "County Model Schools." Classification at one of these model schools is the necessary condition of obtaining third class licenses. Though there are some difficulties in the way, I am of opinion that a similar use of our county academies, or a certain number of them, would not be found impracticable. And on the whole subject, I conclude, that the normal school, relieved of the large amount of ordinary class instruction now forced upon it, would meet all the demands likely to accrue under the suggested re arrangement, and at the same time operate more directly and much more powerfully for the general advantage of education.

The country is ready, waiting for some such development of its educational system, we believe. If any are in doubt of this we give them now the best opportunity we can to correct or modify our impressions.

Friday, May 17th, has been chosen as Arbor Day by Inspectors Wetmore and Carter for the schools in their respective districts. It is quite probable that this will be the date decided upon by the other Inspectors.

Dr. Edward Judson is expected to lecture before the Athenæum of Acadia College on the evening of the 23rd of May.