

Prolonged School Attendance.

A very large proportion of boys, and many girls also, at about the age of twelve to fourteen, begin to show a strong desire to leave school. It does not matter that in many cases they have not acquired the necessary elements of even a common school education. Indeed the more backward they are the more anxious they are to be freed from the restraints of the schoolroom. And too often the teacher, considering herself fortunate to be rid of them, does nothing to induce them to remain.

This tendency to leave school before acquiring the ability to read intelligently, and before securing the training necessary for the more commonplace duties of life, is most unfortunate to the individual and unfair to the taxpayer and to the state, which pay that they may be protected from the dangers of an ignorant proletariat. This evil could be partly remedied by good compulsory attendance laws. But our present laws on this subject are very defective and very poorly administered. They are defective in that they permit pupils, no matter how illiterate, to leave school at the age of fourteen. There should be a minimum educational test—a leaving examination. No pupil mentally capable should be allowed to leave school without being well grounded in the three R's. Nor should there be any minimum attendance clause. Every pupil, without good excuse, should be required to attend every school day. Until, however, these much-to-be-desired improvements, together with an impartial enforcement of the law, can be secured, other means should be used to encourage prolonged attendance. Of these means the granting of leaving certificates from the common schools would be one of the most effective. These certificates, although somewhat after the plan of those given by the high school grades, might, if possible, be of somewhat better design and appearance. Being impartial guarantees to employers of labor, of the training and scholastic ability of the holder, they would possess a decided value. They would be so prized by parents and pupils as to be a strong inducement for a longer attendance at school and for better work while at school. The success of the system of granting certificates to the various grades of the high school should encourage the educational authorities to extend it downwards. In the event of the Council of Public Instruction neglecting to do so, it would pay the various school boards to undertake it, as they would thus be able to secure better results from their school expenditure.

Never lend a borrowed book, but return it as soon as you are through with it, so that the owner may not be deprived of its use.—*Courier-Journal*.

Are We Keeping Step with the Times?

Supt. Soldan, of St. Louis, gives the following as the drift of educational work in other places, and it may be interesting to make a brief comparison as to our own progress.

1. In reading, supplementary work is universal.
2. Primary reading is script reading. The subjects for the first sentences are taken from the child's experience. The tree or the bird which he has seen, the snow on the ground, anything that he has observed, any story to which he has listened, become the subjects of the primary reading lessons.
2. Reading in the higher grades is no longer made an aim and object in itself, but is relegated to the place of a means for gaining information. Literature, or nature study, etc., have become the ends in whose pursuit reading is employed, regularly and constantly, it is true, but rather as an incident than as an aim in itself.
4. Vertical writing has been adopted almost everywhere.
5. The province of arithmetic has been designedly and decidedly encroached upon by other studies. Many topics which were deemed essential ten years ago are omitted altogether or are taught incidentally only (*e. g.*, Mr. Foster reports that the G. C. D. and the L. C. M. are no longer taught as special subjects in the Chicago schools).
6. Physical geography, as a separate study, has lost its place in the common schools in several cities. It has re-appeared, however, as a high school study.
7. Manual training, that is, cooking, sewing and carpentry, or sloyd, has found a place in almost every city school system. In the new buildings rooms are provided for these purposes.
8. The time gained through the elimination of physical geography and parts of arithmetic is largely given to the "enrichment of the school curriculum," to use President Elliot's expression. The study of English history, and in some places (*e. g.*, Indianapolis) Greek and Roman history is begun in the district schools. The study of literature is introduced at an early age and carried from the primary to the higher grades, where the reading of some plays of Shakespeare is frequently taken up. Elementary science is taught extensively.

Now, how do we stand in the Atlantic Provinces in regard to these several subjects?

- (1) Supplementary reading is provided for in a few schools and its necessity recognized for all. It is only a question of "ways and means."
- (2) The natural method of teaching reading in primary grades has been the accepted one here for a long time.
- (3) We are still hampered to a considerable extent by text-books in the advanced grades, but in the high school grades there is little formal reading. What there is consists chiefly of literature, and is incidental to the course of study.
- (4) The most progressive schools and teachers have taken up the system of vertical writing, and all prefer it infinitely to the old style. It is the system in use in Nova Scotia, but the New Brunswick Board of Education has not yet seen its way clear to prescribe it. The