

Modern Education and the Old System of the Same

(By Rev. G. DeBois, M. A., Annapolis Royal)

I must preface my paper by saying that after hearing Miss Cook's paper I would add nothing to the subjects to be taught in schools.

This month will witness the annually recurring revival of the general "Educational System" of the country. The machinery of public and private schools and other institutions of learning will begin to move again after the summer vacation, and all who have been for weeks thinking only of recreation will now turn their thoughts to the great questions which are continually coming up in the process of "educational work."

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my mind at least, is largely owing to the present system of teaching how to spell. I would eliminate Algebra during this period, not being absolutely necessary, and also the teaching of Grammar by the system of analysis as now in vogue, substituting the old system as that contained in Lancelotti Murray's grammar, which certainly was much more simple, less complex and more easily understood, where, as if there be anything in our public schools less productive of good results, less understood, and least by the pupils, universally detested, it is the attempt to teach grammatical construction by the present system of analysis. I had here almost made an end of advising what subjects were necessary to be taught, but after perusing the papers of Miss Juniper of Domestic Science, and that of Miss Cook on singing, and the exemplification and address of Father Sullivan, and the varied requirements of their pupils, I am struck by the thought that by pursuing this simple and attractive system anyone, even an Artisan, would find it easy to do so.

many of the leading schools of the day outside of our own province are beginning to take fewer subjects for teaching, and confining such duties to a whole year in order that each of the subjects taught during that period may be thoroughly understood and mastered; and the lack of such a method as this that which is chiefy detrimental to our present system, since, if a sufficient time could be given to each subject the system would be admirable in almost every respect, but as the age in which most children can attend school is from six to sixteen, the hurrying from one subject to another in order to overtake the whole curriculum cannot be other than unsatisfactory, both to teacher and pupil. But who is responsible for these too numerous studies to be gone through within too short a time? I answer (I may be wrong, but it is my idea as well as that of many others) that it is the present system of instruction, and that of the Board of Public Instruction. Now the gentlemen who compose this board are generally among the most influential men of the community, they spend much time and labor in the interest of our public schools, and certainly on this account deserve much credit. But this is not enough. They may be moral, well-meaning, intellectual men, but in order to act intelligently on the subject of school work they should be thoroughly conversant with actual school work. Lacking this knowledge of the working of schools and framing courses of study, the whole arrangement is left to one man, or a few, the greatest industrial nature, and as ready and as willing to listen to suggestions from others, cannot be expected to do more than disseminate, as far as his ability will permit, what he has himself seen and done in his own school work.

A more energetic, painstaking, faithful, energetic, fair-minded man, open to conviction and willing to listen to and accept the views of others, if proved to him to be better than his own, than our present superintendent, would be hard to find and to him is owing in a large measure the present school system and admirable in its way, if only sufficient time could be given to have it fully carried out, but I feel sure that I am but echoing his own sentiments when I say that the present system, as it is, is not so perfect as it might be, and that there is still room for further improvement, and the proof of this statement is the fact brought before me today in the meeting of the present school system, arranged principally in this paper I shall have to suffer the common martyrdom of those who propose ideas (even though old ones) in advance of the age in which they live, but I must be satisfied with the tardy justice that may be accorded me in the Great Hereafter, and only trust that at present this barren assembly will grant me pardon since my views on this subject are the outcome of twenty years, has been deeply interested in school work, having filled the office of teacher of the Annapolis Academy from sixteen to twenty, a professor of mathematics in a leading University, an inspector of schools and Governor examiner for county licenses for twelve years, and now, at an advanced age, in his forty-fifth year of continuous service as chairman of the Board for Annapolis West, embracing a few years ago the whole county) and who now, from the experience thereby gained, is under the strong conviction that, reasons heretofore and hereafter advanced, the present school system, admirable as it is in many respects, has not as yet reached that high practical standard in some respects so earnestly to be desired. But it may be said, "Why advance a theory without introducing a remedy?" My answer is: That the remedy is the result of a life-long experience in educational matters.

First, then, the best features of the present and past system should be retained. With regard to the past system, viz., having a few studies prosecuting at first until the pupils are thoroughly grounded in them, and thereby laying a solid foundation upon which to build a higher superstructure, upon which the practical and useful features of the present system as far as possible retained. In order to exemplify what I mean, we will take the different ages during which most of our pupils are able to attend school, viz., from six to sixteen years, leaving the earlier years for such instruction as might be suitable for their tender age. Between the ages of six and twelve I would have the pupils study those things only which are absolutely necessary in every day life, without which no one can be deemed a scholar, and with which it may be competent for any one to get along creditably in the ordinary occupations of the world, such studies to embrace, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography, History, the elements of Latin and French, Composition, Book-keeping, teach spelling by pronouncing and carrying on each syllable even to the end, since it is pretty well acknowledged that the spelling, even among so-called highly educated people, of the present day, is inferior to that of the past, which and fact, to

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Exhibits Halifax St. John

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