

For the REVIEW.]

University Extension for Halifax Teachers.

A course of lectures on methods in teaching, chiefly by the Professors of Dalhousie College, was begun after Christmas holidays. The attendance was unexpectedly large, and consisted mainly of actual and prospective teachers. The lecturers are superior teachers of their respective subjects, some of them being considered equal to the best in America. But with one exception, they have not made a special study of education as a science, or of method as related to general principles. Their success in their own department is the result of profound knowledge of their subjects, and of great practical ability. Their lectures are therefore all the more interesting. For they give deductions from a large and successful experience, and thus supply the data for larger generalizations. Our readers cannot fail to be deeply interested in the opinions of such able teachers, and we therefore give a brief outline of their lectures:

PROF. McDONALD ON MATHEMATICS.

He did not believe that there is any very definite science of method. The best general rule was that given by Nelson to one of his captains: "Get at once to close quarters, and pound away until you succeed." If there are any principles of method they are not different for different subjects, but equally applicable to all branches of learning.

The first qualification of a teacher, is a profound acquaintance with his subject and a fair knowledge of all related subjects—wide general culture. In the next place the teacher must be possessed of large sympathies, must be able to look at his subject from the standpoint of his pupil—must hold the interest of his pupils. Thirdly, he must be a master of correct English—pure idiomatic English. Accuracy and clearness in a few subjects is better than blundering over a wider range. Grammar does not teach the correct use of English, nor does logic teach us how to reason; but they are useful as mental discipline, and they enable us to criticize the composition or reasoning. In like manner pedagogical lecturers will not make good teachers, though they may be useful in giving them the ability to judge of such work.

The lecturer then gave the following precepts for the benefit of young teachers: Speak low when you want to be impressive; never overlook a first offence; when in a difficulty tell your pupil that you will take time to consider and decide; never expose your pupil to the temptation to tell an untruth.

He condemned the heuristic method of teaching geometry as it tended to inaccuracy of expression. Geometry is useful mainly as a mental discipline.

For practical purposes, Latin is much more useful—the facts gained from it being used a thousand times oftener than those from geometry. The boy who studies Latin, will excel in all other subjects, and will have his Latin with all the culture which it implies as clear gain. Algebra should be taken up after geometry. Except in rare instances, the study of geometry cannot be pursued with advantage before the age of fifteen. The sciences should also be deferred until late in the school course. A smattering extended over the earlier school years will destroy all interest when the pupil is mature enough to take up these subjects in earnest. It is of prime importance that every subject should be made to contribute to the pupil's power of expression in good English.

PROFESSOR FORREST ON HISTORY.

He claimed that no subject studied in the schools exceeds in practical value, history, when taught as it should be. If the facts are fairly presented with the true coloring of time and place, and the student is encouraged to add to these by his own research, and then left to make his own generalizations, there could be no better training of the judgment and conscience, or better developing of the true citizen and the highest type of manhood. The mental exercise obtained from the study of history, is that which best prepares a man to perform worthily and successfully his part in life, and to decide wisely the most important questions which will come before him.

The importance attached to history by every modern civilized nation, is evidenced by the fact that nearly all the best historical literature of the world is the work of this century. The methods of modern historical investigators are as truly scientific as are the methods of those engaged in natural science, and more productive in the light that they throw upon the realities of the past, separating facts and fiction, exposing to view the mainspring of human action.

The old methods of memorizing history are surely though slowly disappearing. History so taught is worse than a useless waste of time. In the light of modern methods, it would soon disappear, were it not for the prevailing system of examinations, so injurious to teachers and pupils alike. It would be a vast gain to all concerned if half the examinations could be abolished, and the grading of the pupils left mainly to the teachers, who after all, are the best judges. By so doing, the school system would be freed from an incubus which prevents the free development of better methods, and pupils would not be, as now, crowded with memory work.

The text-books now in use, and perhaps the historical text-books in particular, are not as good as they