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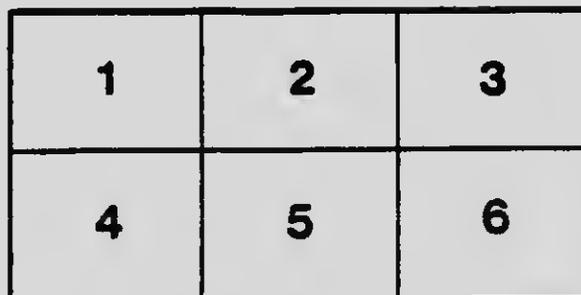
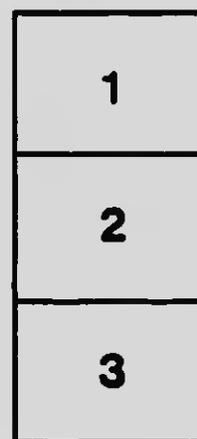
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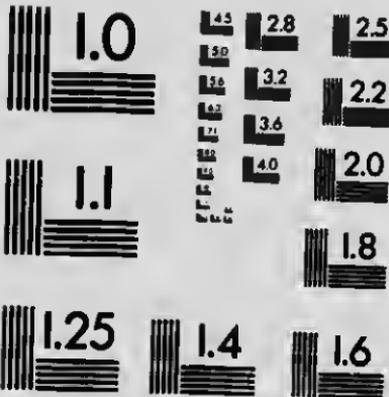
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12 PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

"SOME NEEDED EDUCATIONAL REFORMS"

(1) JOHN SEATH, B.A., LL.D.,

Inspector of High Schools for Ontario.

ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

ONTARIO EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

HELD IN

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

APRIL 14-16, 1903.

1903

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SOME NEEDED EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

This subject I have selected for my address is, "Some Needed Educational Reforms." I intend to present a plea for the reconstruction of the relations of the main branches of our educational system and to add some suggestions for the improvement of the status of the Public and the High School teacher.

I. RELATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE HIGH SCHOOLS.

This relation between the Public and the High Schools, although more satisfactory than it was twenty years ago, is not yet what it should be. The old Grammar Schools—the forerunners of the modern High Schools—were originally for the children of the official and governing classes; and, notwithstanding the gradual popularization of the High Schools under Dr. Ryerson and his successors, the notion that these schools are for the special benefit of the well-to-do and the aristocratic has not yet wholly died out. Now, what the position of the High School should be in our system depends altogether on our definition of popular education. On this subject, let me quote President Eliot, of Harvard University, than whom there is no abler exponent of the claims of liberal culture. According to him, "The fundamental object of democratic education is to lift the whole population to a higher plane of intelligence, conduct, and happiness." And again: "Democratic institutions cannot be safe until a majority of the people can be trusted to observe accurately and state precisely the results of their observations; but, above all, to draw just conclusions."

Put into practice, President Eliot's theory implies free education and a continuous system from the Kindergarten to the end of the University courses in arts. Only here and there as yet do we find state-supported Universities in the United States, but we do find everywhere, so far as my knowledge goes, free primary and secondary schools—Grammar Schools, High Schools, and Technical Schools.

In Ontario we have free Public Schools. An ideal system would be free High Schools and a free University also—a continuous system, modified at different points to meet the necessities of those who drop out before completing the whole course of state-supported education.

Fifth Form and Continuation Classes.

So much for the general question. Let us now consider some of the difficulties that have met us in Ontario as the result of the theory that our High and Public Schools are not continuous parts of one system. Some years ago, in many places, the question of the maintenance of Fifth book classes was a fruitful source of irritation. Time, however, has worked a partial cure. In those localities where there are no High Schools, the number of Fifth book classes, or, as they are also called, Continuation classes, has largely increased. No one who understands the situation and views it unselfishly, can wish such classes anything but the fullest measure of success. Although known by a different name, most of them are simply a lower grade of High School. In the process of evolution, however, their position has become an anomalous one. Many of them attempt the same work as the High Schools, but they are not subject to the limitations which have been imposed upon the High Schools to secure their efficiency. In the coming revision of the Regulations, it will evidently be the duty of the Education Department to adjust the Continuation classes properly to their place in the system. Most certainly, if they are to undertake any part of the work for the departmental examinations for teachers, this adjustment will become indispensable. In their equipment and the qualifications of their staffs such schools must be co-ordinated with the High Schools.

The conditions are, of course, different where the Public School is in the same locality as the High School. What shall be done with those Public School pupils who have completed the fourth form work and intend to remain at school only a year or so, should be, in my judgment, under proper conditions, wholly a question of expense. It is not material whether their education is continued in special forms in the Public Schools, as in Ottawa, Hamilton, and Toronto; or in a special building in connection with the High School, as in London; or, again, in special forms or with special provision in the regular forms, as is, in most cases, the present system of organization. But, if such pupils are transferred to the High Schools, at least the first form should be free and a suitable course of study

should be provided for them therein. Part of the trouble in the past has been due to the unsuitability, for such pupils of the classes in some of the High Schools, and to the language courses which circumstances have often forced upon them. At the risk of provoking my friends, the Latinists, I must point out that, under the new course for the junior examination for teachers, this objection should disappear.

One Small Board of Education.

The existence of separate boards for the High and the Public Schools has, in some localities, led to a want of due coherence in the organization. To meet this difficulty and to obliterate for ever the notion that the Public, High, and Technical Schools are separate entities, all in a locality should be under one management. We need boards whose members are chosen in the interests of all classes of schools. I trust that the Bill which the Minister of Education has promised for the reorganization of the schools of Toronto, will, in due time, be followed by one for the whole Province. In the United States, I may add, although each locality is a law to itself in matters educational, all grades of the schools—Grammar, High, and Technical—are, so far as I know, invariably under one Board.

Nor should this Board be large. Here, again, the United States leads the way. The schools of the new city of New York, for example, with a population half as large again as that of the Province of Ontario are managed by one Board with a membership considerably less than the membership of the Toronto boards; San Francisco, with a population of 350,000, has a School Board of only four members and Chicago, with a population six times that of Toronto, has a Board less than one-third the size of the Toronto Boards, and so on. The Board being almost invariably small and generally elected by the people at large, although many contain the nominated element and some even are wholly nominated. Large Boards are unnecessary. Nothing proves more mischievous in education than the too common belief that every intelligent citizen, whether on the School Board or not, is a born educationist. Here, as in all other departments of human activity, the expert should direct. All my experience tends to show that those schools are most successful, and only generally successful, where this course is followed. School Boards should retain "the right of eminent domain," but in matters of detail the less they are in

evidence the better for their constituents. Willingness to follow the advice of experts is, probably, the best proof of popular sanity and intelligence.

II. RELATION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THE SCHOOLS.

Speaking of the mass of inferior novels under which each publishing season groans, the "Bystander," our eminent publicist, expresses himself thus in a recent number of *The Weekly Sun* :

"All this rubbish (the inferior novels) will find readers. It is impossible that such mental dissipation should not have its effect on mental health. The circulating libraries to which readers flock for novels are intellectual saloons. The consequences will probably be loss of hold on the realities of life, confusion of the moral standard, distaste for unromantic duties."

That this arraignment is, in our case, well founded, there can be no reasonable doubt. From information which has reached me from many parts of the Province, it is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that the percentage of fiction taken from our public libraries ranges from 40 or 50 per cent. to 90 or 95 per cent., and that a good deal of it is of an inferior character. A stricter censorship over the character of the books purchased by the library boards would, no doubt, do something to set matters right, but this remedy would not reach the seat of the disease—the vitiated condition of the public taste. Reform, to be effective, must begin in our schools. The pupil in the Public School as well as the pupil in the High School should go out into life with a permanent taste for good literature. The school system that has failed to produce this result, has failed to accomplish the chief purpose of elementary education.

Condition of Our Library System.

Let us see how matters stand in Ontario. A beginning of an efficient library system has been made in our High Schools. But, practically, there are as yet no libraries in our Public Schools, where, indeed, considering the character of the attendance, they are most to be desired. The provisions under English literature in the proposed courses of study and the encouragement now offered for the establishment of libraries in Public Schools—little, it is true, but, let us hope, only the forerunner of more—show us that the Education Department is not insensible to our danger, or ignorant

of the best means of avoiding it. Ontario must have good Public and High School Libraries—reference libraries and libraries of good general literature—literature which will stimulate and gratify the pupil's thirst for knowledge; which will cultivate his imagination and add to the sum of his happiness; and, which, above all, will keep before him and train him to reverence high ethical ideals of life.

But we need more than school libraries. Neither the public library nor the school library is complete in itself. Each is necessary to the success of the other. The public library should, on the one hand, supplement the all-important work of cultivating the pupil's taste, and, on the other, it should ensure that, when he leaves school, he has acquired the invaluable habit of consulting a library—of attending, what Carlyle has aptly called, "the true University of the people."

School Board Should Control Public Library.

In only one or two localities in Ontario is there as yet even a limited connection between the schools and the public libraries. Here, too, our progressive neighbors have pointed out the way to reform. In many of the States, not only have teachers and pupils special privileges at the libraries, but relays of suitable books are sent regularly to the different school grades, and the librarians give special attention to the needs of the schools in making the purchases. To secure this eminently desirable relation throughout Ontario, one board should control the public library as well as the schools; they are all parts of the provincial system of education. But, until public opinion justifies the step, the principals of our Public, Separate, and High Schools, or at least one of each of them, if there are more than one in a locality, should be members of the Public Library Board; and, to them, when practicable, the Public School Inspector should be added. These school functionaries should be members *ex officio*; and if they are what I trust our principals and inspectors always are, enlightened and forceful men, our public library statistics and our public morals should tell a different tale before many years went by.

We cannot overestimate the importance of our libraries. There is no field of human enterprise in which the man who uses a library has not an advantage over the one who does not. No reasonable person, either, objects to the moderate enjoyment of fiction, the work of genuine writers. Such books sweeten our daily tasks and

lighten the wearisome fardel of human ills. But the highest use of the library is the ethical one—"A good book," says Milton, "is the precious life blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up to a life beyond life." "We come then," says Ruskin, "to the great concourse of the Dead, not merely to know from them what is True, but chiefly to feel with them what is Righteous."

III. RELATION BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE HIGH SCHOOLS.

I now come to a part of my subject which is perhaps not inappropriate, in view of our being for the first time the guests of the Provincial University. My criticisms will be frank, but I know our University authorities well enough to feel confident that they will accept these criticisms in the friendly spirit in which they are offered.

Matriculation Subjects and Standard.

The relation between the Universities and the High Schools is a most important one; for it concerns the character of the work in both, and, through them, the educational status of the Province. This relation involves, in particular, the matriculation examination and the courses for graduation in Arts.

I am, I know, expressing an opinion very generally held when I say that the present scheme of subjects and the present pass standard for matriculation are out of keeping with both the necessities of higher education and the capabilities of our secondary schools. On the question of subjects I do not intend to enlarge. As I shall point out later, the time has come, many of us believe, when the relation between our Universities and the High Schools should be remodelled. What the subjects shall then be will, of course, depend upon the issue.

No educationist, however, needs to be told that the percentage now prescribed on each matriculation paper, even when enforced, does not and cannot secure adequate preparation for University work. Every now and then University dignitaries say to me: "What is the matter with the High Schools? We are all the time getting matriculants ignorant of the elements of English, not to speak of the elements of the languages." Any High School principal can readily supply the answer. As long as the Universities set a low standard, so long will many enter without sufficient prepara-

tion. In England a boy often remains at school for several years after he is able to matriculate. In Ontario many pupils cannot be retained after they have reached the pass standard, or they cannot be induced to go beyond it.

Non-Matriculated Students.

Directly connected with the question of matriculation is that of the admission of non-matriculated students who take a whole or a partial course.

The object of a matriculation examination is evidently to enable the authorities to find out whether the candidate has been properly prepared for the undergraduate courses. As a general rule, therefore, no one should be admitted who cannot give this proof.

Under the system of Junior and Senior matriculation, there has grown up in the Provincial University a condition of affairs which, however necessary it may have been in the early history of our educational system, seems to many of us to be now unnecessary.

Let me present the facts to you as I have ascertained them:*

For the last nine years—from 1894 to 1903, of the total attendance in the first year in Arts in University College, 40 per cent. has consisted of non-matriculated students, and 19 per cent. of the total attendance in even the second year has been of the same character, not to speak of a few in the higher years. The statistics also show that a large percentage of these non-matriculated students have taken the full Arts course, the rest being "occasional" students taking one or more classes. These are all called "non-matriculated"; but it must be understood that some of them are partially matriculated. Of the 48, for example, in the present first year who are taking the full Arts course (I am not here taking account of the "occasional" students), thirty-four have tried no

* The statistics in reference to University and Victoria Colleges are from reports to the Senate and supplementary statements supplied to me by the Registrars. Since my address was delivered, the Chancellor of Victoria has, however, claimed, in a letter to the newspapers, that the number of non-matriculated students in Victoria taking the full Arts course in the present first year, is smaller than I have made it. I have accepted his statement, but have pointed out that special reports to the University Senate for the years 1896-1901, inclusive, show that during this period almost 34 per cent. of the total first year's attendance in Victoria, taking the full Arts course, were non-matriculated students. From 1894 to 1903, inclusive, the statistics show that 30 per cent. of the first year's attendance in University College, taking the full Arts course, have also been non-matriculated. And, of the non-matriculated students at University and Victoria Colleges, 60 per cent. fail each year to pass the Senior matriculation examination, thus demonstrating the truth of my main contention.

matriculation examination or have completely failed, and the remaining fourteen are partially matriculated. I am, I know, not putting the case too strongly when I say that, while there are, no doubt, a few mature students among the non-matriculated, able to go on with most of the work they have elected, the largo majority are taking up work which they should have done in the secondary schools. The best of them are weak in one or more subjects, and most of them are poor all around. Such students, if recognized by the College instructors, are manifestly a drag upon the regular classes.

Elementary Preparatory Classes.

Nor is this the only objectionable feature of the present situation. For many years a preparatory class in Latin has been maintained in University College, and this year, I understand, a similar class has been instituted in Greek. In these classes special instruction is provided for the non-matriculated and for those who have passed the formal matriculation, it is true, but who also are deficient in the classical languages. Just what the situation is we may conclude from the fact that the class in Latin usually consists of from forty to fifty—sometimes, indeed, of more—and begins with the elements in October, overtaking the first year pass work during the College session. In French and German, too,—partly, however, owing to the scheme of matriculation subjects—some students enter the classes wholly ignorant of the languages or badly prepared, and, to these, special attention has to be paid by the instructors. No provision is made, I believe, in either English or mathematics, but that none is made is by no means a proof that none is needed. Victoria College also admits freely non-matriculated students. At present over 40 per cent. of the first year consist of this class, and, of these, half are taking a full Arts course. During the first term of the present session, the Registrar tells me, twelve students received special elementary instruction two hours a week in French and German, owing, probably, to defects in their scheme of matriculation subjects. But, so far as my knowledge goes, similar students in the other departments of Victoria have been left to forage for themselves.

In presenting my objections to the unrestricted admission of students into University and Victoria Colleges, I have taken into account both the "occasional" students and the students in the full Arts course; for those who think as I do, believe that it is not in the interests of either the student or the University to admit any-

one whose fitness has not been passed upon by competent authority. No one objects to the admission of non-matriculated students under proper restrictions as to their preparation for the classes they elect. There is no cast-iron rule in the case of the High School entrance. There need be none in the case of University matriculation.

Trinity and McMaster Universities also admit non-matriculated students, but correspondence with their authorities authorizes me to state that such students are admitted only under restrictions in the matter of scholarship. The number of such students in attendance is, however, considerable: I have the particulars, but it is unnecessary for me to use them at present. In Queen's University, Kingston—and I deal especially with Queen's, for she is the only serious rival of the Provincial University—in Queen's, also, the Arts classes are open to non-matriculated students, but under what appear to be strict limitations. From correspondence with the Registrar, I learn that the number of non-matriculated students in Queen's has always been small, consisting mainly of students from the city of Kingston who take a class or two. According to his statement, of a total attendance of 494 in Arts, during the present session, only nine are non-matriculated students proceeding to a degree. It will not be amiss, either, for me to state here, as having an important bearing on the question at issue, that I have a formal assurance from the Senate of Queen's that it is prepared to support any reasonable scheme for raising the matriculation standard in this Province.

It appears, therefore, that the Universities of Ontario all admit non-matriculated students, but all with definite restrictions as to scholarship except University and Victoria Colleges, the Arts Colleges of the Provincial University. To be admitted here, all the student apparently needs to do is to pay his fees.

Inadequacy of Undergraduate Courses.

A word now as to the University undergraduate courses. The good men our schools get from the Ontario Universities are very good indeed; but the lower grades of honor men leave something to be desired. What is really most at fault here, as, indeed, elsewhere, is the matriculation standard. Besides, one of the commonest complaints from our older High School principals who, through stress of circumstances, have themselves become good general scholars, is the narrowness of the culture of many of the specialists

on their staffs—a narrowness, of course, usually intensified by the limited range of their daily duties. With a low matriculation standard, specialization in the University courses is now allowed altogether too soon. I have dealt with this subject from only one point of view. No one, however, needs to be told that this limitation of culture cannot but affect more interests than those of our schools.

Plea for Reconstructed Relations.

Here, let me say, in concluding this part of my address, that many of us who advocate a reform of the relations of the High Schools and the Universities do not take the ground that the Universities are wholly to blame for the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. Under a logical and consistent programme in our Public Schools and with a suitable High School Entrance examination, we believe that a boy should be able to enter a University on the present matriculation course younger and better prepared than at present. You have now before you, at any rate, a draft of the reforms proposed by the Minister of Education in the department directly under his control, and all of you—the University professor as well as the Public and the High School teacher—have been invited to help him with your counsel.

Notwithstanding, however, the defects in the present departmental courses, there is no burking the fact that the Universities of Ontario have been for years encroaching upon the domain of the secondary schools, to the manifest injury of public education. The denominational Universities may do as they please. The Province does not control them. But, at the present juncture we have the right to ask that the University of Toronto, which is supported by public funds, shall cease to duplicate the work which has been long done, and which, from the nature of the case, has been better done in the High Schools. So far, also, as the University of Toronto is concerned, some of us believe that one of the causes of the present difficulties—a Junior and a Senior matriculation—should be abolished. One matriculation should take their place with a more suitable scheme of subjects and a far better standard of examination. In my judgment, *this is the most needed, the most important, and the most far-reaching reform we could secure in the educational system of Ontario.*

I have been emboldened to bring this subject under your notice from the fact that the President of Toronto University, in his

very excellent Convocation address of 1900, expresses his willingness, if the departmental regulations should permit it, to support a readjustment of the relations of the Provincial University and the High Schools. He will, I am confident, pardon me for pointing out that it is now in his power "to grasp the skirts of happy chance" and add another to the many obligations under which his administration has already placed the Province.

IV. STATUS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER.

Now, a few words in conclusion on the status of the Public and the High School teacher.

Next to the merits of our educational system, the favorite theme of our rhetoricians is the grandeur and the nobility of the teacher's office, from the Kindergarten to the University. Let us see how this opinion has been translated into the hard facts of our experience. So far as the High School teacher is concerned his position has improved very greatly during the last ten or fifteen years. In the larger centres of population, where usually more liberal views prevail, the Public School teacher shares, to some extent, the consideration—financial and social—which is extended to his brother of the High Schools; only, however, to some extent, for the position of most still leaves much to be desired. But there are many, and I am one of them, who believe that the condition of the rural Public School teacher—the teacher of the small or ungraded school—not only has not advanced, but is on the whole worse, both educationally and financially, than it was fifteen or twenty years ago.

How then is the status of the teacher to be improved? Let me give you a frank statement of my views on the subject.

1. Improvement of Qualifications.

The first step in the regeneration of the teacher should be the improvement of his scholarship and his professional skill. No fair-minded man desires to make any section of the profession a close corporation; but the goal of all educational effort is continually receding, and it is surely not unreasonable to ask that, as the supply of available teachers increases, the standard of qualification should be raised. So far as concerns the High School teacher there is ground for satisfaction; his qualifications have improved very greatly during the last fifteen years, and they will, I have no doubt, continue to improve. But the condition of the Public School teachers, as a body, gives fewer grounds for satisfaction. Apolo-

gists may say what they like; the present plight of the lowest grade is largely due to the ease with which the candidate has long entered the profession and to the over-production of poor material which some years ago accompanied this condition. There is, it is true, a scarcity of teachers in some counties now; but this simply shows that the evil over-production did, lives after it. The proposals which the Minister has submitted to you in regard to the subjects and the standard of the non-professional examinations will, in my judgment, do much to improve the character and the suitability of the rural teacher's scholarship.

But the Public School teacher's professional training must also be improved. Beginning next summer, as you are already aware, the Normal School course will extend over a year. This is as it should be, provided always that the academic preparation has been sufficient. Without better academic preparation, more professional training would be an anomaly. The part of the system, however, that stands in greatest need of reform is the County Model Schools. From them come the majority of the 6,123 teachers of the rural schools. It must, therefore, be manifest that the improvement of the training schools for these teachers is a far more pressing need than an increase in the number of the Normal Schools.

More, however, is needed than an improvement of the Public School teacher's qualifications. Departmental regulations are needed to give these qualifications their due value. Assuredly, in a graded Public School, the Principal should now hold a first or a second class certificate, according to the number of his assistants; and the staff of the larger Continuation classes that do High School work, should now have the same qualifications as are exacted in the case of the High Schools.

2. Better Salaries and Educational Prizes.

However you may differ from me in regard to the proposals I have just made, I expect your favorable consideration of my next. To maintain more efficient schools the salaries of the teachers must be better than they are. Every one knows that a man's status depends a good deal on his income. But I am not basing our claims for increased remuneration on merely personal grounds: our claims must be conceded if the Province is to have efficient schools. A rise in the average salary for each grade of the profession will not, however, meet the case fully. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. A short time ago I complained to one of our University professors, that the men we are getting in the High

Schools from his department are too often inferior in both ability and scholarship. His reply was—and he proved it to be true—that we are not getting the best men, simply because we do not offer them sufficient inducements: their prospects are better in other employments. And what the professor said of his department I find to be true of the others. Our High Schools do not now receive and retain their due share of the first-class honor men. Most of such men now enter other professions or they take post-graduate courses, which often lead to positions in the Colleges and Universities of the United States. Here they are lost to the Province which educated them and which sorely needs their services. I have no desire to indulge in hysterical denunciations of our paymasters, but I now call public attention to what cannot but prove, as the years go by, a serious drawback to educational progress in this Province.

But, as I have said, more than an increase in the average salary is needed. It is not the average salary that induces able and ambitious young men to enter a profession. It is the prizes at the top. Compared with law, medicine, the church, and even with politics—for politics has become a profession—what prizes are there for teachers? The principalship of a city Public School? of a Collegiate Institute? an inspectorship? even a University professorship? God save the mark!

3. A Superannuation Scheme.

My next point is this: To give the teacher the status he deserves, a generous superannuation scheme, conducted by the Government, should form part of our educational machinery. The teacher has special claims; he is a public servant on a limited salary, which few can increase if they devote themselves faithfully to their duties. Many banks and other corporations now provide pensions and retiring allowances for their officers, and a superannuation scheme has been established in connection with our Provincial University. Is the case of the University professor a more deserving one than that of the Public School teacher or the High School teacher? True, under the present Minister of Education, an Act has been passed giving School Boards the right to grant pensions for faithful service. But it will, I fear, be long before this provision becomes a vital function of our educational system. The Province of Ontario contributes to the yearly salary of the teacher. To be logical, not to say generous, it should contribute to his pension.

4. More Recognition in the Management of Educational Affairs.

And lastly, if the Public School teacher and the High School teacher are to hold their rightful place in the educational and the social economy of the Province, they must have more to say in the management of educational affairs. I trust I am not rushing in where officials should fear to tread, when I state that I am one of those—and there are many of us—who believe that our present system of administration is a source of both weakness and strength—in what proportion, I am not here prepared to say. But I am prepared to say that some of its weaknesses would disappear if fuller recognition were granted to those directly connected with the Public and the High Schools. This year, by submitting to you the proposed changes in the Regulations, and, more especially, by proposing to recognize you through some of your officers in the important matter of selecting text-books, the Minister of Education has taken a long stride in the direction of a much needed reform. It remains with you to justify your claims to a fuller recognition.

Last year when addressing the College and High School Department, I took the liberty of pointing out that the Ontario Educational Association does not yet possess the influence it should have in matters of educational policy. Sectional disputes, involving, it may be, conflicting class interests, have sometimes blinded you to the importance of larger issues. This session you will discuss more than one question of a controversial character. Permit me to suggest that, however you may finally dispose of a difficulty which all admit, you now take prompt measures to deal broadmindedly with the questions the Minister has submitted for your consideration. Your present session will probably be the most important in the history of the Association; and, although I belong to the official class, you will pardon me, I hope, for assuring you that I still sympathize with you in your aims and wish you God-speed in your deliberations.

