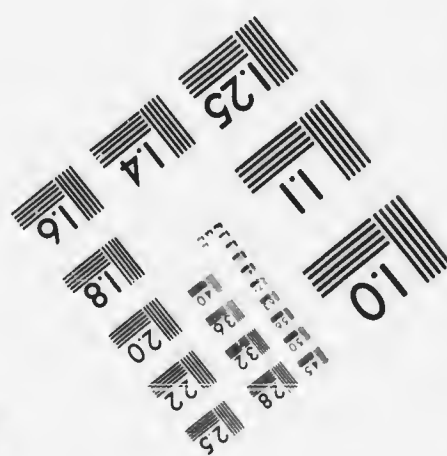
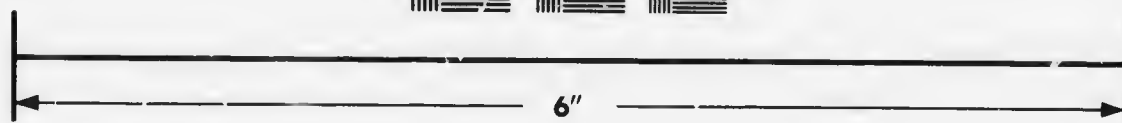
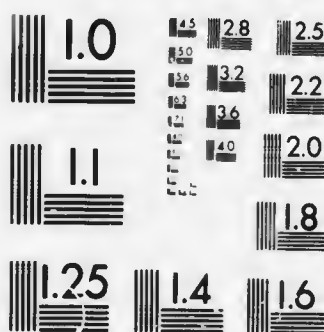


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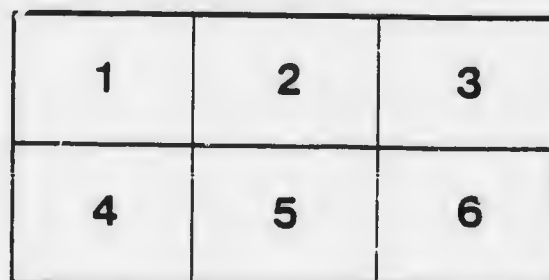
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(From the Educational Record for December, 1890.)

OUR EDUCATIONAL PAST AND PRESENT.*

By REV. ELSON I. REXFORD, B.A.

It seems but a few days since I entered this room and received the pleasant but unexpected information that I had been elected President of this Association. I then expressed my high appreciation of the honor you had conferred upon me in selecting me for this important office; and now that I am soon to give place to another, I desire to repeat my thanks for this mark of your confidence. I had the honor, some years ago, to act as your secretary, and I have pleasant recollections of my associations with you in that capacity. I hope that I am not misinterpreting your action in calling me to my present position, when I take it as indicating that my official duties during the eight years which have elapsed since I laid down the office of secretary have not entirely destroyed our former cordial relations, and that you recognize that I have at least endeavored to fulfil the expectations which you then kindly expressed in reference to my work. I am gratified at this expression of your confidence, not merely from a personal point of view, but because of its important bearing upon the general educational work of this Province.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of cordial relations between the various officers and bodies charged, under

* President's address before the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers at Montreal, October 16th, 1890.

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the law, with our educational work, in order to secure united effort in overcoming the great difficulties with which we as educationists have to contend.

It has been my aim, in the discharge of my official duties, to work as far as possible in harmony with the views of the teaching staff of the Province, and to give every possible consideration to the opinions of the teachers upon the practical educational questions that come up for consideration; and I have reason to believe that my efforts in this direction have not entirely failed.

Our educational work needs the united efforts of all interested in education. There are problems waiting for solution that will tax to the utmost our combined energies and wisdom. Faults and defects are visible at every turn, some of them affecting the vital interests of the rising generation of this Province, and others of a less serious character, yet requiring immediate attention. There is important work to be done, ample to employ the energies of each and all of us. May we be preserved from wasting our energies in senseless opposition to one another, while we are permitted to work together. Many who are here have been working faithfully for the past ten or fifteen years (some for twice and thrice that period) for the improvement of our educational system—to secure more effective teaching for our boys and girls; and yet we cannot now examine the present state of our educational work without being deeply impressed, if not depressed, with the thought of the vast difference between what is and what ought to be.

In this connection, however, a brief review of our educational past may not be without its advantages; for, in order to form a correct estimate of the present, it must be compared, not only with a possible future, but also with the actual past.

It must be remembered that the system of Protestant education in this Province is of comparatively recent date.

It is true that institutions of Royal foundation, and the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, and many private enterprises, were established in the interests of the Protestants of the Province in the early part of this century.

It is true that elementary schools, superior schools and normal schools, subsidized by the Government, were available for Protestants from the middle of this century, and that for the past thirty years Protestants have had a seat at the Council of Public Instruction.

It is true that, in 1869, the Council of Public Instruction was organized in two committees—Roman Catholic and Protes-

tant: but these two committees only had power to consider and discuss matters within the very limited range of their functions. All independent action still remained with the united Council: and an examination of the minutes of the Council for this period will show that the Protestant Committee failed to accomplish much under this Act of 1869. Under this same Act the Protestants of Montreal and Quebec received powers which enabled them to lay the foundations of their admirable system of schools, and in 1871 the Protestants received an increase of \$5,000 to the yearly revenue for their superior schools.

It was not until the Protestant Committee met in 1876, however, under an Act passed the previous year, which gave (1) a wider scope to their functions, and (2) the power of independent action to each committee of the Council in reference to matters under their respective control, that the real history of Protestant education began.

It was then for the first time that a body of Protestants, as such, were given the power of independent action in reference to matters which specially concern the schools and public instruction generally of Protestants. It may be interesting to recall the names of those who were members of the re-organized Committee. They were as follows:—The Right Rev. James Williams, Lord Bishop of Quebec: The Hon. Chas. Dewey Day: The Hon. Chris. Dunkin: The Rev. John Cook; The Hon. Geo. Irvine: The Ven. Archdeacon Leach: The Hon. James Ferrier: J. W. Dawson, Esq.

This Committee proceeded, at their first meeting, to associate with themselves, under the provisions of the law, the following gentlemen as associate members:—The Hon. Judge Sanborn; R. W. Heneker, Esq.; Hon. W. W. Lynch; Dr. Cameron. The fifth member, Henry Fry, Esq., was chosen at a subsequent meeting.

As part of the Council of Public Instruction, the Protestant Committee had, under former Acts, the power (1) to make regulations for the guidance of normal schools and boards of examiners, for the organization, government and discipline of schools and the classification of schools and teachers, and (2) to select the text-books for the use of schools.

By the Act of December, 1875, which came into force in February, 1876, the powers of the Protestant Committee were increased in two respects. First, they could exercise all the old powers and functions of the Council in reference to the Protestant schools as an independent body; and, secondly, the follow-

ing additional rights and privileges were accorded to them:—
(1) To them was entrusted the selection of all educational officers appointed by the Government, such as school inspectors, professors of normal schools, the members of boards of examiners, and, apparently, a secretary of the Department. Next after the power of independent action, this is, perhaps, the most important function of the Protestant Committee—first, because it removes these educational appointments from the arena of practical politics, and (2) because, by placing the choice of these officers for Protestant institutions in the hands of the Protestant Committee, an important guarantee has been given that these appointments will be made in a manner acceptable to the Protestant minority. And although it is not stated in the law that one of the two secretaries of the Department of Public Instruction shall be a Protestant, this is practically secured by the method of appointment.

The second new privilege accorded the Protestant Committee, though hardly inferior to the preceding one, has never been called into active exercise except in an indirect way. The Committee is authorized to receive, by donation, legacy or otherwise, money or other property for the purposes of education; and for this purpose the Committee has all the powers of a body politic or corporate.

The Government has placed at the credit of the Committee, for the purposes of education, different sums, from time to time, amounting in all to about \$90,000, but, apart from this, the Committee has never been called upon to exercise this particular function; and I hope to be able to show, before I have finished, that the present state of our educational system demands that this particular function of the Protestant Committee shall be brought into active exercise without delay.

Let us now briefly review the use which the Protestant Committee has made of these new powers and privileges.

Their first meeting was held in April, 1876, and before the end of December came round eight meetings of the Committee had been held, and almost every part of the educational work of the Province had been called up for review by the Committee. These were the good old times of our short educational history: no written examinations for teachers or pupils; no special inspection of superior schools (indeed, there seems to be some question as to the existence of superior schools in the county districts at that time); no list of text-books; no course of study; no regulations for the guidance of inspectors, teachers, parents or pupils; no special statistics of Protestant schools as

distinct from Roman Catholic; in fact, no organization, no system. To the establishment of a system the Protestant Committee bent their energies. Sub-committees were drafted, and important departments of educational work were referred to them. A special inspection and report of superior schools were ordered, and special reports were requested from the elementary schools; and both classes of schools were informed that their grants in future would depend largely upon the character of these reports.

The Sub-Committee on Superior Schools reported at the fourth meeting that, of 56 institutions represented, only 14 could be said to meet the requirements, and of these five only could be pronounced efficient. These five were *Granby, Huntingdon, Knowlton, Lacelle* and *Sherbrooke*.

The Sub-Committee on Text-Books reported that the lists authorized by the Council could be utilized to a very limited extent for the Protestant schools, and new lists were accordingly prepared, published and distributed.

The Sub-Committee on Boards of Examiners recommend that the examinations should be conducted in writing, upon printed examination papers, prepared by a Central Committee. A series of regulations for Boards of Examiners was adopted in accordance with this report, and the Regulations were subsequently printed and distributed.

A demand was also made by the Committee for a grant of \$1,700 for contingent expenses, and for the establishment of a Journal of Education under the control of the Committee.

These are some of the items of business of the Protestant Committee during the first eight months of their new life, and the list is certainly a most satisfactory one.

At the beginning of 1877 quarterly meetings were adopted, and thenceforward the Committee held its meetings in February, May, August (or September) and November each year.

In September of this year the first examination of teachers, upon the printed questions of the Central Committee, was held, and as a result 41 elementary diplomas were granted. This system of examination was continued, with an increasing number of candidates, down to 1886, when regulations substantially the same as those now in force under the Central Board were adopted for the guidance of the several local boards. In 1880 a strong resolution was passed by this Association in favor of a Central Board of Examiners, and transmitted to the Protestant Committee. In 1882 this Association again called attention to this subject in a strong resolution.

The Committee reported in favor of the principle of the Central Board in 1883: but, owing to legislative and other difficulties, the provisions for a Central Board were not carried out until 1888, when the system of examinations was established under which we are now working.

In 1877 Messrs. *Weir* and *Emmerson* were formally appointed by the Committee to inspect and examine the superior schools. The *inspection* and *examination* were conducted at the same time, as the inspector passed from school to school. As the examination was practically the same in each school, and as three or four weeks intervened between the first examination and the last, this scheme can hardly be called satisfactory, although it was a great advance upon the former method of determining the grants for superior schools.

In 1886 a special inspector was appointed to give his whole time to the superior schools, and the work of inspection was separated from that of the examinations, which were held simultaneously in all the schools of the Province.

It is scarcely necessary for me to trace the various stages and changes by which the first list of text-books of 1876 has gradually passed into the list of 1890: but I may point out that the present has been reached only through a great amount of careful thought and examination, in which the Committee has had the advantage of the suggestions of this Association.

During the earlier meetings, the Committee put forth strong efforts to reach the Protestant elementary schools. The Department of Public Instruction was requested to give full statistics concerning the number, locality, attendance, etc., of these schools: the inspectors were requested to make special reports upon the elementary schools of their respective inspectorates: special regulations were issued for the guidance of inspectors: the Government was requested to raise the grant for common schools to \$200,000 when the actual grant was less than it is now, and to provide for extra payment to municipalities where trained teachers are engaged. If this admirable programme had been carried out, the status of our elementary schools would have been greatly improved. The Committee's efforts in this direction did not produce satisfactory results, and the reasons of the failure are quite apparent. In the first place, the careful oversight of the work of 1,000 schools necessarily involved very frequent or very prolonged sittings of the Committee neither of which could reasonably be expected. And in the second place, as the grants to elementary schools are given according to population, the Committee had no

effective means of enforcing their decisions in reference to these schools. After several vigorous but unsuccessful efforts to reach the elementary schools, the whole attention of the Committee gradually passed over to the superior schools.

The earlier meetings of the Protestant Committee opened up several important questions which, in modified forms, engaged the attention of the Committee for many years. The question of the relation of the professions and professional examinations to the University and school examinations, which was started in 1878, took up a great amount of the Committee's time, until it received at least a temporary quietus in the passage of the B.A. Bill.

The Sub-Committee on Legislation has been a prominent feature of the agenda paper of the meetings of the Committee; and, although much useful legislation has been carried out in accordance with its reports, there is still ample work for the Sub-Committee in connection with the progress of legislation.

The Committee also spent much time in securing from the Ottawa Government the \$28,000 of marriage license fees now placed at their credit. This agitation, which began in the Council, was renewed at the first meeting of the Committee in 1876, and did not cease until the payment of the money in 1883.

In the year 1880, regulations were adopted concerning the qualifications of superior schools and the conditions of admission thereto, and attention was directed to the University school examinations as a standard for teachers.

In the same year provision was made for the publication of the EDUCATIONAL RECORD under the direction of the Committee.

The last decade is full of important educational changes, whether we take the history of the Protestant Committee, or of this Association, or of other departments of educational work. We can only refer to a few of them.

In 1883 a conference of the inspectors of Protestant schools was held, which resulted in several important movements for the improvement of our schools, and which was followed by conferences of School Commissioners in different sections of the Province: a course of study was provided for elementary and superior schools: a Central Board of Examiners was recommended to the Government: and the present Principal of the McGill Normal School was recommended for appointment to his present position.

In 1884 another important step was taken in the recognition of the Teachers' Normal Institutes, and in the changes in the Normal School session to permit the professors to take part in the Teachers' Institutes.

The year 1886 is marked by the appointment of an inspector for superior schools, by the adoption of the new regulations for boards of examiners, and by the arrangements for the simultaneous examination of the superior schools.

In 1888 our school law was amended and codified, and our school regulations were revised and extended, and published in a convenient form for reference; and thus a knowledge of our school system in all its details was rendered accessible to all who require or desire to make themselves acquainted with it.

I cannot here, for obvious reasons, stay to draw attention to the various amendments introduced into our school law at this time, nor to the great amount of time and thought given by the members of the Protestant Committee to this subject of legislation upon educational matters. The changes introduced into our school law at this time were very numerous, and, although they did not touch the fundamental principles of our school system, they tended to make the system much more satisfactory to all who have to do with it, by reducing the friction in its working caused by little defects, or defects in minor points, whose power of annoyance seemed to be in inverse ratio to their importance. All the changes made cannot, however, be classed as of minor importance; and, in proof of this, I have only to mention the establishment of a Central Board of Examiners with the exclusive right, apart from our Normal School, of granting diplomas valid for Protestant schools, (2) the incorporation of this Association, and (3) the right granted to this Association of electing a representative on the Protestant Committee. In fact, since the Act of 1875, which laid the basis of a system of Protestant education in this Province, there has been no period so fruitful with legislation and official action beneficial to our Protestant educational work as the past three years of our educational history.

We feel so keenly the defects of our present system and the injustice arising from unwise local administration of it, which are the necessary conditions of all human systems; and public attention has been so systematically directed of late to alleged defective and objectionable legislation in connection with education, that we are in danger of ignoring the important advantages which we enjoy under our present educational system. There are, indeed, three important defects inherent in the nature of the system itself which cannot be removed so long as the present system is continued, but which must be recognized and neutralized as far as possible by wise administration.

In the first place, the system is an expensive one. In order to

carry on a dual system of schools in the country districts, a larger expenditure of money is required than would suffice to provide a uniform system for all the inhabitants. The present unsatisfactory state of our elementary schools is due in a great measure to the fact that this expensive feature of our present system has not been fully recognized. I shall take occasion to refer to this point again, and will now simply say that very little can be done for the improvement of our elementary schools until this fact is recognized, and more liberal provision is made for their support.

A second defect is that the children of each locality or district are trained under two different influences—in different buildings, in different text-books, and, in the main, in different languages; and by this means those who are to live together as one community in after life have their natural differences and prejudices intensified, rendering it all but impossible for them to act as a homogeneous people in after life.

There is one way in which this defect can be partially overcome, and that is by insisting that the two languages of the Province shall be taught in all our schools, so that there may be a medium for free interchange of thoughts and opinions among different classes of the community; and I shall show presently that important progress has been made in this direction during the past few years under the regulations of the Protestant Committee, and that further progress in this direction depends largely upon increased educational grants.

The third inherent defect of our present system is that it becomes necessary under it to recognize and legislate for a minority—always a difficult and unsatisfactory work, and rendered doubly difficult by the conditions of this Province. Minorities are proverbially grumblers, and from the nature of their position they are probably necessarily so. To be obliged in all educational movements to consider their bearing, not only upon the interests of the majority, but also upon the naturally sensitive minority, adds very much to the difficulties of educational work in this Province.

So much for the inherent defects of our system. Attention has been called to them, not in a spirit of criticism, not with a view of magnifying them, but in order that it may be clearly seen that they are *inherent in our present system*, and that it is worse than useless for us to waste our energies in crying out against them as parts of our system. Apart from these defects, a candid examination of the system will compel an admission of its general fairness and excellence, and of the importance of the

privileges which the minority in this Province enjoys under it.

It is, no doubt, capable of improvement in many of its details. It will, no doubt, be amended from time to time along the lines indicated by the experience gained in working the system. And, moreover, it is quite possible for illiberal and prejudiced persons to administer the law so as to do grave injustice in their localities in educational as in other matters. In fact, perhaps more dissatisfaction is caused in those cases in which our educational work is necessarily affected by changes under the municipal law than in any other way. And there is much unnecessary friction arising from such causes. And yet a system must commend itself as on the whole satisfactory which provides for the minority such educational advantages as:

(1) A separate Board of Education, having exclusive control over its educational work, and having special powers in reference to grants and property ;

(2) A normal school for the professional training of teachers ;

(3) A competent staff of inspectors for its elementary and superior schools under the direction of its own Board of Education,

(4) A Central Board of Examiners, with exclusive right of granting diplomas for Protestant schools ;

(5) A journal of education, published under the direction of its Educational Board ;

(6) The power of selecting (through its Board of Education) a secretary for the Department of Public Instruction, the professors of its normal school, its school inspectors and the members of its Central Board of Examiners ;

(7) The power of prescribing (through its Board of Education) the course of study and text-books for all its schools, and regulations for the guidance of its normal school, inspectors, Board of Examiners and teachers.

That these advantages are not mere matters of theory is evident from the fact that we have a thoroughly representative Board of Education in the Protestant Committee, carrying out a vigorous policy under the provisions of the law ; a fairly equipped Normal School, nearly every officer of which has been selected by the Committee, turning out yearly a supply of well-trained teachers, and extending its advantages by means of Normal Institutes during the summer months to those teachers who feel unable to take the regular course ; a staff of eight inspectors, half of whom have been selected by the committee, with a good prospect of an increase in the number and remuneration of the staff in the near future ; a Central Board of

Examiners, whose members were selected by the Committee, which has for two years granted diplomas under the regulations and conditions prescribed by the Committee; a list of text-books and a course of study authorized by the Committee and in general use, the latter connecting the infant class of the elementary school with the graduating class of the University, and qualifying in its several grades for the ordinary business of life, for the several grades of teachers' diplomas, and for admission to the University; and all of these several works are carried on under regulations drawn up by the Protestant Committee.

This is a brief statement of the main features of our present educational status and of the steps by means of which it has been reached; and, although it is susceptible of improvement in many directions, when it is viewed in the light of the past there is certainly no cause for discouragement, but, on the contrary, there is every encouragement to increase our efforts for further improvements.

Now that our system of education is fairly organized, our efforts for improvement must be in the direction of increasing the efficiency of the different parts of our system.

It will be generally admitted, I think, that the two most important parts of the system are (1) the teaching staff, and (2) the course of study over which the pupils are to be taken for the purposes of intellectual development and the acquisition of knowledge. If these are satisfactory, the results will be satisfactory.

Of these two points, the least important and the most easily satisfied is the course of study. If the present course of study is not satisfactory, it should be made so without delay. The materials are at hand for framing a course of study that shall meet the educational requirements of our Province, and no expense is involved in framing such a course.

I do not propose here to examine in detail the present course of study, or the criticism which it has received. I desire to say, however, that it has already done much to improve our school work, and that, while it is subject to amendment from time to time, it is now a satisfactory guide for the teachers and pupils of our schools.

One or two remarks, however, upon the general principles upon what the course of study is based may not be out of place, and, first, as to our *Course for Elementary Schools*.

The fundamental parts are reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic, together with Scripture and moral teaching. In

addition to this there is a little singing to act as a tonic for the school, a little drawing to keep little hands usefully employed, and occasional oral lessons during the week upon the use of English, upon geography, upon Canadian History, upon useful knowledge, and upon physiology and hygiene. This covers the whole course, with the exception of the optional subject of French; and yet many who glance at the course and find it divided into thirteen sections are shocked at the ignorance and stupidity of men who could so overload the minds of children. It never occurs to them to examine how this course is to be applied, nor to reflect how a child is trained in the school of Nature. They could soon discover (1) that it was never intended that a child should cover the whole thirteen departments of work in one day, and (2) that the child in Nature's school carries on his investigations in more than twice thirteen subjects side by side, and that the motto of early childhood is *multa non multum*: a little of many things—not much of any one thing. The course of study imposed upon young children by Nature is far more extended and far more varied than our school course, and children thrive and make rapid progress in Nature's school. The variety of subjects presented for examination by Nature is the very life of the child, and the younger he is the more rapidly he passes from subject to subject, and the sooner he wearies in the consideration of a particular subject. A child has been likened to a narrow-necked bottle—you can only pour in a little at a time. If you exceed the proper amount it flows over, and is lost. You can only teach so much reading and arithmetic in a day—the remainder of the time must be filled in with something light and interesting. Our course of study, while giving the fundamental subjects the prominence they deserve, provides variety and occupation for the pupils in other useful subjects. If those who are distressed at the extent of the educational bill of fare which has been provided for our elementary schools would follow these children to their homes in the neighbouring farmhouses of an autumn evening, and examine the stores that have been laid up for the winter's use, they would scarcely survive the shock. As they reviewed the vegetable list of potatoes, turnips, cabbages, beets, carrots, squash, and pumpkins; the grain list of wheat, corn, buckwheat, oats, beans, and pease; the apples and small fruits in endless variety; the meat and fish, butter and cheese, milk and tea and sugar, etc., they would turn to the farmer and ask what he intended to do with all these. They would, no doubt, be told that this was the ordinary winter's supply for his family of young children;

that there was no intention of inviting the children to gorge themselves, nor to ruin their physical health by cramming them with all these varieties of food. The farmer would point out that some of these articles of food would appear daily upon the table, but that the great majority would appear from time to time to give variety and enjoyment, and to maintain a healthy interest in the frugal meal: and it would be difficult to induce him to discard all the unessential elements of diet and to confine himself to the three or four articles of food which appear daily upon his table.

The same principle holds good with reference to a course of study for elementary schools. The child has been accustomed in the school of Nature to have his mind occupied with a great variety of subjects, and no sudden change should be made when he enters upon school life. The child has little or no power of voluntary or sustained attention. We require to attract the attention of a child by throwing interest and variety into our teaching; we must, therefore, frequently change our subject.

In the great majority of our elementary schools the children are obliged to remain alone at their desks three-fourths of the school time, and during this time they must be provided with interesting work to employ their time. In the case of the majority of these pupils this must be mechanical work. There must be a pleasant variety in this work, or the pupils will soon tire and turn from work to idleness and mischief. In accordance, therefore, with the principles of child nature and the requirements of our schools, a variety of pleasant and interesting work has been provided in the course of study in our elementary schools in addition to the three or four fundamental subjects of the course. But, as we sometimes see a man discuss in order at one sitting every item of a menu card at a hotel, from the soup to fruit, and as some mothers abuse the abundance of the winter's supply by allowing their children to gorge themselves with varieties of food, so mistakes are, no doubt, sometimes made by teachers in applying the educational bill of fare which has been prescribed by our schools; and I am disposed to believe that the complaints which have been made against our course of study have been due in a great measure to the manner in which the course of study has been applied. For example, there seems to be an impression that in order to do efficient work each of the subjects prescribed in the course of study should be taken up each day—that the pupils in the upper classes should prepare at home each night lessons in all or nearly all the principal subjects of the course. There can be no

doubt as to the result where this plan is carried out. Both teacher and pupils will be loaded down with work in school, and the burden of home lessons will be greater than the children can bear.

There are two systems under which we may work in this connection. Our course of study may consist of three or four subjects to be taken up according to a daily time-table, or our course of study may consist of several subjects to be taken up according to a weekly programme, in which the subjects alternate with one another. The latter is our present system, and to endeavor to build up a daily time-table upon it is a fatal mistake.

It is a mistake to suppose that very little can be done with a subject that comes before a child two or three times a week. All that a child requires of history, geography, grammar, and like subjects can be taught in two lessons a week; and if due regard be had for the main subjects of the course and for the child's health, more time cannot be afforded for these subjects.

In reference to the subject of home lessons, I desire to say that I do not consider any time-table for our superior schools complete that does not plainly indicate the subjects for home lessons for each day in the week. In the case of the upper grades not more than four home lessons should be given per day, only three of which should be on principal subjects. These lessons should be so arranged as to length and difficulty as not to call for more than two hours' work from the average pupil, and for the lower grades these lessons should be diminished both in number and length so as not to occupy more than half an hour of the younger pupils' time out of school.

I have dealt in detail with this question—first, because I believe it to be a practical question at the present time: and, secondly, because I know by personal experience the evils arising from excessive home lessons, and the great improvement that comes from the adoption of such a system as I have indicated. And I am inclined to think that if this plan were more generally followed in our superior schools, the school work would be more satisfactory to all concerned, and the complaints concerning over-pressure would be greatly diminished.

One of the subjects of our school course has been attracting special attention of late, and it is only fitting that some reference should be made to it here. I refer to the teaching of French in English schools. Attention has been called to the fact that in a large number of English elementary schools

French is not taught. The fact is not questioned, and there is no doubt that it is desirable that both languages should be taught in all our schools: but, in order to a just appreciation of the present status of this subject in our English schools, it is necessary to know the past history of the subject of French as a school subject. In our Normal School this subject has received special attention from the commencement under a professor of French, and each teacher sent forth from the Normal School has been obliged to take a thorough course and pass an examination in French. During the past few years the time given to this subject in the Normal has been more than doubled, and the instructor in French has been raised to the rank of an ordinary professor, giving all her time to this subject. Under our Board of Examiners, French is required for all academy and model school diplomas and for first-class elementary diplomas: but it is optional for second and third-class elementary diplomas. In the last examination, out of 104 teachers who took second-class elementary diplomas, 47 passed in French, although it was optional with them.

In our superior schools the subject of French is compulsory, and forms one of the subjects of the annual written examination: and at the examination in June last, out of 1,259 pupils, 1,169 were presented for examination in French.

In the elementary schools of the cities, towns and villages the subject of French is also regularly taught: and during the past few years no subject has received so much attention at our educational gatherings as the subject of French, the best text-books to be used and the best methods of teaching it. Our text-books in French have been prepared by our own teachers, and a new one has just been added to the list from which good results are expected. The best teachers of French from a distance have been invited to give us the benefit of their experience in the best methods of teaching this subject: and some of our own teachers have taken advantage of the noted summer schools of languages in order to qualify themselves for the best work in this subject, and they have in turn given other teachers the advantages of their experience in our conventions and summer schools, and in special classes for teachers organized for this purpose. In fact, it may be said that no subject of the school course has been so persistently and enthusiastically discussed by our educational bodies during the past few years as this subject. It cannot be said, therefore, that we are indifferent in reference to the teaching of this subject, or that we have neglected to take the necessary steps

to give it its proper place on our programme of studies; and yet the subject is not taught in about 75 per cent. of our elementary rural schools.

The reason of this is not difficult to discover. These schools are the small district schools of young children, with an average enrolment of 22 pupils. Only a few of the older pupils could study the subject from a text-book; nearly all the teaching would require to be oral teaching. The pupils of these schools have so much difficulty in obtaining the mere elements of an English education that it would be difficult to induce them to turn their attention to any other subject. The average salary in these schools is less than fifteen dollars a month, and the average time that the schools are in operation during the year is not more than the minimum of eight months required by law. In order to qualify one's self to take up the subject of oral French in these schools in addition to the other requirements, a teacher must take an extended course of training in some good institution, involving a considerable expenditure of time and money not warranted by a prospective salary of \$120 per annum. Just here lies the solution of this whole difficulty. As long as these schools are unable to offer more than \$120 a year for a teacher, this and other defects must continue to exist in our elementary schools. To impose new conditions at present would simply close these schools. We have the machinery to prepare teachers thoroughly qualified to do this work. We have candidates who would gladly prepare themselves if the remuneration was satisfactory. As soon as the means are placed at the disposal of these schools to enable them to pay twenty or twenty-five dollars per month for their teachers, it will be an easy matter to secure the teaching of French in all our schools, and to improve them in many other respects.

This concerns the second important part of our system referred to—namely, our teaching staff. Over 25 per cent. of our present staff are trained teachers; another 25 per cent. have been brought more or less under the influence of our teachers' institutes; the remainder of the staff have had no kind of professional training, a large number have had no experience, and far too many are teaching without diplomas. The main reason for the employment of teachers without training, without experience or without diplomas, is that the schools are not able to offer salaries that will command the services of trained teachers. That a large number of our schools should be under the independent control of young

persons destitute of professional preparation and of experience in teaching, and that a number of our schools should be under the independent control of persons who have not even submitted to the test of a literary examination and whose qualifications are entirely unknown, is certainly not satisfactory. These defects affect chiefly our small elementary rural schools. It is here, however, that the education of many children begins and ends. It is here that the children are found during the most plastic and most important educational period of their lives, when they require the most skilful treatment. The results which follow from this state of things are simply disastrous. These untrained and inexperienced experimenters fail to make their teaching interesting and attractive: hence the lack of interest on the part of parents and pupils, followed by irregular attendance. They fail to maintain discipline in an even and judicious manner, and they consequently develop a spirit of disobedience. They fail to give satisfaction and hence frequent changes of teachers. They fail to instruct the children, and hence the unsatisfactory condition of many pupils in the county districts after an attendance at school for several years. These facts not only affect the interests of that large proportion of our pupils whose education is confined to these schools, but the work of our superior schools is seriously affected by the inferior preparation which many of the pupils receive in these schools.

The whole scheme for our Superior Education must remain unsatisfactory so long as the arrangements for laying the foundations of an education in our elementary schools leave so much to be desired.

Not the least serious result of our present condition is the depression and discouragement which young teachers experience from having difficult work thrown upon them for which they are not prepared either by previous training or experience. Not being able to conduct their work with pleasure to themselves or profit to their pupils, they naturally drift away from the work of teaching as a disagreeable and thankless occupation. Such experiences deter others from even entering upon this work, and thus our schools are deprived of a most desirable class of candidates, who, under favorable circumstances, would have made successful teachers.

I have no desire to depreciate our teaching staff. They are doing all that could be expected of them under the circumstances in which they are situated. The efforts made by a large number of our teachers in elementary schools to qualify them-

selves for better work is most creditable, and shows that the material is available for an excellent well-trained staff for our elementary schools, and all that is required is sufficient remuneration to enable the candidates to incur the expense involved in a preparatory course of professional training.

I have no hope of being able to increase the efficiency of our staff beyond its present status under existing circumstances. It will require all our efforts to maintain the present degree of efficiency. The literary requirements for our diplomas impose as heavy a strain as our system will bear. All first-class diplomas of the three grades now require previous training or successful experience in teaching. To impose further requirements for second-class diplomas under existing circumstances would simply increase the number of schools under persons without diplomas. The difficulty is really a serious one for our educational well-being, and it deserves the careful attention of all those who are interested in our Protestant educational institutions. Defective elementary schools are more serious in their consequences than one would be inclined to suppose. If the facilities for an elementary education are poor in our country districts, the better class of the inhabitants of those districts will be compelled to withdraw out of regard for the interests of their children. This question, therefore, does not concern educationists merely, but affects the vital interests of our rural sections. It is not too much to say that the continued existence of the Protestant minority in this Province is closely bound up with the maintenance of efficient elementary schools, and it is time that those who have great interests at stake in this Province should have these facts pressed in upon their attention.

The remedy for our present educational distress is simple, and the means for applying it are at hand. More money is required for the maintenance of our elementary schools. The local taxation of two to five mills in the dollar cannot well be increased in the present condition of our farming population.

The expensive nature of our system renders increased aid from external sources absolutely necessary for an efficient system of elementary schools. This additional aid may be looked for from two sources. First, from an increased Government grant for elementary schools. This increase has been urged by School Commissioners, by School Inspectors, by the Protestant Committee, by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and by this association: and let us hope that the present Premier of the Province, who has given so many substantial proofs of his deep interest in our educational work, will see his way

clear to supplement in the near future the grants for elementary schools. But a second and undeveloped source of additional aid for our elementary schools is that of private benefactions. There is no more useful way in which men of wealth can use their means than in securing for the Protestant minority in this Province an efficient system of elementary schools. The machinery is all ready to hand for the efficient administration of such funds. The Protestant Committee is a body corporate under the law, specially empowered to administer money and bequests for educational purposes. With a revenue of \$20,000 a year to be administered in this way in the interests of elementary education, the Protestant Committee could establish within a few years a system of elementary schools that would be a credit to any province. He who aids by his means the work of Superior Education does a noble work, for he contributes directly to the interests of a few ; but he who aids the work of our elementary schools does a nobler work, as he renders efficient the colleges of the people, and contributes directly to the educational interests of the many.

I believe that when this matter is pressed home upon the attention of wealthy citizens in the right way that they will come to the relief of our elementary schools, and secure thereby great benefits for the people and great honor to themselves.

