

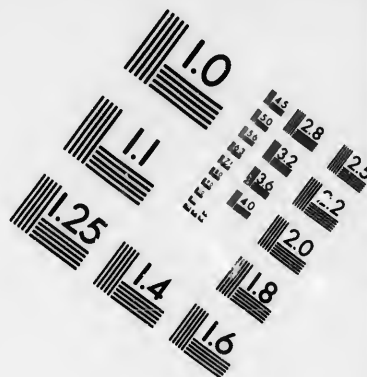
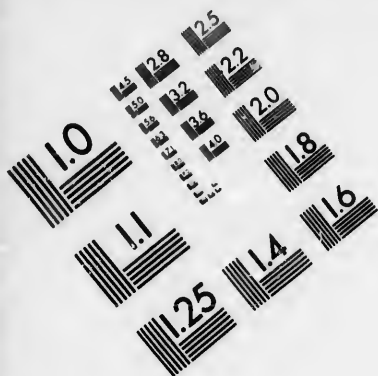
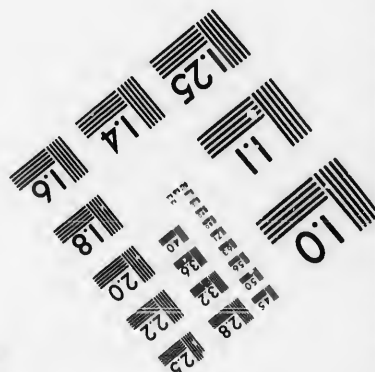
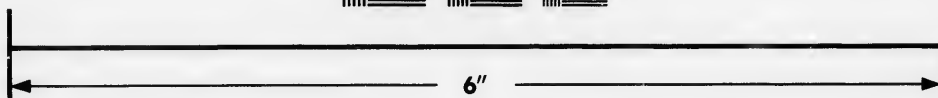
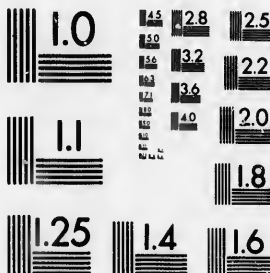


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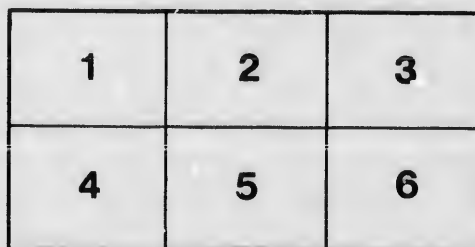
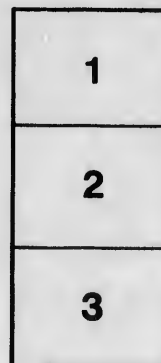
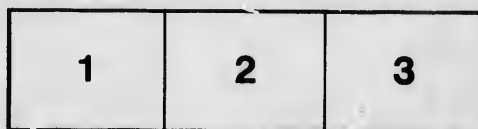
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**OUTLINE OF A SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR
THE CITY OF HALIFAX.**

An Address delivered before the Board of School Commissioners,
by the Superintendent of Education, January 22, 1866.

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS,

City of Halifax, January 23, 1866.

T. H. RAND, Esq.,

Prov. Superintendent of Education.

SIR,—

I do myself the honor, by order of the Board, to enclose a copy of a resolution unanimously adopted by them at the meeting of yesterday, immediately after your admirable address on a system of schools for this city.

“*Resolved*, That this Board respectfully request that the Council of Public Instruction will cause to be published, in pamphlet form, the address this day delivered by the Superintendent of Education, before the Commissioners, in order to its free circulation throughout the city.”

JOHN R. WILLIS,

Secretary Board School Commissioners, Halifax.

2462

ADDRESS.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—

In the discharge of the duties of my office, I have sought this opportunity of laying before the Board of Commissioners for Halifax a plan for the systematic and efficient organization of Schools throughout the city. And let me say, I am not unmindful of the greatness of the undertaking, nor ignorant of the difficulties which lie in the way of its successful accomplishment. The success, however, which has already so signally attended the efforts of the Board must render apparent to all the necessity of dealing yet more liberally and directly with the whole matter of Public Education in our midst, while it may also fairly be taken as a pledge of a final and complete achievement of desired results.

Whatever may be the wants of the country at large in respect of Educational provision, it is beyond question that up to the Autumn of 1865, schools in this city have been poorly cared for, and thousands are growing up to manhood and womanhood without receiving anything answering to a practical training for citizenship. It may be an unwelcome statement, Gentlemen, that for years past in this city the number of children at school, in proportion to the population, has been below that of any other District in the Province, while the smallness of the sum contributed by the people for the support of schools, in proportion to the amount received from the Province, has been equally without a parallel. Last winter, being honored by a Committee of the Legislative Council with a hearing on the condition of public education in this city, it was with some difficulty that I was able to convince the members of the Committee of the correctness of these and kindred statements; but the evidence is complete, though the facts are anything but creditable to the metropolis of the Province. The Legislature, realizing that ignorance was not only abounding in the city, but was whelping its thousand evils more vicious than itself to prey upon the social system, provided, as it was in duty bound to do, that a free educational provision should be made for all, and that the property of all should contribute to its support. The acceptance of the responsible and most important trust now held by each member of the Board, is proof of the deep interest felt by you

in the education of the city, and of sympathy with this inaugural movement in behalf of free schools.

Notwithstanding the commendable activity of the Board in providing school accommodation, it is well known by you all that it is inadequate to the present demands, and entirely unfit as a permanent arrangement. New buildings must be erected; and I greatly desire that the Board shall, before a single building goes up, have a clear apprehension of a *system* of schools adapted to the city, so that every step taken shall contribute directly to secure such arrangements as that system may require.

One of the peculiarities of modern systems of public education is the application, wherever population will permit, of the principle of the division of labor. This leads to what is termed the grading of all the schools—*i. e.*, the classification of the pupils in an ascending series, according to their ages and attainments, and assigning a curriculum of study for each grade, so that step by step all the scholars of the section, or city, shall be led steadily forward to the completion of their course of common school work. Our school law wisely requires those entrusted with the management of schools to provide school accommodation in accordance with this principle of classification; and that your Board may not be in any doubt concerning the application of the same, I shall outline such a series of schools for this city as the law contemplates.

Leaving out of view, for the time being, the existing school accommodation, I will suppose that provision should be made at once for something over 5000 pupils, and this number, in a population of nearly 30,000, is not excessive. The law groups the schools in villages and towns into three grand divisions—Elementary, Preparatory, and High Schools, and requires such sub-divisions of each group as may be necessary to effect a complete grading of all the schools.

Applying these principles to Halifax, the following would, I judge, be found the most efficient as well as the most convenient arrangement:—

1. Elementary Division, 4 grades, 1 year each = 4 years.
2. Preparatory Division, 4 grades, 1 year each = 4 years.
3. High School Division, 3 grades, 1 year each = 3 years.

The number of pupils in charge of one Teacher should not, in my opinion, exceed fifty-six. It will be found that this number, however perfect the classification may be, will give the Teacher as much to do as is compatible with an efficient discharge of school duties. If, then, we take fifty-six pupils as the number for each school-room, and if two-story buildings be provided (and on no account should the Board provide buildings exceeding three stories, unless the fourth be a hall for occasional use,) the number of buildings required would be as follows:—

1. Six Buildings for Elementary Schools, having eight school-rooms each, accommodating in all 2688 pupils.
2. Five Buildings for Preparatory Schools, having eight school-rooms each, accommodating in all 2240 pupils.
3. One High-School Building, having three school-rooms and two class-rooms, accommodating in all 168 pupils.

Total—12 Buildings, 91 school-rooms, 2 class-rooms, and 5096 pupils.

The six buildings for Elementary Schools should be so located as to divide the population of the city into six equal portions; those for the Preparatory Schools should be so arranged as to divide the population into five equal portions; while that for the High-School should be placed as near the centre of the city as possible. The school-rooms in the Elementary and Preparatory divisions should be seated throughout with single desks of the most approved pattern, and graded to suit the different ages of the pupils. Single desks would require a little more floor-room, and would add something to the expense of seating the schools; but the advantages arising from every pupil occupying a seat by himself are so great that the additional outlay is not to be weighed against them. In the High-School, double desks give nearly the same advantages as single desks.

It would be found practicable, on account of the difficulty in securing sites of sufficient size, or from the desire to work into the system some existing building, to erect Elementary and Preparatory school buildings, each having eight school-rooms. This, however, will not necessarily disarrange the proposed classification, since the four grades assigned to each of these divisions may find accommodation in two or even four buildings, instead of one. I have not been able to make that investigation which would enable me to say what buildings at present occupied by the Board would be available, in such a series as I propose, nor is it at all necessary that I should. Every member of the Board is capable of judging in this matter. I wish but to impress one controlling idea, and that is, a thorough classification of the school-machinery of the city, with a progressive course of instruction adapted to the whole. Nothing short of this is worthy of the name of a system of schools, and nothing less than this will ever satisfactorily realize the desires which, I am persuaded, actuate each Commissioner.

Concerning the foregoing scheme, let me offer a brief explanation, and enumerate a few of the advantages that would accrue upon its adoption.

1. It will be observed that the course of study is eleven years, each year being a step in advance of the previous one. There are eight school-rooms less in the Preparatory division than in the Elementary; and it will be found in practice that the attendance on the Elementary schools will require about this excess of accommodation over the Preparatory. The High

School accommodates 168 pupils. By the time a progressive course of instruction extending over eight years has been mastered, the great majority of pupils will be seeking some active employment which their school-training will have fitted them to engage in at a comparatively early age. There should, however, be found in a city of 30,000 inhabitants not less than 150 pupils desirous of pursuing a further and more extended course of instruction, such as a well-managed and efficient High School would confer.

2. If each of the first two divisions was provided with buildings each having eight school-rooms, the Board, having secured through the Inspector the sanction of the Council of Public Instruction, could devote, wherever it was preferred, the four rooms of the first story to the girls, and the four rooms of the second story to the boys; or, if preferred, both stories could be occupied by girls in one building, and both by boys in another, though this latter arrangement would not place the several school-houses so near the homes of the children. In those schools where it was judged most expedient that boys and girls should be classified in the same rooms together, the four rooms of the first story would present the four grades of each division respectively, while the second story would be a duplicate of the first: where the girls occupied the first story and the boys the second, the four grades would be seen in duplicate, as also would be the case if girls occupied one building and boys another. Thus each building would exhibit, *seriatim*, the four grades or steps of each division.

The High School would necessarily be composed of pupils of both sexes; unless, indeed, the Board should deem themselves warranted in erecting a building with six or eight school-rooms, suited to a progressive course of three or four years. In that case, one half of the building could be devoted to girls and the other to boys, one head-master controlling the whole establishment. This is the plan adopted in the High School lately established in Portland. If such an establishment can be afforded, and if a sufficient number of pupils of proper attainments are to be had in the city, I should be only too happy to see the latter plan carried out.

Among the advantages that would accrue from this system of classification, I may mention the following:—

1. It would place the Elementary and Preparatory schools sufficiently near the homes of all the children, even the youngest; while the High School would be attended by those old enough to walk from all parts to the centre of the city.

2. It would secure to almost every child in the city a *regularly progressive course of instruction*.

At present most of the schools in the city are merely miscellaneous gatherings. In the same room may not infrequently be heard the alphabet class and the class in the higher departments of English grammar, the class in Addition and the class in Exchange or Alligation; in short, the pupils

throughout the city are not as a whole, pursuing a systematic course of instruction. If they chance to have a teacher who is experienced and free from specialties (a rare fortune), their instruction, so far as that teacher is able to control the circumstances of his position, may be tolerably well adapted to their wants and regular in its stages; but in the vast majority of cases it is not so. Every teacher is pursuing his own course. If he prefers geography to grammar, or arithmetic to reading, the pupils under his charge will be found partaking of the same one-sidedness; their scholarship will lack symmetry; it will, in fine, be mere half-work. As many different miscellaneous schools as the Board supports, just so many different courses of instruction will be found to obtain. The education secured will be no education at all; for, to be worthy of the name, it should be an attempt, at least, to bring about a regular and symmetrical growth of all the parts of the child's compound nature. This is too important a matter to leave to the random efforts of every individual teacher.

Suitable school-accommodation being provided, the first duty of the Board would be to prepare a course of instruction extending in regular gradation, from the first grade of the Elementary schools, to the last grade of the High School,—a course of eleven or twelve years. This course should be based upon the latest and most approved principles of modern education, and should attempt nothing less than to present, in the capital of the Province, a model system of common school instruction. This curriculum should prescribe the work for each year and each term in the year; and, in the Elementary and Preparatory grades, for each day and each hour in the day. This programme should be exactly the same for all schools of like grades throughout the city. With graded schools, and a regular course of instruction, every school would be a class, each class being exactly abreast in all its studies, with one teacher for every fifty-six pupils. Pupils would be admitted at the beginning of the school year (November 1) at five years of age and over; but failing to enter at that time, they should not be permitted by the Board to enter during the year, unless fully prepared to join some class or grade already organized. This arrangement would be necessary to prevent the confusion and inconvenience arising from the formation of new classes during the year. At the close of the school year (October 31) one class or grade would graduate from each series of four grades, and at the beginning of the school year (November 1) a new class or grade would come in; while all the intermediate classes would be advanced one year. Thus the classification would be kept perfect, each teacher having from fifty to fifty-six pupils exactly together in all their studies.

3. It would enable the Board to select teachers having a special fitness for the grade over which they might preside. But few can teach ten or a dozen branches equally well, yet most of the schools at present under the care of the Board make this demand in full upon the teachers employed.

It is impossible that the work can be well done. If, however, every grade had a constant curriculum extending over only one year, the whole course would present such room for choice on the part of teachers, that every one ought to find the place for which he or she is best fitted. Add to this aptitude of the teacher for the work of a particular grade, the fact that every teacher would be engaged, year by year, in giving instruction in the same branches, and in the same portions of these branches; while every year would bring before each teacher an entirely new group of children. Thus the most desirable conditions for effective teaching would be had in every school-room, viz.: *sameness of lessons with difference of pupils*. Suitable teachers having been secured for each grade, each would soon become a workman indeed. Under the working of such a system, the Board would be able to secure the very flower of the teaching profession in the Province, in every variety of its manifold excellence.

And here let me say that I am fully persuaded that your present arrangements are depriving the cause of education of one of Nature's chosen instrumentalities for the training of the young. It can scarcely be questioned by any who will take the pains to make careful observations, that female teachers are superior to male teachers in all that pertains to the training of the younger children. If your schools were thoroughly classified, female teachers should be employed in every grade of the Elementary Division, both for boys and girls. In the Preparatory Division, they would also, in most of the grades, be at least equal to male teachers; though there should be a head master in charge of each Preparatory group, and as teacher of its highest grade. In the High School, also, plenty of work would be found in which female teachers would be equally efficient.

4. It would render all the schools highly efficient in respect of moral and physical discipline and intellectual progress. I have already anticipated this remark in part. Nothing destroys discipline in our schools, and renders the creating of a fine, healthy tone so difficult as the diversity of physical stature and intellectual attainments among the pupils. Every experienced teacher will testify that a school composed of pupils of nearly the same age and attainments is comparatively easy to govern, and presents the best conditions for effective disciplinary training. The same is equally true of intellectual progress. Like years and attainments beget a wholesome stimulus and emulation. Each pupil feels the influence of his fellows, and all are roused to the consciousness of intellectual power.

Add to these considerations this very important one, viz., that *the mind of every pupil would be brought into direct contact with the teacher's mind as much in one day as it is in miscellaneous schools in three days*. Ungraded schools must, of necessity, have many classes, and each class must be dealt with separately, so that most of the pupils are actually under that direct and positive training of the teacher, of which the mutual investigation of

any subject furnishes the occasion, but very little during the day. But with schools rigidly classified, all the pupils may pursue, in many branches, their investigations simultaneously; and but three or four sub-divisions, or classes, at most, are required, even in the lowest Elementary grades. I feel, therefore, that I am understating the truth, when I say, that with such a system of schools as I have proposed, every pupil would, in the same space of time, make twice the progress in real mental growth that it is possible for him to do under your present miscellaneous system.

Nor should I omit to call your attention to another element of efficiency. You will perceive at a glance that if all the schools under your charge were pursuing a graduated course of instruction, each grade mastering its assignments every year, a wonderful stimulus would be infused into both teachers and pupils throughout the entire city. Every teacher's work would be brought into direct comparison with that of every other presiding over a like grade, and all would be anxious to excel. Every pupil, also, being aware that there were higher departments before him, and seeing his fellows doubling their diligence that they might be ready to pass the necessary examination, at the end of the school year, in order to transference, would have a most powerful corrective of indolence or indifference constantly before him.

I suppose it has already occurred to some members present that the rigid system of classification proposed would occasion some difficulty in the case of individual pupils. These, however, being the exception, should not for one moment prevent the carrying out of a system that would confer the highest benefits on the great bulk of the school-going population.

The individual cases referred to would arise chiefly from three sources:

1. Some pupils, for various reasons, would fall far behind the grades appropriate to their age, and would not be accommodated by the furniture in the grade where their proficiency would locate them; nor would it be judicious to compel them to be associated with children so far below them in years and stature.

Similar cases would require consideration at the very outset of your classification.

2. Some pupils would wish to attend school for a short time, for the purpose of perfecting themselves in some particular branches, and would have but a limited time at command in which to attend school.

3. It would frequently happen that pupils coming from other localities would be found deficient in some one or more branches of the course prescribed by the Board, but well advanced in others; and it would be impossible to classify them in the graded schools without much disadvantage to the pupils.

To meet all such cases the Board would need to establish, or rather to

preserve, a miscellaneous school. It would probably need several teachers, and would include pupils of all attainments, from the Elementary to the High School. With many of the pupils, the neglected branches could be brought up to a point that would enable them to enter some grade of the regular series advantageously to themselves. The number of classes in such a school would be comparatively numerous, and the number in each class small. It would, in fine, be precisely similar to many of your existing schools. Such a school, properly cared for, is, in a city, essential to an efficient system of graded schools, inasmuch as it removes from the various grades every element of friction, and renders the whole system compact and strong.

In order to place the blessings of education—so long denied—within reach of even the most unfavorably circumstanced, and to give the fullest effect to the provisions of the law, the Board should, during the winter term, open an Evening School. There are those who are occupied during the day, and cannot attend the day school. This school could be held in the same building as the Miscellaneous School, and would be but a small additional expense to the Board. All would thus, even to the man of grey hairs, be enabled to obtain at least a few of the first elements of an English education.

To recapitulate. The system of schools I propose for the city embraces a series of ascending grades, having accommodation for 5000 pupils or over, at the outset; and a prescribed course of instruction adapted to each step in the series, covering a period of eleven or twelve years. Under the direct supervision of the Board, pupils would be admitted to the grades for which they were prepared, at the beginning of the school year, while at the close of the school year every grade would be advanced to another school-room, to another teacher, and to a higher step in the course of instruction. No school-room would have more than fifty-six pupils, and all the pupils in any one room would be of the same attainment and nearly of the same age. To provide for individual cases, in order that every pupil may be properly cared for, and that the efficiency of any school may not be injured by the inability of a few pupils, I propose the efficient maintenance of a Miscellaneous school centrally located; and for those whose circumstances prevent them from availing themselves of the instruction furnished by the day schools, the opening of an Evening school, from the first of November to the first of May, in each year.

In view of these proposals, I beg to offer a few remarks upon their feasibility, and at the same time to urge upon the Board a fitting consideration of this whole matter.

The first difficulty that presents itself is that of expense in providing suitable school accommodation. The outlay will be large. But it should

not be forgotten that the proper education of all the children of this city, is of more value, a hundred-fold, than all the money it will cost. It is pertinent to ask, Will delay *lessen* the expense? What is it you would propose to do, if not to deal squarely with the result of past neglect? Delay will but increase the difficulty. Every year adds largely to your population. Had a proper system of public education been in operation many years in your midst, or, in other words, had your citizens each and all been yearly called upon to contribute toward the maintenance of public schools, and had there been public officers entrusted with full control in this matter, the Board would not now be called upon to deplore the almost utter destitution of proper school structures and furniture. But the present condition of the city in this respect is certainly not to be continued by the deliberate decision of this Board, when it is clothed with full authority to make this "wilder-ness blossom as the rose." This whole subject must be grappled with, and the sooner the better; unless, indeed, we are to content ourselves with deploring the sad condition of matters, and let the future, as the past, take care of itself,—a conclusion from which every man and woman and child in this city must revolt. The county of Halifax, exclusive of the city, has, within the past fifteen months, appropriated nearly \$30,000 towards school accommodation alone. Is it too much to expect that the city, according to its means, and the importance of its position, show an equal appreciation of the value of public education? It is manifestly wrong that the metropolis of the Province should continue to allow hundreds, perhaps thousands, to be growing up in its midst in ignorance, or worse than ignorance, because to have it otherwise would cost something. When, think you, shall we be able to impress adequately the people of this Province with the vast importance, nay necessity even, of educating those about them, if in Halifax—where reside as shrewd merchants, as well-read political economists, as intelligent citizens, and as large-hearted Christian philanthropists, as the land can boast—men ignore such claims, and by neglect proclaim to the whole Province that, notwithstanding they consider themselves as representing the most advanced public spirit and sentiment of Nova Scotians, by them the education of the people is not held of equal value with gold, or if so, not with *much* gold? The absence of a generous educational spirit and zeal pervading all classes in this city has not only given you hundreds of criminals, and lost you thousands of good citizens; but, what is equally to be deplored, it has for long years been a clog upon educational progress and reform throughout the Province.

My honored predecessors felt the educational condition of this city to be a millstone about their necks. My humble efforts have also been subjected to the blighting influence which has resulted from the former inertia of Halifax. "Have any of the Pharisees believed on Him?" was anxiously asked concerning a weightier matter in the olden time. "What are they doing in

Halifax?" has been asked of me a thousand times as I have, in private or in public, urged the importance of a free and liberal provision for the education of all. You may judge whether the answer which I have been forced to give has impelled or retarded the progress of the cause I have sought to advocate. The education of the Province cannot progress as it ought while the Capital is content to sit in darkness; though I rejoice to be able to say that many portions of the country present an educational equipment commensurate with the claims of this subject, and surpassing in every respect that existing in your midst. But I feel happy in saying, that, within a few months past, abundant proofs have been given that the great majority of the citizens deplore the educational history of this city, and are now looking anxiously to this Board to bring into operation a thorough and permanent system of schools at any necessary cost whatever. Scarcely a day passes but I receive from influential citizens expressions of anxious solicitude in this matter; the common fear being that the Board will rest short of a complete and modern system of school-accommodation and equipment. I have not the slightest hesitation in stating, that, from all I have been able to gather, the citizens will most cheerfully bear whatever expenditure is necessary, provided that the arrangements be thorough, ample, and complete. It is very apparent that if the provisions made by the Board are less than this, dissatisfaction must ensue; for it is not right (nor do the provisions of the law contemplate such a state of things) that all should be taxed for schools, and the accommodations be such that all cannot avail themselves of them. What is wanted (and anything less is but a caricature of a system of public education) is such buildings, such furniture, such teachers, and such management as will make our schools the delight of the children and the pride of our citizens, the rich as well as the poor.

The law empowers the Board to borrow money, and if need be to issue debentures, payable in equal yearly instalments, in order to meet the very exigencies consequent upon the introduction of a system of schools in the city. It is, therefore, just as easy to make the required provision at once,—the expense being spread over ten or twelve years, and the benefits that will be secured by this course cannot but render such a step satisfactory to all. Delay will not extricate the Board from present difficulties: on the contrary, these difficulties will increase day by day. A prompt and thorough reform will alone place your schools upon a satisfactory basis.

To procure suitable sites for buildings will, doubtless, be a matter of some difficulty. Three objects should be kept in view: to secure lots with surroundings suitable for schools; lots of sufficient size to allow a yard, at least, for the recreation of the pupils; and lots so situated in respect to each other as to distribute the schools, according to their grades, as evenly as possible throughout the city. In some cities on this continent the law allows school officers to select suitable sites, and to demolish dwelling-houses and shops if

need be,—of such paramount importance are the needs of education held to be. Such a provision, however, is not in our school law; but, surely, for an object of such transcendent importance to the whole community, no obstacle should be considered insuperable. Where sites for the sale of merchandize, for dwelling-houses, for stables, for prisons, ay, and for the very dens of traffic in iniquity and vice, can be had, let it not be said that education cannot find standing-room in our midst.

As to existing buildings, but few of them, in my opinion, are at all suited to the demands of public education. If good buildings, well planned, well lighted, well furnished, well heated, well ventilated, are needed for any object, that object is education. Poor buildings, dingy of aspect and ill-furnished, are enough of themselves to drive education from the city. Allure, attract, should be the motto; study the physical comfort and the pleasure of the young. Nothing is more powerful in rendering successful the efforts to elevate the education of any given locality, than the excellence of external arrangements. The building lately erected through the exertions of His Grace the Archbishop of Halifax, is in keeping with the object for which it was erected, and cannot but have a salutary influence upon those who have in charge the arrangements I have been discussing. The Acadian School, and some others not public ones, would be found suitable in such a plan as I have proposed. From the cordial co-operation existing between the Board and the managers of certain schools, not necessarily public, I have little doubt that such schools would cheerfully fall into any general arrangement embracing the whole city. Those who have felt so deeply the importance of providing the means of education, as to anticipate, in part, the provisions of the law, will, I believe, be glad to aid the Board in so great a scheme as the one recommended. If, however, such schools prefer not to form a part of the regular series for the city, the law still allows the Board to treat with these schools in any way it may deem best calculated to secure their advantages free to the public. This could be done without seriously disturbing the general plan proposed, though it would be exceedingly desirable to secure complete uniformity.

Gentlemen, I have now presented, for your consideration, a hurried sketch of a maturely-weighed scheme of public education for your city, such as is contemplated by the School Act. It is no Utopian dream, but is capable, with reasonable activity and energy, of being realized among you. It is substantially such a system as may be seen to-day in full operation in many cities on this continent; in almost every city, in fact, that pretends to an efficient system of free education. The crowded condition of your schools, the want of proper buildings, and, above all, the lack of anything like a *regularly progressive course of school instruction*, must render these remarks at this time not inappropriate. I commit this whole subject to your careful and early consideration, hoping that no time will be lost in redeeming Hali-

fax from the reproach under which it has so long lain ; and, that under the fostering care of the Board, such a system of schools will be speedily established in the metropolis of Nova Scotia, as shall not only bring to every member of this Board the sweet reward of good deeds, and to every citizen an honest pride in the scholastic institutions of his city ; but also to every child, rich or poor, high or low, the unspeakable blessing of a careful and thorough training for the grave duties of citizenship, and the graver duties of life. Surely it is high time that this subject was dealt with ; and may the hands of the Board be upheld and strengthened by every citizen !

