

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, FEBRUARY 24, 1864.

EDUCATION.—THE NEW SCHOOL BILL.

EDUCATION is one of the prime necessities of civilized life, and whatever can be done for its promotion amongst all classes in the community, demands the most serious attention of the people and of those entrusted with the affairs of government. This—education—more than any other of our social arrangements, distinguishes between savage and civilized life. Uneducated men are dependent on others for a knowledge of the laws by which they are governed amongst their fellowmen, and are thus at the mercy of any who may seek to impose upon them, whilst those in possession of these advantages have no excuse for the misuse they make of them.

Divine revelation—the voice of God to the children of men—is given to us now on the printed page. The preached Gospel is ordained of God as a wise institution for the benefit of both the educated and the ignorant, but it is only by being able to read that we can learn for ourselves what is therein taught. The ability to examine the contents of the Holy Scriptures should be supplied to every human being. We owe to the rising generation, as parents and as members of civil community, our best efforts to accomplish this great object. A government cannot undertake a more important work than endeavoring to combine the people for united effort in this direction. We have long had more or less of legislation on the subject.

Education in the Common Schools of this Province has been carried on of late years under the "Act for the encouragement of education," passed in 1850. This law has long been considered defective in many points. Both parties in the legislature have sought for the remedy, but the question has been so surrounded with difficulty and conflicting interests, and parties in the legislature have been so nearly balanced, that it has failed to receive such attention as it demanded.

In the year 1856 the Hon. Mr. Young brought in a School Bill intended to effect a thorough change in our educational affairs. It provided for general Assessment for the support of Free Schools, and for an Inspector of Schools in each District. This bill was deemed pretty generally a desirable movement, if the country had been prepared to adopt it. The provincial revenues were required for railroad purposes, and an adequate increase in the Provincial Grant for Education could not be expected for some time to come. The compulsory taxation of the people was therefore considered the best mode of raising a revenue which would be of any material service in the way of increasing the remuneration for Teachers. A week or so after the introduction of this bill, the introducer, for some reason, sought to engraft upon it a provision for Separate Schools in certain districts. This action produced an entire change in the favorable opinions before expressed, and the whole measure was shortly withdrawn by the announcement that "it had been deemed expedient to defer its further consideration to wait the expression of public opinion thereon." This, then, was the end of that measure.

The party contests which have continued from that time to the present amongst our legislators, have hitherto prevented the introduction of any general measure for the improvement of Schools.

The Bill now before the House of Assembly was introduced on Monday, the 15th inst., by the Hon. Provincial Secretary, who at the same time explained its leading provisions. His exposition of it will be found in our parliamentary report.

Several new features are embodied in the Bill, some of which are unquestionably great improvements. It may, however, receive various modifications before it is placed upon our Statute Book. In the first place it appoints the Executive Council of the Province a Council of Public Instruction with the Superintendent of Education as its Secretary. Various duties are assigned to this body, as follows: "The general superintendence of the Normal School;—they shall prepare and publish regulations, under which money shall be drawn, and teachers classified, and shall make such general regulations for the guidance of School Boards as may seem best fitted to bring about uniformity in their proceedings;—shall appoint Inspectors of Schools and prescribe their duties;—shall appoint properly qualified persons to examine the students of the Normal School for the purpose of awarding them certificates after the completion of their term of attendance;—shall recommend suitable text books and apparatus for all schools, as well as proper books for school libraries; and shall decide all cases of appeal

from Commissioners, Trustees, or Teachers; and make such orders thereon as may be required."

The offices of Superintendent of Education and Principal of the Normal School, both of which are now held by Dr. Forrester, are to be separated. The former officer is to receive \$1200 annual salary, with \$400 for travelling expenses and contingencies.

Objection will doubtless be raised to this, that the Executive having their time pretty fully occupied with the ordinary matters of government, will be unable to give attention to the duties enumerated above, and these will therefore rest almost exclusively with the Secretary. To this it may probably be replied that more vigor and efficiency may be expected from those acting under a body so directly responsible to the people as the government, than under a Council of Public Instruction composed of persons appointed specially to those duties. Too much centralization may act injuriously. This will depend, however, almost entirely on how the power is used and the law administered.

A change is to be made by this Bill in the office of Clerk to the Boards of Commissioners. Instead of the Board appointing its own Clerk, he is to be appointed by the Council of Public Instruction, (the Government,) and is to be the Inspector of the Schools under the supervision of the Board. He will be required to visit each School every half year, and report fully upon its condition. For each of these visits he is to receive 7s. 6d. His duties further will be "to furnish the trustees and teachers such information as they may require respecting the operation of this Act and the performance of their duties;—have the charge and management of all school books belonging to the Board; promote the advancement of education by holding public meetings and diffusing such information as shall further the above object, as also the improvement of school-houses, and all appertaining thereto, and generally aid the superintendent in carrying out a uniform system of instruction."

A revision and re-arrangement of School Sections is to be made by a special commission, consisting of three persons—the Chairman of the Board, the Deputy Surveyor of Crown Lands, and the Inspector of the District. The Board, however, may, with the sanction of the Council of Public Instruction, make alterations of such Sections, if thought necessary.

A Board of three Examiners, one of whom must be the Inspector, is to be appointed by the Commissioners for the purpose of examining applicants for Licenses to teach, without which no Teacher can receive any portion of the Provincial Grant. Each of these Examiners is to receive \$2 per day for every day they meet for this purpose.

The Grant from the Provincial Treasury for Common Schools is to be \$58880, instead of the \$45386 as at present. An addition is therefore made of \$13494.

The appropriations of the Provincial Grant to Teachers are to be regulated, not by the number of pupils in his school, but by the Class of License the Teacher is able to obtain; the second Class Teachers are to receive two-thirds of what is paid to those of the First Class, and the Third Class License is to receive but half that of the first Class. This we think will require very carefully managing, or it will lead to great corruption, and to injustice to the people and the really useful Teacher.

A premium is offered by the Bill to induce Trustees to make their Schools free to all. Those who do so, whether they be sustained by Assessment or Voluntary Subscription, are to be allowed an addition of 25 per cent, above that which the Teacher would otherwise receive. This will be some inducement for the introduction of the principle of Assessment in some Sections, seeing that one fourth additional will be payable to such section more than in others where the schools are not absolutely free.

Here we would remark that we are of opinion a county Assessment would have been far better than a sectional one. For while some sections may be pretty thickly settled, and able to obtain subscriptions sufficient to make their schools free, others but a mile or two away may be unable to do so; and such poorer sections, whilst being less able, have to pay a larger sum for the School fees of their children, and the Teacher receives a smaller portion of the Provincial Grant; whereas if it were done by a whole county, on the agreement of the Session and the Board of Commissioners, there might be an appropriation to the poorer section, from the Common Fund, so as to give it a fair share of the grant; thus securing more equality—the great object of Assessment.

This Bill also proposes to establish County Academies in each of the counties of the Province except in King's, Halifax, Colchester, Hants and Pictou. These Academies are

to receive \$600 per annum, and are to be constructed and located according to the directions of the Council of Public Instruction. Besides these there is to be another class called Superior Schools, to be constructed and located by the Council of Public Instruction. To the support of these \$7200 are to be divided in the proportion of \$400 for each county, each school to receive not less than \$100."

We must reserve till our next further remark upon this Bill. There are several parts of it which demand careful consideration. It is highly important that its provisions should be well weighed by the people themselves; as their future welfare, and that of their children, may be much affected by present enactments on this subject.

THE LATE REV. JOHN SCOTT.

We very much regret having to report the decease of the Rev. John Scott, the late pastor of St. Matthew's Church (Presbyterian) in this city. Mr. Scott died on the 18th inst., after a short illness. He had been thirty-seven years minister of St. Matthew's church and congregation, having come to Halifax in 1826, and fulfilling all the duties of his office during that period, with the exception of the last few years, when he had an assistant. On his resignation of his charge a few months since, he was succeeded by the Rev. G. M. Grant, the present pastor. Mr. Scott will long be remembered in this community as a laborious and faithful minister of the gospel of Christ, giving all his time and thoughts to the important charge with which he was entrusted. As a Preacher, in the more technical meaning of the word; he was not distinguished in manner or delivery, except by the earnestness with which he endeavored to enforce the great truths of religion. His style, however, was forcible and perspicuous, and his discourses well adapted to impress his hearers with a deep sense of the momentous nature of the great truths which they enunciated. His life was pure, upright and consistent, and although somewhat reserved in manner, few men possessed a larger share of the spirit of benevolence and christian urbanity, and few a smaller amount of sectarian exclusiveness. Though decided in his attachment to the section of the church of Christ of which he was a minister, he was ever ready to give the hand of fellowship to all who held the great leading principles of our common faith. Our long acquaintance with Mr. Scott, and respect for his character, both public and private, justly require this tribute to his memory.

QUARTER-OF-A-CENTURY CELEBRATION.

It is the intention of the Governors and friends of Acadia College to celebrate the completion of the twenty-fifth year of Acadia College by holding several fraternal and congratulatory meetings on Thursday the 2nd day of June next, at Wolfville,—the day before the College Anniversary. Meetings will be held in the morning and afternoon. In the evening it is proposed to hold a Grand Soiree, at which the Graduates of former years may give historical and other reminiscences of the past. The friends from different parts of the country are expected to be present and unite in this joyous season. The Governors have issued the following Circular to the Churches:

ACADIA COLLEGE.—To the Baptist Churches in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.—Dear Brethren,—Twenty-five years ago you founded Acadia College. It was a great work to undertake. But you entered on it in faith, and impelled by a strong sense of duty. Refused a share in Institutions professing to be provincial, and thus defrauded of your rights, you felt yourselves called upon to make a grand denominational effort, whereby you might supply yourselves with that education which was ungraciously denied you in other quarters. You made the effort. You sustained it—nobly—patiently—perseveringly. The stream of your contributions flowed freely, and the College building on the hill is a monument of your zeal and benevolence.

God has blessed your enterprise. Two hundred and eleven students have entered the College in the regular way, by matriculation; and its advantages have been enjoyed by numbers who have pursued partial courses of study. Thirty-four ordained ministers—nearly all stationed in these provinces—one of them a missionary in Burmah—constantly proclaim the glorious gospel of the grace of God. Many others who received education in your College are now occupying important positions in Society—in the British North American Provinces—in the United States—and elsewhere.

On various occasions God has mercifully visited our Institutions, and very many members of the College have been converted by his grace. We have now arrived at the close of the twenty-fifth year of the history of Acadia College. It is befitting that we should act in the spirit which animated the servant of God, when he, "took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer,"

saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," 1 Sam. vii. 12.

Our gratitude may be shewn in different ways. We may pray, earnestly and unitedly, for enlarged blessing. We may encourage our young men to repair to the College for instruction, and assist them while so engaged. And we may present a thank-offering, in the form of pecuniary contributions.

All the members of our churches may unite in this celebration. Who is there so poor as not to be able to spare something at such an interesting time as this? May it not be fairly expected that every church will raise a sum at least equal to a quarter of a dollar for each member?

Many churches can do much more. And many individual members of the churches will surely be forward to manifest, by liberal donations, their thankfulness to God for his great mercies.

It is respectfully suggested that the object of this Appeal may be secured in every church by the immediate appointment of a Committee, to whom the business of collection may be entrusted, and by whom the proceeds may be remitted to the Treasurer of the College.

The Governors find that at least two thousand dollars will be required, to meet the salaries of the Professors and to put the College premises in a state of full repair. They ask that the above-mentioned sum may be appropriated to these purposes, the remaining proceeds of this special effort being paid into the Endowment Fund, for investment.

And now, brethren, will you not give a generous response to this application? Will you not hasten to render to the Lord according to the benefits received? Will you not, in this way, give proof to other denominations of your unabated zeal in this good cause—your undying attachment to your own Institution?

By order of the Board of Governors,
S. W. DEBLOIS, Secretary.

Wolfville, Jan. 27, 1864.

N. B.—J. W. BARRS, Esq., Wolfville, N. S., is Treasurer of the College. It is requested that the contributions for this object may be remitted on or before the twenty-fifth day of May next.

The very modest sum named as an offering on the occasion will, we doubt not, be far exceeded by the friends of the Institution. We hope to hear that a large addition is made to the Endowment Fund by the surplus over the sum named.

NEWS SUMMARY.

Our English Mails by the R. M. Steamer Africa, which arrived on Saturday, bring dates up to the 6th inst.

Parliament met on the 4th inst., and was opened by Commission, Her Majesty not appearing in person. The Speech from the throne is very brief, and does not touch upon some of the most exciting questions which must necessarily occupy the public interest for some time to come.

Hostilities have at last commenced between the Germans and Danes; the Prussians have marched a large force into the Duchies (Holstein and Schleswig) which was followed by a sharp conflict, in which the Germans received a check with some loss of life. It is still hoped that the intervention of other Powers may avert further collisions, although we fear that such is the propensity of nations for war, that when once blood is shed, there is not much hope of arresting the evil passions until they have become fully satiated. Thus far England, although strongly sympathizing with Denmark, has taken no active measures, but it is greatly to be feared, that not only she, but half the nations of Europe, may soon become involved in the horrors and miseries of war.

The commercial prosperity of England has been great during the past year, and there is a large overplus in the revenue. The distress in the manufacturing districts is also decreasing, and if only peace can be continued, her future prospects are highly encouraging.

The Polish Insurrection is still going on with little variation. The cities and fortresses are in possession of the Russians, while the insurgents are scattered over the country in greater or less bodies, which attack and often discomfit their enemies.

The Japanese difficulties are likely to be adjusted without further recourse to coercive measures.

The war with the natives in New Zealand has been lately more successful and it is hoped will soon be terminated.

Notices, &c.

Monthly Meetings of Home Missionary Board.

IN THE VESTRY OF GRANVILLE STREET CHURCH.
Wednesday, Feb. 3rd, 1864.

Present—Rev. Dr. Pryor in the chair.
Brethren Geo. Robbins, H. N. Paint, Alex. Robinson, S. Selden, and Secretary.

Letters received from Rev. J. Bancroft, and Tan-cook Church.
Received by the Treasurer since last report,—
From J. W. Barrs, Wolfville, \$20
" J. L. Tremain, Fort Hood, 6
R. N. BRACKWITH, Sec'y. H. M. Board.