

Messenger and Visitor

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OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

If work could be done by talking about it we might look for the highest efficiency in our public schools. For we have Provincial Institutes and Associations, Dominion Educational Associations, Summer Schools and district organizations of various kinds,—all for the study of methods of instruction, school management and school support. These meetings are very useful and necessary. The great difficulty, however, is to make theory into practice. The perfect teacher is sketched by the speakers; but the teachers after all will be the first to confess that they are not perfect. The value of good school grounds is duly set forth; but the surroundings and equipments of many schools are still far from ideal. Nevertheless discussion must go on until public opinion forces the improvements demanded by the most important department of our public service.

At the New Brunswick Institute held in St. John last week, Principal Crockett, of the Normal school, rejoiced in the great advance that had been made since 1891. He had noted with pleasure improvement in writing and spelling, especially in rural districts. The improvement in the equipment of high schools was very marked. He had an opportunity of visiting many high schools throughout the dominion but from what he had seen and heard the high schools of this province compared very well with the best elsewhere. The Educational system was now unified, and the integral parts were linked together by examinations. This had awakened an unprecedented interest in Educational matter.

If time had permitted Dr. Crockett to review the history of public education at greater length he might have referred with cogency to the still more pronounced improvements of the present as compared with the condition of affairs before 1871 when the Common Schools Act was passed, under the leadership of the late Hon. George E. King, and put into most successful operation by the late Dr. Theodore H. Rand, who for a period of twelve years worked with enthusiasm and ability to promote the efficiency of the schools.

A note of similar character is given by the Wesleyan, of Halifax, in an editorial referring to the recent closing exercises of the Normal school at Truro. Rev. Dr. MacLaren, the editor, was impressed with the fact of an excellent equipment of buildings and the good work which is being done for the building up of the Province and the Dominion. "We have seen a greater display of burting in decorating the rooms, but we have never listened to better addresses at a similar gathering than we heard from the lips of Rev. Dr. Keirstead of Acadia College, and President Hannah of King's College. They were profound and thrilling with emotion while setting high ideals before the graduates. There was intelligence marked on the faces of the Normal students allied with an alertness which was delightful and inspiring."

Dr. MacLaren omits mention of his own thoughtful and timely address at Truro. He dealt with the question of salaries of teachers and in a similar vein to the discussion of this subject in the Institute in St. John. Reports show that while the cost of living goes up from year to year the salaries are no higher than formerly. This means that the salaries are in reality lower; and this again means that the service rendered is less hearty and efficient. And this again means that the minds of the children receive a poorer training and less enrichment than was given in former years. The parents are saving money by starving their children. And still we boast of our advancement!

Another subject discussed in these meetings was the relation of the East to the West. It appears that we must furnish teachers for the West as well as the East. The quality of our education, the standard of our teaching will therefore affect the life of our country in all its domain and for many years.

There is considerable discussion on manual training and the consolidated school arrangements. While the latter costs more money, especially at the beginning, it is believed the increase of efficiency will justify the expenditure—as to

manual training it is no longer an experiment as to popularity or usefulness.

Our public schools are a large part of our national assets and should be the constant care of all good citizens.

A RELIGION OF POLICY.

Whether or not Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was in any real sense a religious man is difficult to determine from the very brief biography of him which the Scriptures give. It is evident indeed that he recognized the importance of religion as a factor in national life. There are many men today who perceive and admit that the prevalence of religious belief among the masses is in a high degree important to the cultivation of public morality and therefore to the stability of the State, but who give very little consideration to religion as a matter of personal concern. It is certain that true religion blesses every department of human life and interest which it influences. It purifies the home life and the social life, gives virility and fruitfulness to its industrial and commercial life, purifies and elevates the political life, gives to art and literature a nobler inspiration and sends wholesome currents throbbing through all the pulses of the nation. And yet religion is vastly more than a handmaid to the State. Its end is not merely to ameliorate material conditions and to prevent mankind from sinking into the sloughs of insensibility, to the destruction of all natural virtue and national strength. The teaching of the Bible everywhere is that religion is the supreme concern of the individual and the nation. Religion is not a matter of policy to be cultivated merely because it ministers respectability to the family and welfare to the State. It is that which brings men face to face with God and presses home upon them the supreme duty of obedience to the truth.

There is a subtle evil tendency in human nature to dethrone religion from its supreme place and make it the minister to our ambitions or selfish interests. How many men go to church, not to bow in humble and devout worship before God, but because it is respectable and to their financial interest to do so! How many men who do not go to church are yet well pleased to have their wives and daughters go, because an utter open disregard of religion on the part of the family would not seem respectable! The failure of Jeroboam evidently turned upon his attitude toward religion. Instead of giving it the supreme place in his thought and in his kingdom, he endeavored to make it subservient. He gave attention to religion, not because the highest duty demanded it, but because it seemed to him necessary to hold his kingdom intact. It was not with Jeroboam the kingdom of God first and everything else afterwards, but his own kingdom first and religion as a means of establishing himself upon the throne. This is the choice which men are so prone to make—the choice that results in immeasurable loss to every man who makes it.

"Whereupon the King took counsel." We are not told with whom Jeroboam took counsel, but it seems evident that he did not go to the best available sources for advice in this time, when wise direction was so greatly needed. A man who has committed the initial mistake of making his own ambition supreme is not likely to seek counsel in quarters where his purposes will be submitted to severe criticism in the light of truth. Jeroboam had "said in his heart" that the people over whom he ruled must not go to Jerusalem to worship, else the result would be disastrous to his throne and to himself, and having decided so much apart from any divine counsel in the matter, he takes counsel with those who are prepared to second his purposes as to the best means of carrying them into effect. The result was that unauthorized changes were made in the ancestral worship, in respect to the place of meeting, the ritual and the ministry. Bethel and Dan were established instead of Jerusalem; figures of calves or bulls took the place, it would seem, of the figures of the cherubim in the tabernacle; men of other tribes, instead of the Levites, ministered in these sanctuaries chosen by Jeroboam, and a feast was appointed on another month than that on which the feast at Jerusalem was held. Just how far the ritual of worship departed from that which had been established in Jerusalem we cannot tell, but the corrupting influences of the apostasy appears to have been especially connected with the worship of the calves. Of its swift downward tendency Dr. MacLaren writes: "How impossible it was to arrest the swift descent when once that steep and slippery slope was entered on, the history of the Northern Kingdom proves. The calves could be speculatively defended as not being idols, but symbols, just as apologists for heathenism today defend or palliate their idols, and refined distinctions could have been drawn between worship of the symbol and of the power represented by it, but all such subtleties were non-existent to the mass of worshippers, and the symbol was very soon a god to the people, whatever Jeroboam meant it to be. It is a perilous thing to call in the senses as aids to worship. Sensuous objects may be introduced with good inten-

tions as ladders by which the soul climbs to spiritual realities, but all experience shows that the soul is as likely to go down the ladder as up it, and that to bring in the material to help towards apprehending and approaching the spiritual is much more sure to lead to the materializing of the spiritual than to the spiritualizing of the material."

THE ELECTION OF BISHOPS.

Our Anglican friends of Nova Scotia have not succeeded in obtaining a successor to Bishop Courtney who a few months ago retired from the office of Bishop, which he had filled since 1888, to accept the rectorship of a church in New-York. The Synod elected, on the eleventh ballot, Rev. Dr. Cody of Toronto. But Dr. Cody declined the office and will continue to preach in a church in Toronto and to perform his duties as Professor in Wycliffe College.

The full reports of the action of the Synod reveal a somewhat divided state of opinion in the Church of England. The clergy seem to favor the High Church doctrines while the laymen seek a bishop of the Low Church school, or, at all events of the broad church views. The election of Dr. Cody was considered rather favorable to the Low Church party. But in view of his failure to accept the office the election is postponed until August 31st.

While this is a matter belonging exclusively to the Church of England, all Christians will hope that a man of consecration and strength may be found to lead the Church in its doctrine and life. In view of the weakened state of Kings College and the differences of doctrinal views it is of great consequence that unity of sentiment should as far as possible prevail. The appointment of President Hannah gives satisfaction to the friends of Kings College. He is impressing the people as a man of much force and energy.

But other people elect bishops. Baptist churches by the hundred are doing it every year—For our pastors are overseers, bishops—they have the care of the churches. They preach the gospel and administer the ordinances and lead the flock of God. If their election is not so much talked of by the papers as in other denominations, it is of equal moment to those concerned. The ministers of the churches in their relation to their brethren, to the world and to Christ are at the very centres of influence. Let them magnify their office even if they feel themselves unable to fill it as they desire. It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. And let the churches that have the responsibility of electing pastors hold the trust as most sacred, let them pray the Lord to show whom he has chosen, let the party spirit be left outside when a minister is to be sought from Christ. Some of our churches are now pastorless. Let all our people pray for these our brethren that they may have wisdom to secure able ministers of the New Testament.

THE WAR.

According to a report published last week as coming from Admiral Togo one Russian warship was sunk and two other vessels seriously damaged as a result of an attack by Japanese torpedo boats on the Russian fleet in the roadstead of Port Arthur on the night of June 23. A report from Viceroy Alexieff to the Czar, published a few days ago denies that the Russian fleet suffered any loss from the Japanese attack. Which report is to be received as correct it is difficult to determine. During the past week, so far as reported, the Russian ships at Port Arthur have remained quiet, with the exception that a torpedo boat is said to have run the Japanese blockade and gone northward to Niu Chwang. The Vladivostok squadron has been active having bombarded Gensan on the Korean coast and also destroyed two vessels. There is a rumor of an engagement having taken place between the Vladivostok and the Japanese squadron under Admiral Kamimuri, but the rumor is unconfirmed. On land the Japanese armies of Generals Kuroki, Oku and Nodzu have been pushing northward and westward in the direction of Niu Chwang, and Liao Yang. There has been hard fighting at Motien Ling and Ta Ling and in both cases the Russians were driven back. It is reported, however, that the Russians were able to recapture Ta-Ling. The word ling means pass and the possession of these places is accordingly of great importance. It seems probable that General Kuropatkin's purpose is to avoid a general engagement if possible and to move his forces northward to Mukden before the rainy season sets in, which is now at hand, making that place the base of future operations. It is doubtful whether conditions are such that the Russian commander will be able to withdraw his forces without giving battle. From what appears to be authentic reports there was a successful attack on some of the outworks of Port Arthur on June 20 and three strong positions were taken after hard fighting and considerable loss of life on both sides. . . . The latest despatches tell of the destruction of a Russian battleship or cruiser and a torpedo boat by a torpedo boat attack of the Japanese at the entrance of Port Arthur on June 27. It is also reported that the Vladivostok squadron again eluded Admiral Kamimuri's squadron in the fog after being in touch with it in the neighborhood of the Tsu Islands.