

Demands for Normal School Work in Oregon, and how Best to Secure It.

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"We met the enemy and they are ours." Fierce has been the conflict of words, with some skirmishing still on the outposts, but with such men as Pestolozzi and Froebel to originate on the mother continent, and such men as David P. Page, Horace Mann, and other kindred spirits to put into practical shape in our own country, it could not have been otherwise than that the newer and more perfect methods, as well as the schools for training teachers in those methods, should have succeeded in establishing themselves, immovable, in the advance line of our educational progress.

We are scarcely prepared to estimate at this time the spirit of opposition which the pioneers in this reformatory movement have met. Even in New York, now priding herself on her nine Normal schools and nearly 10,000 pupils, the opposition was so hot when the legislature, in 1843, made an appropriation to establish and maintain a Normal school, that it was made an issue in the State election following, and the opposers of the "expensive nuisance" boasted a triumph in the election of Hon. Silas Wright, one of the strongest enemies of "the experiment," as it was called. But he was a man of good sense, and subsequent investigation of the workings of their then only Normal school at Albany, made him ever after one of its warmest friends. Only last winter the President of the State University, in one of these United States, was using the influence of his pen, through the press of the State, to have the Normal school curriculum cut down to an elementary course, and thus drive from them the better class of students, who desire to know all that may be known that will assist them to successful teaching.

But the opposition is waning. The Normal schools are a grand success and are coming to be recognized as an indispensable part of the machinery of our free school system.

Normal schools have had that quick growth in this country that is characteristic of American soil. Their first great advocates were Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, John Quincy Adams, and Horace Mann. Adams used to say: "We see monarchs expending vast sums to establish Normal schools. Shall we be outdone by kings?" The memorable words of Webster were: "Normal schools are designed to elevate our common schools, and thus carry out the ideas of our Pilgrim fathers."

Forty years ago the first Normal school was established in this country. Its influence has grown till now there are more than 150 Normal schools, Colleges and Universities whose central thought is the preparation of teachers for the public schools. These 150 institutions are attended by more than 30,000 pupils. Of this number about 3,000 graduate yearly. As many more obtain a good knowledge of the branches to be taught and the methods of teaching them, and go to their work in the school-room without graduating. What an army of workers, going forth with that energy and enthusiasm that the Normal school alone can give, to swell the ranks of those already engaged in the intellectual and moral training of the future citizens of this mighty republic! The estimation in which these schools are held by the States in which they are located, is shown by the fact that an annual appropriation of more than \$600,000 is made for their support, from the State treasuries, besides appropriations of counties and cities for the same purpose.

If we go beyond the limits of our

own country and trace the history of Normal schools, we find it brief but brilliant. Though originating in the seventeenth century, but little was accomplished for a hundred years. In the middle of the eighteenth century, that remarkable man, Pestolozzi, arose—remarkable for the extent of his plans and the magnitude of his failures; for his fine theories and utter inability to put into practice. Though he failed in all he undertook, he succeeded in kindling in others an unprecedented enthusiasm for popular education, and in leading a host to unprecedented success. He succeeded in inventing the A B C of knowledge, but it was reserved for his most enthusiastic admirer and disciple, Fredrick Froebel, to invent the A B C of skill. Pestolozzi discovered what ought to be done, Froebel discovered how to do it.

The growth of Normal schools has been as remarkable in Europe as in this country. Practically, starting in a little town in western Switzerland in the beginning of the present century, the result is that at present Prussia has 119 Normal schools, Austria 118, France 95, Great Britain 48, and so on. In fact, that which has made the free school system a real success, is that part of the system that prepares teachers for successful work in these free schools.

The subject immediately pressing upon us at this time is,

THE DEMAND FOR NORMAL SCHOOL WORK IN OREGON.

What has been the necessity of other parts of the world for trained teachers, till provided with the means of training them, is our necessity at the present. True, we have been greatly benefited by what our sister States have done, as their wholesome influences have been slightly wafted to us across the mountainous barriers that on every side shut us off from them. But this has only been sufficient to make us feel the more keenly the importance of doing something for ourselves.

There are, however, still those, who should know better, that will insist that when a person has acquired a sufficient knowledge of the branches to be taught, he is fully prepared for the duties of the school-room. As this class is unfortunately large, and many of them among the best citizens of our State, it may not be improper, just here, to briefly answer their question: "Why have a Normal school?" Let us look first to the causes which led to the

ORIGIN OF NORMAL SCHOOL.

"Normal schools do not owe their origin to some visionary scheme, such as sometimes takes the mind of the age by surprise and reigns with the tyranny of a new fashion, whose brief life forms a moment's interval between the first marvel of surprise and the subsequent tedium, but they were called into life by a public want. They were not a luxury in which the age allowed itself to indulge, but a necessity for the improvement of primary education; they were founded at a time when, while higher education was flourishing, the schools of the people were, to a great extent, in the hands of the ignorant and unqualified. The refuse of other callings and professions, as a last resort, took to the teacher's chair, and it became necessary, if the common schools were not to go to wreck and ruin, to secure a supply of qualified instructors. This led to the founding of the first Normal school."

It must further be conceded that the system of training provided by the Normal schools is

DESIRABLE.

Says State Superintendent Gilmour of New York: "That it is desirable to have schools for the special preparation and training of persons who intend to become teachers in the public schools, is a proposition which

* St. Louis Report.

is no longer disputed by any person of intelligence. The most prominent educators in the country have advised the establishment and maintenance of Normal schools, and in most of the States which have organized an efficient system of public education, the Normal school has been founded, encouraged, and made to do effective work."

Still further, we must, with the present demand of our public schools for trained teachers, consider the Normal school

A NECESSITY.

Common schools, high schools, and colleges give a general education, but do not make lawyers, doctors, preachers, or teachers. To fit for these professions there must be special training and a special course of study provided. Hence, the necessity of law schools, medical schools, theological schools, and Normal schools. It is quite as reasonable to suppose that a person may succeed in either of the other professions named, as in that of teacher, without special preparation for their special work. It had grown to be considered that when a person had proven himself unfit for anything else that he might then take the teacher's chair and perform his duties successfully. But when it is understood that in no other profession is so much skill required to bring entire success and in none the results so disastrous when the work is improperly done, the Normal school is seen to be a necessity—an outgrowth of the demands of our free school system.

Let us now summarize the

ARGUMENTS FOR NORMAL SCHOOLS.

1. The Normal school is the best agency yet devised for the training of teachers; and we have seen how great the importance of that training.
2. Normal schools utilize the experience of the race. This is their special field.
3. Normal schools popularize and propagate improved methods of instruction and school management, and thus become a blessing far beyond the immediate results accomplished on their own students.
4. Normal schools aid all other schools. By providing better teachers for the common schools they furnish more and better students for the higher institutions.
5. Normal schools pay. Oregon expends \$300,000 annually on her public schools. With carefully trained teachers, the returns for every dollar will be tripled.

WE FEEL THEIR WANT.

Hon. L. L. Rowland, our late State Superintendent, in his last biennial report to the legislative assembly, says: "No want, it is confidently believed, is more keenly felt by the real friends of thorough, practical State education, than that of a State Normal school;" and closed the report by respectfully recommending and earnestly urging that a State Normal school be established at the earliest day practicable. Our present Hon. State Superintendent expresses his appreciation of this need in our State, in the strongest terms, and is doing all he can to encourage Normal work and Normal Institutes. He will, no doubt, present the subject in his next report to the legislative assembly in the most urgent language. By correspondence with the County Superintendents in our State, I find among them the strongest desire for a State Normal school. "We are in great need of trained teachers," "I will do all in my power to aid in this important work in our State," and kindred expressions, come from almost every superintendent in the State. These men say that in their examination of teachers, they find them as a rule lamentably deficient in a knowledge of the theory and practice of teaching.

There are also strong local reasons why we should have a first class Normal school in our State. One of the States in the Mississippi valley, or on the Atlantic slope, could get along

much better without such a school than we, if they chose; for being surrounded by them in other States, they would be able to obtain many trained teachers. But this will not meet their necessities. Teachers are generally not rich, and, hence, not able to go a long distance from home to prepare for their work. The Normal school must come to them or they must go without its training. Realizing this fact and the true economy of providing thus for the successful operation of the public schools, nearly every State in the Union has made appropriations to establish and maintain Normal schools with free tuition to those who agree to teach in the State. Of all these States, no one needs to provide for the training of her own teachers, so much as Oregon. Separated by thousands of miles of expensive travel from the Normal influences that now pervade the States east of the Rocky Mountains, it is simply an impossibility that we should be greatly benefitted by their influence. A few trained teachers find their way here, but they are generally engaged in our city schools, and even there the demand is not supplied. We have abundance of as good intellect as can be found in the nation. In literary culture our teachers will compare favorably with those of New York or Pennsylvania. They only need to learn how to teach and our public schools will become an ornament to our State.

It is probable, however, that the second part of the subject assigned me, is the more important:

HOW TO SECURE IT.

It would be well, however, for us first to be able to decide just what we need; that is, in what way the training of the teachers of our State can be best effected. We can reach our conclusions most safely by calling to our aid the experience of other States, for all do not follow the same plan in securing the desired result.

Delaware follows the plan of providing free scholarships to Normal students in Delaware college, but, as might be expected, the Normal department receives but little attention, and the whole affair is considered a failure by the State Superintendent of that state, so far as Normal work is concerned. One or two other States have taken a similar course, with similar results. We should steer wide of any such arrangement in Oregon.

Iowa had for a number of years a plan peculiarly her own. A Normal department was established in the State University, and Normal Institutes were required to be conducted in each county with such instructors as the County Superintendent deemed necessary. The department in the University was found to be an unsatisfactory part of the machine, and three years ago a State Normal school was established at Cedar Falls to provide the professional training necessary, while the Normal Institutes were continued as auxiliary thereto.

Other States have generally provided for professional training in Normal schools only; establishing for that purpose from one to nine as might be necessary to meet their requirements. These are all, I believe, maintained by annual State appropriations, except in Wisconsin where there is a permanent Normal school fund of nearly a million dollars, with an annual income of over eighty thousand dollars. This gives her the proudest position for her Normal schools, and consequently for her public schools, of any State in the nation.

A careful examination of the whole matter makes it apparent that Iowa now has the best system of training for her teachers of any of the States. Normal Institutes alone would not answer, for they can not give sufficient time. A Normal Institute of from two to six weeks duration, would be of immense advantage to the schools

of any county, but only surface work can be done. The details of the science of teaching can not be taught. Teachers are shown what they ought to know to be successful, but there is not time to learn the principles or apply the methods. The most enterprising teachers will thus be awakened to a sense of their deficiencies and go to the State Normal for a full course; while those who remain will be led to experiment. Many of them will reach a good degree of success and all will be improved.

It may be well for us to consider here that

NORMAL SCHOOLS MUST BE STATE SCHOOLS.

Few individual enterprises have succeeded or can succeed. The reasons must be obvious to those who have given the subject attention.

President Baldwin expresses it well when he says:

"Law, medicine and commerce pay; hence law, medical and commercial schools may safely be left to private enterprise. War preaching and teaching do not pay; hence, to secure officers, preachers and teachers, military, theological and Normal schools must be sustained. Unless endowed, no collegiate institution can now be made efficient. The churches, associations and individuals endow colleges. The Normal school is established for the benefit of the whole people. It is essential to the success of the public schools. It cannot long be sustained by private enterprise. It is a part of the public school system, and its support by the state is simply a necessity."

As already stated

IT WILL PAY.

Of the \$300,000 annually expended on the public schools in our State, \$200,000 is paid to teachers for their salaries. Well have they earned the money paid to them; and still it must be admitted that much of this money is little better than given away, because those to whom it has been paid, though doing the best they could, have probably so conducted their schools that as much, possibly more, injury than benefit has resulted. If our State should wish to make any internal improvement at a cost of \$200,000, all will agree that it would pay to expend \$5,000 or \$10,000 of this amount to secure architects or engineers who thoroughly understand their business to plan and superintend the work, rather than to let the contract to some one, for better or for worse, who, though well enough educated, has never studied a book nor taken a lesson in architecture or engineering. The same is true in a far greater degree when applied to our educational improvement.

To look at it from a financial standpoint alone, we would better allow 10 per cent. of the amount, or \$20,000 annually for the preparation of teachers for their work, than to have incompetent ones, and the remainder of the money would give far more satisfactory returns. But 3 per cent. would give ample funds for running a Normal school, such as we need, and conducting Normal Institutes in every county in the State.

To come more immediately to the subject—how to secure this Normal work. The movement must begin with the teachers themselves. This is the body that should move, and now is the time when this movement should be inaugurated. Let a committee be appointed at this meeting of those who have the welfare of our school system at heart, who desire to see the standard of our schools raised, and educational interest awakened throughout the State. Make it the duty of this committee to carefully examine into the results of the plans adopted by the different States, and make a full report at the next meeting of this association. Their report should then be fully discussed and acted upon, and the same or another committee appointed to prepare