1903

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Evolution of the Rhode Island Normal School.

by A. W. Brown.
THE EVOLUTION OF A LEADING NORMAL SCHOOL

HORACE MANN AND MASSACHUSETTS; HENRY BARNARD IN RHODE ISLAND; FIRST NORMAL SCHOOL; DANA P. COLBURN; JOSHUA KENDALL; EDUCATIONAL REVIVAL IN RHODE ISLAND UNDER COMMISSIONER BICKNELL; NEW NORMAL SCHOOL, 1871; JAMES C. GREENOUGH; THOMAS B. STOCKWELL.

ARTHUR W. BROWN

In our country, when a great idea needs, for its proper promotion, only "more exertion, more and more," it is practically certain that it will be promoted. With a tireless worker like Horace Mann ready to supply the necessary exertion, the merest nucleus of so great an idea as that of the Normal School was sure of growth from the outset. The school was established at Lexington, with Cyrus Pierce, the right man in the right place, as principal. On Sept. 5, 1839, the second Normal School in America was started in Barre, Massachusetts. "More exertion, more and more," came from Mr. Mann, who at one time sold his own library to save the pioneer institution.

A new impulse was given to the idea by the establishment of a similar school at Albany, in 1844; and of two others in
Massachusetts, in 1850, at Lancaster and Bridgewater.

In Rhode Island, in 1845, Henry Barnard began what he called "an itinerary Normal School agency," through which he held some 1,100 meetings, distributed many thousand pamphlets, contributed many strong letters to the press, and even put at least sixteen pages of stirring educational matter into every popular almanac sold in the state. These arguments influenced President Francis Wayland, of Brown University, to establish a professorship of didactics. Samuel S. Greene, the noted grammarian, then superintendent of schools in Providence, was appointed to the professorship, and, in the winter of 1851-2, eighty persons, mostly women, received instruction under him in the hall of the Providence High School on Benefit Street. October 24, 1852, the second session was opened in a suitable room at the corner of Broad and Eddy Streets, with Dana P. Colburn, from the school at Bridgewater, Arthur Sumner, from the one at Lancaster, and William Russell, as associate instructors. Eighty-five pupils attended. In 1854 Professor Greene retired, because of other pressing duties, and Mr. Colburn became principal. The school grew, having 147 pupils at one time, but in 1857 the state legislature failed to maintain it in Providence, and it was moved to Bristol, where financial aid was generously furnished. In its new home it flourished well, considering the lack of a central location in a thickly populated place, until December 15, 1859, when Mr. Colburn was almost instantly killed by being thrown from his carriage and dragged upon the frozen ground. This distressing accident proved to be a mortal blow to the school as well as to its principal; for, although a very good man, Daniel Goodwin, was selected as the new principal, he had to leave three months later to begin the theological studies he had previously decided to pursue. His sister carried on the work until May 17, 1860, when Joshua Kendall, of Meadville, Pennsylvania, was chosen as her successor. Under him the attendance steadily increased for two years or more, but contrary to the usual experience, the majority of the student body was sometimes composed of young men, and the Civil War, with its insatiable demands for young volunteers, and its abundant promising business opportunities, dried up this source of patronage. At the close of the spring term, 1865, the school was closed for a vacation of five weeks, but it opened no more in Bristol. It had done a grand work, educating as teachers 123 young men and 532 young women.

Many earnest attempts were made to resume the work, either in Bristol or elsewhere, but the body of the dead Normal School lay in the path, and most people assumed that its spirit had flown forever.

In 1869, however, matters suddenly began to assume a different aspect. The change was not accidental, but rather a very pointed illustration of how, in the words of Byron:

The spirit of a single mind
Makes that of multitudes take one direction,
As roll the waters to the breathing wind.

A new Commissioner of Public Schools saw that many strong, earnest men and women were deeply interested in the improvement of their schools, but that, under existing discouragements, they were working somewhat aimlessly, at best, and too often at cross purposes. He knew what had been done by Horace Mann in Massachusetts, and by Henry Barnard in Rhode Island, and he decided at once that he would unify, encourage, and energize the strong but scattered forces eager for further progress. Having thus decided, he threw himself unreservedly
into the work of organization. He stirred the educational public as it had never been stirred before, and the wind of his spirit seemed to breathe a new and vigorous life through the dry bones of the Normal School idea. His enthusiasm was contagious, his confidence in his cause absolute, and he seemed to put iron and electricity into everything he touched. Indeed, if the reader will excuse a quotation from Josh Billings, because of its homely pathness, he was so thoroughly alive that he seemed "like a case of itch in a district school, for he set everybody to scratching at once."

From Woonsocket to Westerly, from Burrillville to Block Island, from Coventry Centre to Little Compton Commons, he blew his clarion call to the friends of higher education, and they gathered round him in an army of progress whose advance was resistless. He revived the suspended school paper of the state, and through its columns and those of the daily and weekly press, which were freely opened, he and his co-workers made Little Rhody ring with educational arguments. The Rhode Island Institute of Instruction, at its last meeting in a church vestry, had had an attendance of only twelve, and its previous meetings had never been large. The young commissioner hired for it the largest hall in the state, and men stopped on street corners to inquire if his zeal were not carrying him into insanity. He next engaged eminent speakers from far and near, and they began to consider the appointment of a guardian. He then announced that the American Band would furnish music, and they thought they might have to stop him by main strength. But no one wanted to play the star part in belling the cat, and the excitement continued. There was method, however, in all this madness. The hall would not hold hundreds who wished to attend, and the impetus given the institute is still operative.

A large crop of new schoolhouses sprang up all over the state, almost as quickly as the armed men rose from the sowing of Cadmus. The enthusiastic educators spoke in the legislature, and their words received profound attention; their leader added a characteristic speech, and, with but one dissenting vote, $10,000 was voted to reopen the Normal School, in Providence, with an additional sum for "mileage" to students coming over five miles.

Sept. 6, 1871, opening exercises were held at 265 High Street, conducted by the young commissioner, Thomas W. Bicknell. The next day the school was opened with 106 pupils, of whom eight were young men, by three of the best teachers ever in charge of such an institution—James C. Greenough, the principal, from the Westfield, Massachusetts, Normal School, and Misses Susan C. Bancroft and Mary L. Jewett as head assistants. There were other teachers of the first order of ability, but I specify the three named individually because the brunt of a hard battle to popularize an uncertain project fell upon them most of all, and no victory was ever more complete than theirs.

December 31, 1874, Thomas B. Stockwell succeeded Commissioner Bicknell, who had gone to Boston as editor of "The New England Journal of Education," and he, too, has done grand work in advancing the State Normal School. Through his labors, the school moved, July 1, 1878, into full possession of its first home, the Providence High School house on Benefit street, and in 1891 to
its new building, erected at an expense of $400,000, and probably the best edifice of its kind in the United States. Lack of space forbids more than passing mention of Mr. Greenough's able successors, Thomas J. Morgan, George A. Littlefield, William E. Wilson, Frederick E. Gow- ing, and Charles S. Chapin, the present principal, and their capable associate teachers. Few schools have experienced greater vicissitudes than this, and none has won, in the end, a higher place. Under Principal Chapin students enjoy advantages not excelled anywhere, and in some ways unequalled.

[Our second article will be devoted to Mr. Chapin's plans in the larger development of the Normal idea as now understood and applied in modern education.]

Science Teaching in Secondary Schools

AARON GOVE
Superintendent of Public Schools, Denver, Col.

The scientific departments of our secondary schools are weakening in efficient instruction, and unless a halt be soon called the days of fair knowledge of elementary physics and chemistry with the fifteen-year-old boy will be only in memory. The typical university senior who properly seeks for and obtains a position as teacher in the high schools, is more and more poorly prepared for the legitimate duties of teacher and unprecedentedly well skilled in scientific knowledge. He is enthusiastic along the line of original research; he demands promptly, an elaborate and expensively equipped laboratory; he puts the classes at work on as high a plane and under directions that demand as high scholarly attainments as he himself possessed during his university course. This class of teachers are forgetting more and more the plane upon which they lived during their high school days. Time was when the ordinary law of refraction and reflection in light, the parallelogram of forces and the laws of falling bodies were of practical use to the high school boy.

We shall find in the classes, to-day, boys and girls floundering along, sometimes in original research and very often clutching at problems and heartlessly meandering in unscientific investigation, neglecting drill in elementary principles of natural science.

I am complaining that university laboratory methods and college proficiency and efficiency constitutes too much of the work in elementary science which only should have a place in the high schools, the more advanced and skilled manipulation and calculation being reserved for the university. I am complaining of the high shooting of the young university men who are largely filling the positions of teachers in our secondary schools. The fault will be remedied in most cases by from five to ten years' experience, but in the meantime hundreds of bright boys and girls, especially girls, will have become so palled with their attempted work in science as never to realize good therefrom; and worse than that to live the rest of their lives with a belittling disgust of true elementary science study.
RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

COURSES OF STUDY: MANUAL TRAINING; SCHOOL GARDENS; LITERATURE

HON. HENRY SABIN, Iowa

It may be taken for granted I presume that there is no question as to the feasibility of establishing such schools for the immediate advantage of children who reside on the farms or in the smaller country hamlets. If the present tendency to consolidate several small schools into one larger one, and grade it, after the similitude of the city becomes the settled policy, then the highest grade may be established as a high school open to all the children of the district under equal conditions. Or it may be deemed advisable to erect at the center of the township a high school building, and continue the lower school in other localities.

Each scheme has its advantages, and, which is advisable, very often must be left to be determined by attendant circumstances. Or a county may sustain a High School for the benefit of all the rural schools within its limits.

The more important question for consideration is, what effect should the establishment of such a school have upon its pupils and upon community life about it? As far as knowledge studies are concerned its course of study may run parallel in some respects with that of the city. Grammar, geography, history, arithmetic, in an extensive sense, must not be crowded out by more ambitious studies; they must be given in their most practical form. An eminent educator says very pointedly and truthfully: "I find it necessary to say often that the core of the school curriculum is right; that the need of an illiterate man when he goes away from home, is a knowledge of reading and writing, rather than a knowledge of beetles, bugs, lobsters, whales, and other stuff which is displacing the three R's in the curriculum of many schools."

The length of the course in such a school is of prime importance. It is altogether probable that the pupils attending school will not have over three years at the most to spare; many of them must be contented with two. If this conclusion is correct, then everything which makes for show, or amusement, must be rigorously excluded.

The pressure of life, and the haste "to get to work earning money," is as great in one section as another. The course of study then must be so arranged as to give the largest amount of knowledge and discipline in the least possible time. Those branches must be selected for prominence which have a direct bearing upon country life, and at the same time those which tend to make the child a citizen of the world, and to give him a knowledge more or less complete of the civilization of which he is to be a part, must not be neglected. In order that those who enter may complete such a course in three years or less, two things are to be considered. In the first place, there must be no break, but the high school course must be a continuance of that commenced in the schools below. In other words, whatever changes are found necessary in the common school studies, must be followed by corresponding changes in the curriculum for the Rural High School.

In the second place, those desiring to
THE EVOLUTION OF A LEADING NORMAL SCHOOL

ARTHUR W. BROWN

PART II.

"BLACKBERRIES," musingly began Professor Samuel S. Greene, the first principal of the Rhode Island Normal School, in a lecture which the writer attended, some thirty-one years ago, "Blackberries, ur-r-rrr-ur!" he repeated emphatically, with that peculiar rattling challenge of attention which all his old pupils will recall; then he paused, removed his spectacles, and looked somewhat sternly over his audience. "Blackberries," he repeated once more, in very staccato tones, "when green, are red."

As the learned professor, with all the solemnity of an oracle, gave utterance to this simple and well known truth, it seemed the height of the ridiculous,—of the utterly incongruous; but its paradoxicality, if I may be allowed to use the word, was no greater than the contrasts shown by the Normal School in its sun-chased shadows, its alternating adversity and prosperity.

Although housed now in what is said to be the best building in its line in the United States, its usefulness has more than once been restricted by strait-jacket quarters, as in the body of an abandoned church, with the buzz of a woodworking mill on one end and the noise of a busy street on the other, always ready, when windows were opened, to drown the individuality of pupils in singing and encourage the teachers to give practical illustrations of the distinct enunciation which they advised their classes always to use.

Although the politicians gave many fair words, they did nothing practical toward getting an ideal home for the school until Commissioner Thomas B. Stockwell enlisted and unified the efforts of the graduates and teachers, creating a strong body of sentiment to which the legislature was glad to give the necessary attention.

Although located in the smallest state in the Union, it has nearly always been ranked among the ten best Normal Schools in the country, while under Principals Samuel S. Greene, Dana P. Colburn, James C. Greenough, and Charles S. Chapin, it has had no superior between our two great bordering oceans. Largely
through his efforts to give his pupils a
good basic knowledge of our language,
Professor Greene elaborated the most
practical and thorough,—most consist­
ent, coherent, concise, and comprehensive
system of English Grammar ever devel­
oped de novo on original lines. His
pupils understood Grammar. They
could give something more than mere opinions
on fine grammatical questions. They
could analyze and synthetize accurately.
They knew that they knew what they
taught, and could give valid reasons
therefor. Very few of the teachers of
to-day understand the subject as did
nearly all the graduates in Professor
Greene's day.

Instead of Grammar, think of Arith­
metic, and in place of Professor Greene
put Principal Colburn, and you will have
under consideration the greatest Normal
exponent of numbers, their science and
art, that America has known. Only less
great, the merest fraction, were some of
his graduates as teachers of Arithmetic.

Is it thorough Pedagogy you have in
mind, or sound, lucid, workable Psychol­
ogy, or uplifting, compelling institute
addresses? Note how Professor Green­
ough towered in all these above nearly
or quite all the Normal men of his day.
When he began his work, after the old
school had died in Bristol, doeful
prophets said that he might possibly gal­
vanzize it into temporary animation, but
that he could never revive its former
professional spirit. Yet when one looks
back upon the record of his first class,
of twenty-five, which was graduated
about a generation ago, and of which all
but three are still living, and most of
them still engaged in educational or lit­
erary work, in responsible positions, he
sees at once that the initial impulse given
by Mr. Greenough must have been one
of remarkable power.

Passing over the period between the

regime of Principal Greenough and that
of Principal Chapin, my purpose in this
article will be fulfilled by setting forth
the aims and working principles of the
school under the latter's new and efficient
administration. Under six leading di­
visions of the subject, with appropriate
subdivisions, I outline, as briefly as is
consistent with clearness.—

The Future Policy of the Rhode Island
Normal School

I.—The gradual approximation to a
truly professional school. The Normal
School should not be a high school, or a
college, or a mere training school. Its
aim, which public conditions do not per­
mit it to attain fully, at present, is to be­
come as thoroughly a professional school
as is a school of law or of medicine or of
theology. Its one reason for existence
is the belief that there is a philosophy of
education which may be taught and an
art of teaching which may be acquired.
This is the Normal School idea. In one
form or another it is accepted now by
nearly every intelligent educator of ex­
perience. The one dispute among school
men must turn upon the question, "What
is the best form of professional instruc­
tion?" This Normal School believes
that the course of study must include in
due proportion the following topics:—

1.—Educational theory.—The history
of education, Psychology, Pedagogy, or­
ganization and management of schools,
the principles and art of teaching, and
methods.

2.—A thorough study of the subject
matter of the elementary school curricu­
um.

3.—Observation of model teaching.

4.—Practice in teaching under expert
supervision.

II.—The gradual increase of the re­
quirements for admission, and the adop­
tion of such selective standards as shall
secure the best personalities for the teaching profession. The most serious question which faces the educational public to-day is how and where to secure the best men and women to train as teachers. It is unfortunately true that some Normal Schools do not demand the best. It is equally true that no Normal School of to-day can secure the best; but this difficulty can never be entirely solved by Normal Schools or colleges. It is, to a certain extent, an economic matter and follows the laws of economic demand and supply. The public gets as good teachers as it is willing to pay for. When cities and towns will make inducements to teachers both financially and professionally, they will secure the teachers whom they are now seeking in vain to get with inadequate inducements.

The qualifications of a good teacher are both natural and acquired. The former include all that we mean by personality. In detail, these are:

1. Adaptability and tact; i. e., the ability to adjust oneself in thought, language, and method to the immaturity of children.
2. A strong attraction for teaching, based on a genuine love of children.
3. Intellectual ability.
4. Executive ability.
5. Common sense.
6. Good health and a cheerful disposition.

One who lacks any of these natural qualifications will not teach well. Since the Normal School cannot create personality, it cannot make teachers. Its most important function is to discover, to inspire, and to train the born teacher, and to fit her into her appropriate place in the schools.

There can be no academic tests of personality. The candidate for the teaching profession is admitted to the Normal School chiefly upon evidence of her intellectual ability. The condition is always implied that she may be dismissed whenever it becomes clear that she lacks conspicuously the natural qualifications of a good teacher.

To the natural teacher, however, the Rhode Island Normal School offers unexcelled opportunities for acquiring that professional knowledge and technical skill which are indispensable to the best teaching.

III.—The gradual raising of the standard of work in the school, both through a stronger curriculum and through better teaching. One of the foremost problems of the Normal School is how to secure depth and breadth of scholarship without sacrificing that practical knowledge of the art of teaching, for which such scholarships have always stood. As between a person of scholarship who cannot teach and one of limited educational attainments who can teach, the Normal School will always select the latter. All superintendents and employers of teachers know that this position is sound. But the demands of the times are for better scholarship among our teachers and among our students; and this demand the Rhode Island Normal School recognizes, and, as occasion offers, and conditions permit, will seek to meet.

IV.—As a corollary of the third, those in charge stand for a gradual introduction into the faculty of more men, and of more teachers, both men and women, who have had college or university training. With the exception of specialists in music, art, gymnastics, and kindergarten training, it is quite certain that the Normal School cannot afford to demand any less equipment than a college or university course. The Normal School faculty should eventually be composed of instructors whose standard of scholarship would make them wel-
come on the faculty of a first-class college; who join to this equipment that working knowledge of children in the public schools and their needs which can come only from practical experience in the schoolroom. It must be said now that it is practically impossible to find instructors for normal schools who possess this twofold equipment. Some institutions select the latter qualification, ignoring the former. Some insist upon the former and ignore the latter. The Rhode Island Normal School will endeavor in the future selection of teachers to require both, but with a misgiving born of the knowledge that the supply of such teachers is inadequate to the demand. There is no source of supply from which to secure thoroughly prepared Normal School instructors. Perhaps there will not be until several first-class normal colleges have been established.

V.—The gradual perfection of the training school system, which, by requiring one-half year of actual teaching in sole charge of a school, will furnish the only sufficient test of a student's ability to teach. The training school system is as follows:

Observation of Model Teaching

The observation school meets the need of a preliminary course in observation and practice. Its eight rooms are in charge of teachers selected for their skill and ability.

As an observer, the Normal student follows the child through all the gradations of school life; as a class instructor, she tests her special fitness and strength; finally, as the teacher in charge of a room in one of the training schools, she proves her ability to instruct and her power to govern.

Students are assigned in groups to the kindergarten and the several rooms. Each group passes successively from grade to grade, thus making the entire circuit. Observations are systematically directed and interpreted, until observers are familiar with methods, material, and devices used, and are fairly intelligent as to what may be expected of children at different stages in their school career.

Students are allowed to specialize, to some extent, in their practice work, according to their tastes or aptitude for primary, intermediate, or grammar classes. Assignments are made in groups the members of which observe and teach in turn. Daily individual criticisms and group discussions insure progress from one recitation to another in the development of subjects. Thus students grow into familiarity with grade work and the course of study.

Practice in the Training School

Students of the first class are appointed to the training schools outside the building for a term of twenty weeks. Here every student is responsible for the teaching and management of an entire school, subject to the ordinary conditions of town or city. The work of every school is directed by a critic teacher, while the whole scheme is under the personal supervision of the principal of the Normal School. There are now twenty-three such training schools connected with the Rhode Island Normal School.

So far as is known, the only Normal Schools in the country which afford equal training in the practical art of teaching to that given at the Rhode Island Normal School are the New Britain, Conn., Normal School, and the Oswego, N. Y., Normal School. The Fitchburg, Mass., Normal School has the same system, but requires only twelve weeks of teaching.

VI.—As soon as the conditions mentioned above are perfected to the highest
THE BOTANICAL LABORATORY
possible degree, the Normal School should take up the task of preparing college graduates to teach in grade schools. If all the professors of Pedagogy in all the colleges of the country should devote their time to this work for the next two decades, the supply of college graduates well trained for grade work would be far below the demand. The Normal School is in no sense a rival of the college, but a coadjutor in this work. The ideal arrangement for the Normal School, and the one which it would prefer, is some scheme of cooperation with a good college, whereby the department of Pedagogy of that institution should thoroughly train competent seniors in Educational Theory and in the subject matter of the grammar school curriculum, while the Normal School should have charge of the training-school work of these seniors under such conditions as to furnish a decisive test as to their ability to manage and teach school. It is hoped that some such arrangement may be effected in the future.

In no state of the Union is there a better opportunity for the development of a strong Normal School, which shall, in a sense, be a leader in its appropriate work. The compactness of the population of Rhode Island, the excellent means of travel from the remotest quarters of the state to the Normal School building, the location of the school in the midst of a population of 300,000 people, and the superior equipment which the state has given, combine to furnish an opportunity such as the school cannot neglect if it would, and which it has no disposition to neglect if it could.

The Conquerors

DAVID BUPFUM

I thought that I saw in a vision a man who hath striven and won,
He was crowned with the crown of a victor while the world looked kindly on.
For the world it loveth a hero and seldom sayeth him nay.
He was strong with the strength that hath carried all obstacles out of his way:
He was brave; what others had fled from he faced and did not quail;
He was proud with the sense of a power that was never known to fail,
And the world that loveth a hero, laid its richest gifts at his feet—
All things for the valiant victor who suffereth no defeat!

Then again I saw in my vision a man who hath striven and lost,
For years he had fought unyielding, yet he counted not the cost;
For this man, too, was a hero; and he took the decree of Fate
As a brave man taketh his portion who hath fought where the odds are great
No palm of a valiant victor, no kingly crown for him,
For the world that loveth a hero, hath eyes that are wondrous dim.
But a goddess stooped and touched him and I saw, as again she rose,
He was wise with the wonderful wisdom that sees and feels and knows,
With a heart deep-touched with sorrow, that could feel for another’s pain
And a soul that had braved such dangers that no fears to him remain.
And I said, "Not all to the victor, to him be the honor meet,
But never be less to the hero who conquereth in defeat!"