

## PAPER IV.—EDUCATION—PRACTICAL AND NATIONAL.

BY THE REVEREND J. H. JOHNSON, M. A.

(Read before the Society, Feb. 15th, 1871.)

As a Canadian, I desire to see a nationality for Canada. I would have all who reside here, intending to make this their home, as well as all who, like myself, have had their birth on Canadian soil, remember that Canada is even now a *country*; that she has in her bosom all the elements of future greatness; and if her sons and her daughters fully realize their position, and prove true to the indications of Providence, she may not only stand high amongst the nations, but she may yet become the founder of empires, and give laws to other countries. By a Canadian education, I mean an education adapted to the circumstances and wants of the people of Canada, an education which will fit young people to discharge those duties, and assume those responsibilities, which sooner or later must devolve upon them as the citizens of a new and growing country. While great attention should be paid to the classics and the natural sciences, as well as the higher mathematics, by those whose pursuits will require attainment in these departments of study, there should be a universal regard to those branches of knowledge that are considered inferior, but which qualify the majority for the practical business of their lives. Besides this, education should be ornamental as well as solid. A writer said in *The Spectator*, more than a century ago:—“The general mistake among us in educating our children is, that in our daughters, we take care of their persons, and neglect their minds; in our sons, we are so intent upon adorning their minds, that we wholly neglect their bodies. It is from this that you shall see a young lady celebrated and admired in all the assemblies about town, when her

elder brother is afraid to come into a room. From this ill-management it arises, that we frequently observe a man's life is half spent, before he is taken notice of, and a woman in the prime of her years is out of fashion and neglected. The true art in this case is, to make the mind and body improve together."

Education commences in a very early period of life. Man is possessed of faculties, by the development of which, he takes his place in the highest scale of created beings, and finds himself surrounded by objects, and in the midst of scenes adapted to the growth of these faculties. Every influence brought to bear upon him, will tend to educate either the good or the bad principles of his nature. So that, both intellectually and morally, he is undergoing a process of development. Especially is this the case with youth.

" 'Tis education forms the common mind ;  
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

The word "*educate*" is thus defined by an eminent lexicographer: "To bring up as a child; to instruct; to inform and enlighten the understanding; to instill into the mind principles of arts, science, morals, religion, and behaviour." But a reference to the original may give its meaning more fully. The Latin "*educo*," from "*duco*," I lead, and "*e*," "out of," when applied to a human being, signifies the *drawing out* of his faculties. The illustration of Addison has always been admired. He compares a human soul without education to a statue in a block of marble. The statue exists in the marble, and the sculptor only finds it. So education removes the rubbish, and the man appears.

The subject of education naturally divides itself into three branches—*physical*, *intellectual*, and *moral*.

First, then, education should be *physical*. This relates to the inferior part of our nature; but it has strong claims upon

our attention. The mind is necessarily affected by the condition of the body. It acts through the physical organs. If these be disordered, the powers of the soul will be obstructed in their operations. All people, the young especially, should exercise freely, and at stated periods, in the open air. Close confinement has involved many in physical debility, and left them to drag out a life-time of suffering. Some of the most eminent physiologists and enlightened educators, have turned their attention to this subject, and fearful is the picture of woe they have presented to the public. Every institution of learning, from the elementary school up to the university, should have its ample play-grounds, with proper facilities for physical exercise. The hours, both of study and recreation, should then be so arranged, as not to infringe upon those portions of time essential to the preservation of the health of students. There should be a suitable proportion between the development of the physical, and that of the intellectual faculties. If this proportion be destroyed, both natures will suffer. Many have fallen through an incessant application to study, whom a moderate attention to gymnastic exercises might have preserved for extensive usefulness. The laws of nature cannot be violated with impunity. Here every transgressor must pay the penalty. Those who are too ambitious to ascend the hill of science, and are desirous of employing every moment of their time, may be compelled by their impatience and indiscretion, to make a long halt by the way, suspending their energies, and often failing to realize their hopes. And many, even after attaining to eminence in letters, have so abused their physical nature by the process, that they have not been able to use the knowledge they had acquired.

We come now to the *intellectual* branch of education. The importance of this cannot be over-estimated. "The intellectual powers are those by which man acquires the knowledge of facts, observes their connexions, and traces the conclusions which arise out of them." Much might be said on this

interesting subject ; but I shall only speak of education, as calculated to discipline the mind and fit a man for usefulness in life. In order to this, a judicious selection of studies should be made by each student, and pursued in that connexion which will tend to develop all the faculties of the mind alike. There is in most minds a predilection for some particular study, or a preference for those pursuits which will serve to call into exercise some special faculty, to the neglect of the rest. This is commonly observed in the industrial pursuits, where it appears to be perfectly in place ; but every student should guard against its indulgence in a system of education. Not that any young person should be prevented from fitting himself for that business in life which his inclination leads him to pursue, and which his parents or guardians may have selected for him, by giving more immediate attention to those branches of science required for such avocation ; but in order to preserve a well-balanced mind, the study of those branches which call out and give vigor to various faculties, is an indispensable requisite.

Remember also, that *thoroughness* is essential to a good intellectual education. In fact, there can be no mental discipline, or real improvement, without it. Whatever is attempted, should be accomplished, and nothing is learned until it is understood. The system of committing to memory, without digesting the writings of an author, so prevalent in our day, cannot be called education.

We must bear in mind also, that it is not possible to acquire a knowledge of every thing, whatever may be a man's intellectual powers, and whatever his facilities for improving them. That profound scholar, Boyle, tells us of a certain mineral that a man may occupy his whole life in studying, without arriving at a knowledge of all its qualities. And the truth is, "there is not a single science, or any branch of it, that might not furnish a man with business for life, though life were much longer than it is." No man, then, should

suffer himself to be inflated with the idea that he has become a scholar or a learned man, because he has attended school, or spent a few months in the pursuit of any science.

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing—  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.  
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain ;  
But drinking largely sobers us again.”

The more extensive our attainments, the more deeply we shall be impressed with our lack of knowledge. The great Sir Isaac Newton, after all his researches, and all his attainments, compared himself, in point of knowledge, with a man who had approached the ocean, and gathered a few pebbles upon its shore, while the mighty deep, with its teeming millions of inhabitants, its inexhaustible treasures, and its innumerable islands of verdure and beauty, lay unexplored before him.

Lord Bacon said: “ Knowledge is power.” And it is certainly knowledge that rules the world. Nor is it too much to say, that, in a new country like ours, where there are so many openings to the aspirations of youth, success will materially depend on the zeal and energy with which they devote themselves to study, and the supply of those intellectual treasures which they shall lay up for future use. On some of the personal advantages of an education to those who are so fortunate as to acquire it, the following remarks are from one of the best writers in the English language:—  
“ The hours of a wise man are lengthened by his ideas, as those of a fool are by his passions. The time of the latter is long, because he does not know what to do with it ; so is that of the former, because he distinguishes every moment of it with useful or amusing thoughts ; or, in other words, because the one is always wishing it away, and the other always enjoying it. How different is the view of past life, in the man who is grown old in knowledge and wisdom, from that of him who is grown old in ignorance and folly ! The latter is like the owner of a barren country, that fills his

eye with the prospect of naked hills and plains, which produce nothing either profitable or ornamental; the former beholds a beautiful and spacious landscape divided into delightful gardens, green meadows, fruitful fields, and can scarce cast his eye on a single spot of his possessions that is not covered with some beautiful plant or flower.”

But in addition to the physical and intellectual, we must mention *moral* education. Unless based on sound moral principles, the two former will prove a curse rather than a blessing to society, and cannot much further the real interests of those that have acquired them. This sentiment cannot be too firmly impressed upon the mind. Young people, and after them, those of mature years, are too apt to be dazzled by appearances. But the intellectually great are not always to be admired. There is great force in the following lines from Pope :

“ If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined—  
 The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind ;  
 Or, ravish'd with the whistling of a name,  
 See Cromwell damn'd to everlasting fame !  
 If all, united, thy ambition call,  
 From ancient story, learn to scorn them all.”  
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 In each how guilt and greatness equal ran,  
 And all that rais'd the hero, sunk the man !  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 The whole amount of their enormous fame,  
 A tale that blends their sorrow with their shame.”

Man has an elevated nature. He is a moral being. In this department we reckon the desires, the affections, self-love, the will, conscience, and the moral relation of man towards the Deity. Every system of education must be considered defective which omits the proper cultivation of these principles. On this analysis of man as a moral being, much might be said. It would be easy to show the necessity of controlling the desires, of placing the affections upon suitable objects, of confining self-love within reasonable

bounds, of regulating the will by correct principles, and of listening to the admonitions of an enlightened conscience. These are all involved in a sound system of moral education. And to these must be added man's relation to his Maker. Indeed, on his attention to this particular will materially depend the advantage to which his intellectual attainments may be applied. The late Dr. Thomas Arnold, of Rugby, who was one of the most successful teachers of modern times, kept prominently before his pupils the great fact of their responsibility to God. His biographer says of him, that "he did not attempt merely to give theological instruction, or to introduce sacred words into school admonitions: his design arose out of the very nature of his office; the relation of an instructor to his pupils was to him, like all other relations of human life, only in a healthy state, when subordinate to their common relation to God. The idea of a Christian school was to him the natural result of the very idea of a school in itself. The intellectual training was not for a moment underrated, and the machinery of the school was left to have its own way. But he looked on the whole as bearing on the advancement of the one end of all instruction and education; the boys were still treated as school boys, but as school boys who must grow up to be Christian men; whose age did not prevent their faults from being sins, or their excellencies from being noble and Christian virtues; whose situation did not of itself make the application of Christian principles to their daily lives an impracticable vision." The eloquent and erudite Dr. Harris has very forcibly presented the value of revealed truth in awakening the energies of the human mind, and calling into exercise all its faculties in the acquisition of knowledge. He says:—"Let the Gospel obtain admission into the mind, and from that moment the most torpid specimen of humanity is quickened into a new mental as well as moral life. Even the mind which was previously alive and vigorous, becomes conscious of a new impulse to activity, and of a new sphere in which to spend it. In finding a

God, man finds the centre of all things, and henceforth the tendency of his mind is ever to harmonize the discordant, to arrange the displaced, and to assign to everything its right position in the great circle which surrounds the Deity. In finding 'the truth,' he finds an infallible standard by which everything is to be tested ; henceforth he would fain try every pretension, weigh every claim, by its relation to this standard, and estimate everything accordingly. Unless, therefore, you do violence to the mind, and repress its activity, moral education to some extent becomes a necessity."

"The man who lives under an habitual sense of his moral responsibilities," says Addison, "no sooner steps aside from the busy scenes of life, than his heart burns with devotion, swells with hope, and triumphs in the consciousness of that presence which everywhere surrounds him ; or, on the contrary, pours out its fears, its sorrows, its apprehensions, to the Great Supporter of his existence."

By the great principle of religion, do not understand that I recommend any system of denominationalism. True religion rises far above the region of party, and ignoring sects and contentions, teaches the truths of God, points out human duty, and breathes good-will to man. Passing by, therefore, the distinctive peculiarities of any and all religious communities, I maintain that the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, held by all, should be assiduously instilled into the minds of the young.

Let me add to these three departments of education, a few observations on the importance of a proper cultivation of the manners. A certain amount of politeness in their intercourse with others, of whatever rank or position in society, should characterize all persons. By politeness, I do not mean the vain pageantry of the conceited coxcomb, or the supercilious deportment of the haughty aristocrat, but that essential ingredient in all good breeding which leads us to pay a



proper deference to the opinions of others, and to treat the persons and presence of all with that consideration due to their respective positions in society; a course of conduct equally removed from vanity on the one hand, and from coarseness and vulgarity on the other. No one who has not duly considered this subject, can fully appreciate its importance. Lord Chesterfield and others, who have written so much on the value of good manners, have rendered an essential service to society. Many persons of a high order of natural abilities, by coarseness of manners have rendered themselves obnoxious to refined society, and thus presented an insuperable barrier to their usefulness, and often to their success. Like the *erinaceous quadruped*, they cannot be approached from any direction without throwing at the unlucky but innocent one who approaches them the pointed missives of their own disagreeable natures. Men of good taste will avoid such, as they will the pestilence or a beast of prey.

The above is a mere outline of the education which ought to be not only general, but universal. Now, I hold that it is the prerogative of the constituted authorities to afford all reasonable facilities for the education of the people, not merely for a section or class, but for the whole. The government of a country exists for the protection of a country, and to promote the welfare of its inhabitants. The want of education is a serious drawback to the prosperity and happiness of a people, while its possession must be the means of material improvement and of comfort. The condition of the uneducated classes has been graphically described by Dr. Foster in his excellent Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance.

“Imagine,” says he, “a week, month, or year of the intercourse of the members of a family destitute of mental culture, the course of talk, the mutual manners, and the progress of mind and character; where there is a sense of drudgery approaching to that of slavery, in the unrelenting

necessity of labor, where there is none of the interest of imparting knowledge or receiving it, or of reciprocating knowledge that has been imparted and received; where there is not an acre, if we might so express it, of intellectual space around them, clear of the thick universal fog of ignorance, where especially the luminaries of the spiritual heaven, the attributes of the Almighty, the grand phenomenon of redeeming mediation, the solemn realities of a future state and another world, are totally obscured in that shade; where the conscience and the discriminations of duty are dull and indistinct, from the youngest to the oldest; where there is no genuine respect felt or shown on the one side, nor affection unmingled with vulgar petulance and harshness on the other; and where a mutual coarseness of manners has the effect, without their being aware of it as a cause, of debasing their worth in one another's esteem all around. Home has but little to please the young members of such a family, while the elder ones have little enjoyment in their society. So little is the feeling of a peaceful cordiality created among them by their seeing one another all within the habitation, that, not unfrequently the passer-by may learn the fact of their collective number being there, from the sound of a low strife of mingled voices, some of them betraying youth replying in anger or contempt, to maturity or age. It is melancholy to see how early this liberty is boldly taken. As the children perceive nothing in the *minds* of their parents that should awe them into deference, the most important difference left between them is that of physical strength."

This is a dark picture; but it is not overdrawn. Ample materials for the composition of it may be found in this Province, in many places, and in this city. Ignorance has stamped her deformed image upon many families, and among them some afford scenes similar to those above described. Who can travel through some of the rural parts of this country, and especially pass through some of the inferior streets of our city, and not have his eyes and ears

pained with the evidences of social wretchedness that meet him? I refer not to the wretchedness arising from a want of pecuniary resources. This is abundant, no doubt; but from a paucity of intellectual gratifications—for mental poverty is the most despicable of all pauperism.

Now, I repeat that it is the duty of the State, as the protector of the people, to make provision for their education. Certainly, to furnish all with the means of obtaining a good elementary education, and to encourage and foster institutions for higher education where individual efforts may originate them. This proposition appears to me so obvious, that it requires no discussion. It is not only founded in reason, but the experience of all countries shows that neither voluntary effort nor religious association can render education universal, or even general; and that governmental interference is indispensable, alike to secure universality and uniformity. In our country the principle is admitted, and the annual legislative appropriations for educational purposes testify to the great prominence given this subject.

But after all the efforts made in this Province, now for nearly a generation, I apprehend that two facts must strike every careful observer, as indisputable, viz.: 1st, that a limited number of children attend school at all; and 2nd, that the education imparted is not, generally speaking, of that thorough or that comprehensive character which should distinguish a national system of education. The answer to this two-fold objection may seem to be very easy. To make a system comprehensive, provide an ample curriculum or course of study, and to ensure thoroughness, secure the best text-books and the most competent teachers. But how are these to be obtained? and how shall we make sure that ample school accommodation, with maps and apparatus, will be provided?—and then, most difficult of all, that the whole school population of the country can be got to attend? These are the questions to be answered; and when the difficulties

they suggest have been surmounted, all the advantages of a sound national education will inevitably follow.

First of all, I maintain that a national system of education should be free from sectarianism. Where children belong to parents of a different religious belief, it is manifestly inconsistent to teach either one or several religious creeds in our public schools. This inconsistency has been recognized, and the difficulty attempted to be met by the establishment of separate or dissentient schools for the minority. Such provision is doubtless a relief for the minority, and becomes an actual necessity, where the public schools are conducted upon a denominational principle. But why should they be? Is it necessary to interweave the catechism with reading, writing, geography, and arithmetic? Can neither grammar, algebra, nor geometry be safely learned, except through a sectarian medium? I can understand, that, both in school and elsewhere, moral and religious principles should be recognized and inculcated; but I do not see that any religious opinions should require to be inculcated in connexion with purely secular branches, any more than that they should be taught in our counting-rooms, or our manufactories, or our machine-shops, or even in the places set apart for our most menial labour. Why not leave the teaching of peculiar religious tenets to the parents and the church, to be carried out in the family circle and the Sabbath-School, or any other place belonging to the parents or the religious community? I would like to see our common schools attended by all classes alike; while protected by a wholesome moral influence, all the children of the land, together in their several localities, acquiring an education in those branches of science which will fit them for usefulness and enjoyment. And if parents and religious teachers do their duty, I cannot understand how the religious principles of children should be compromised by this course, or suffer from the absence of sectarian teaching at the public schools.

Having secured the establishment of our public schools on a broad and liberal basis, I would render them free to all the children of school-going age in the community. Rate-bills should be abolished, and no man's expenses for maintaining the cause of elementary education in the country should be increased by reason of his availing himself of the advantages of such an education for his children. On the contrary, this should be his and their *right*. How, then, should public schools be supported? I answer, partly by an appropriation from the revenues of the country, and the balance by a direct tax upon the rateable property of the school district.

To this it may be objected, that the Legislature, in setting apart a certain fund for Common School purposes, and allowing the imposition of a tax in localities to a limited amount, ought to go no further; and it may be thought unjust to compel any man to assist in gratuitously educating his neighbour's children. I reply, this argument, if it proves anything, proves too much. It is either just to provide for *all* the expenses of public schools by taxation, or it is not just to provide for *any* of them by such means. If it is right to take *a cent* for this object, it is equally right to take *a dollar*, or as much as may be necessary to accomplish the purpose.

I employ the term "taxation" as applicable alike to what is called "government allowance" and what is raised from the people by an assessment upon their property. The revenues of any free country belong to the people of that country. True, an appropriation from these revenues is not so immediately felt as that raised by direct taxation. For this reason, I would be glad if, by economy in the administration of public affairs, by a retrenchment of other expenditures, and by any reasonable increase in the public revenues, enough could be afforded to establish a free school in every school district in the Province. But if this cannot be done, let the deficiency be made up by a direct tax upon property.

Even in a pecuniary point of view, the wealthy would find the free school system advantageous to themselves. Is not any kind of property enhanced in value by being situated in the midst of an intelligent, virtuous people? Is not real estate, as well as personal property, thus rendered more secure? Is not greater stability thereby given to our civil and social institutions? Are not the expenses of the administration of justice thereby greatly diminished? Who are they that crowd our prisons and our Penitentiary, that multiply the number of our lawyers, bailiffs, constables, jailors, judges, and sheriffs? Are they not usually those who have been brought up in ignorance of all that refines and ennobles the human mind? who have been educated in vice, because virtue had not been presented to them, and the activity of their minds required some outlet? The following remarks, from the speech of the chairman of a public meeting held in Manchester, England, are pertinent to my argument:—

“I maintain, gentlemen, that the ratio of crime is directly inversely proportioned to the amount of education. It may be argued that people in superior circumstances, generally have a superior education, and are not exposed to the same temptations that those occupying a lower class are. I grant that to some extent this is true; but not by any means to the extent they go, when they seek to draw any important conclusions from it. From the returns I have given you, it will be seen that only one out of 150,000 of the population has been committed for crimes. I could show you, that out of 8,000,000 of adult females in this country, a whole year has passed without a single educated female being committed for trial for any offence whatever. But there are in London, as you well know, a number of well-educated—I'll call them gentlemen, or educated men, if you please—who have to struggle day by day, and hour by hour, against an amount of privation which, in my humble judgment, few people in this part of the country understand. You shall take your actors, your authors, your artists, your men connected with various learned professions, your teachers, your decayed

females, and others, of whom the mass in London is enormous, and I will show you that in one year, whilst there were fifteen hundred uneducated people committed to prison in Lancashire, in the county of Middlesex, in which London is situated, not one educated person was committed to prison for any offence whatever."

Doubtless, correct statistics in the Province of Quebec, would support the same theory. What an amount of crime, and consequent misery to society, might be saved, by teaching youth some mode of employing their time profitably, impressing upon them noble principles of thought and action, developing their powers, intellectual and physical, and directing them into proper channels! We have a House of Correction for juvenile offenders. Would it not be well to have, not one house for the whole Province, but one for every section, in the shape of a free school, to prevent juveniles from *offending*? The reformation of criminals is acknowledged to be a difficult, and in many instances, a hopeless task. But here is a plan to control the stream, by beginning at the fountain. Without, however, claiming every thing for education, we can safely assign it an important position in forming the human character upon a correct basis.

But it may be said, that, after all the facilities proposed are provided, multitudes of the lower classes are too indigent to furnish their children with books and clothes; or they so little value an education, that they will not afford them the necessary time to attend school. For the former I would make a special provision, similar to the arrangement in the English ragged schools, the pupils being furnished with suitable garments and books, not to be removed from the school room. And in the latter case, I would make it obligatory upon the parent to send his children to school.

In short, I warmly recommend the compulsory system of education, and have done so since 1850, when I advocated

it at a Convention in Upper Canada. I propose to abolish all rate-bills, and introduce the free school system in all its departments. In addition to this, I would fine the parent or guardian of each child, between 5 and 16 years of age, who is not attending some school, private or public, or being otherwise properly educated; and if *fining* did not answer the purpose, I would *confine* the parent or guardian, for a limited period, with a view to secure the facility of education to the child. I believe no School Law can be complete without such a provision. In the case of a breach of the peace, under our laws, the person offending, if found guilty, is compelled to pay a fine, or undergo imprisonment, often at hard labor, for a stated period, according to the nature of the offence. In the plan which I propose, there is a more visible connexion between the crime and its punishment. In both cases the penalty carries with it a recognition of the principle, that every individual who inflicts an injury upon the community, shall repair the damage to the extent of his ability. But how slight an offence is his who assaults his fellow creature, compared with that of the man who helps to surround him with an ignorant, degraded society? Do we not need protection from such inhuman citizens? Does not ignorance occasion violence, theft, intemperance, robbery, and even murder? Many a man has been a pest to society, and ended his days on the gallows, whom the benign influences of a common school education might have made an ornament to his race. I grant, indeed, that there are melancholy instances of acquired abilities perverted, of even a Christian education becoming worse than useless, for man is naturally depraved, and only his Maker can constitute him anew; but such a system of education as I suggest, will do much to turn his energies into the proper channel, and keep him from mischief.

Imagine not that I attach too much importance to the education of the young. It is not easy to over-estimate it. Why has the Creator endowed us with faculties whose



development marks our character, and points us out as a blessing or a scourge to our fellows? Why has he decreed that knowledge shall expand the mind and exalt those faculties, while it refines the taste of pleasure, and opens up numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment? Why has he ordained that, in the intervals of physical repose (which all manual laborers absolutely require), the cultivation of the mental powers is not only conducive, but essential to health? "The Author of Nature," says the eloquent Robert Hall, "has wisely annexed a pleasure to the exercise of our active powers, especially to the pursuit of truth, which, if it be in some instances less intense, is far more durable than the gratifications of sense, and is on that account, to say nothing of its other properties, incomparably more valuable. It may be repeated without satiety, and pleases afresh at every reflection upon it. These are self-created satisfactions, always within our reach, not dependent upon events, and not requiring a peculiar combination of circumstances to produce or maintain them. Let the mind but retain its proper functions, and they spring up spontaneously, unsolicited, unborrowed, and unbought."

Entertaining such sentiments, I consider it the duty of all classes and all parties to combine, and provide such a system of national education, as shall necessarily embrace the entire community. I advocate the free school system, as calculated to effect this object, while at the same time it is just in principle. To the rate-bill I have two serious objections: 1st, that it has kept many of the poor class of children, as well as those of some selfish parents, not of the poor class, from school altogether; and 2ndly, that it makes the teacher servilely dependent on the patrons of the school. By the former objection, some of the most promising children have been practically excluded from our public schools. Their parents struggling under the oppressions of poverty, have found that, in addition to the clothing of a large family, they could ill spare the means to pay even the moderate

tuition fees demanded for their education. However anxious they may be to afford their offspring the facilities for mental improvement, their limited resources have put it out of their power to do so. Nor does it furnish a satisfactory answer to this objection, to say that the commissioners are authorized to send indigent children to school, making their instruction a charge upon the property-holding inhabitants of the school-district; for, with their utmost vigilance, commissioners, or trustees, may be deceived as to the resources of parents in some instances, and overlook them in others; besides, the honorable pride of many of the industrious poor will not permit their children to become pensioners upon public charity, and be subjected to the taunts of those in better circumstances, who will not fail to administer those taunts. But free schools, by bringing all upon a level, remove this objection. The children of the rich do not then have access to the school, because their parents have enough and to spare; nor those of the poor, because their neighbours are charitable and humane, and the Government is generous or bountiful; but both attend, because they are *children*, endowed with faculties of infinite worth, and because their education is a birthright, and must be obtained as a matter of course. Could public opinion be brought to this point in the Province of Quebec, we should see our public schools crowded with children, whose object would be, not to while away their time, but to store their minds with useful knowledge,—not to escape from parental restraint, but to mould and fashion their mental and moral character after the best models, and prepare themselves to act their part upon the great stage of life. But I am satisfied that nothing short of an universal, comprehensive free school system can place the children of this Province in such an honorable position.

And as to those parents who are able, but unwilling to send their children to school, the plan I suggest would most effectually meet their case. Nothing then could prevent

their children from enjoying the advantages of others ; for if their parents are not open to mental persuasion or conviction of judgment, they would unquestionably be to fine and imprisonment.

The second objection to the rate-bill is, that it makes teachers dependent on the good opinion, and subject to the caprice of the parents of the children they teach. The more independent the teacher is of the parents, the better. The Commissioners are the proper parties to come in between the two in case of difference of opinion, or difficulty of any kind. Then as to a knowledge of a teacher's qualifications, the majority of parents are certainly not competent judges ; yet they are continually interfering, where they are called upon to pay a school bill ; for, as a great author remarks, "there is a very common infirmity of human nature, inclining us to be most curious and conceited in matters where we have least concern, and for which we are least adapted by study or nature."

Do not understand me, however, as prohibiting parents from taking an interest in the education of their children. Much of their children's success will depend upon that interest, and by judicious co-operation, they may greatly strengthen the teacher's hands ; but let them beware of weakening his influence with their children.

Another phase in which this objectionable dependence displays itself, consists in making the amount of a teacher's wages depend on the number of children under his instruction. The agreement with teachers in this Province is, generally, to pay them the government grant for their section, and permit them to charge each pupil a certain sum per month or quarter. But a small portion of the teacher's salary can be considered as definite by this arrangement. The inducement to the teacher to accommodate himself to the prejudices of the people, is very strong ; dissatisfied

parties will have it in their power materially to reduce his wages; and the interests of education may be greatly retarded. It is better, therefore, for all parties, for the teacher himself, for parents, for the Commissioners who have the supervision of the school, and for the children, that the teacher's income should be fully determined at the time of his engagement, which can generally be done only under the free system.

What I recommend is no novelty. The plan has been tried in other countries, and with all the results I have claimed for it. Several of the Northern States of America have had free schools in operation for many years. Those in the State of Massachusetts have secured general education, and have brought to the head of affairs some of the poorest children in the land. In the State of New York, the introduction of the free school system caused an accession of 100,000 children to the Common Schools of that State in a single year. In the Kingdom of Prussia both free schools and compulsory education have been in existence for about half a century. The effect has been universal intelligence, and as "knowledge is power," Prussia has developed a power which has no parallel in the history of modern nations, if indeed in the history of the world. During the wonderful campaign which has brought France so terribly under her power, even her common soldiers have evinced a knowledge which has fitted them for any position or emergency. In Sweden compulsory education has been the law for several years, and with the best results. In the neighboring Province of Ontario, for twenty-two years past the residents of each school section have been authorized by law to determine by a vote, at the beginning of each year, whether their school should be free. The principle so grew into favor, that all but a mere fraction of their schools have been free for several years past; and to that feature in her common schools Ontario has been much indebted for the excellent school system which has commanded the admiration of all who

have investigated it. And I am pleased to see that at the session of the Ontario Legislature held this winter, all the common schools of that Province are declared free, and education has been made compulsory. The result of these great measures to the sister Province, will unquestionably be the crowning of the great educational edifice, rendering the system complete, and securing the universal education of the succeeding generations. May the time be near when this Province shall imitate Ontario in her noble school system, and when education here shall be alike generally diffused.

To make free schools just in principle, however, besides being established upon such a basis as will render them generally acceptable, as I have already shown, two other conditions are necessary : viz., good school houses and good teachers. To tax all the property of a school section for the education of all the children in that section, when there is not ample accommodation for the school-going children, is evidently unjust. Large and commodious school rooms, made comfortable in their internal arrangements, should be provided in all parts of the land, and furnished with maps and apparatus, with all the improvements suggested by modern science. That we have such at present, is what, I presume, no advocate of our school system would claim.

Then, with respect to teachers, the most efficient possible should be procured, and that even at a large increase in expense. The practice of selecting school teachers on the ground of their cheapness, ought to be abandoned. But it has been carried to a great extent in some localities. An anecdote is related of a schoolmaster in a country which shall be nameless, who was employed in that capacity, for the very excellent reason that he had become too old and infirm to take care of a farmer's pigs, and he was appointed, as to a business next in importance, to take care of the children of the neighbourhood. Being interrogated by

a visitor as to what he taught them, he replied with perfect sincerity and composure, "Nothing." And to the question, "Why he taught them nothing?" he answered, with frankness and simplicity, "Because I know nothing myself."

The following from an American writer can scarcely be considered a caricature: "What motives are now most influential in prompting men to follow the business of common school-teaching? Some engage in this employment during the winter months, because they can make higher wages by it than by farming or mechanical labor. Some follow the profession of teaching, because they are too feeble to endure the more hardy and often more coveted toils of active out-door employment. Others again, because they have failed of success in all other pursuits. Others, for the more honorable purpose of aiding themselves in obtaining a liberal education. And the multitude are made up of thriftless adventurers of every grade, too lazy to work, too poor to live without it, and much more fit to be peddling wooden nutmegs, or making hickory hams, than to undertake the task of training the youth of a nation to the knowledge and love of their duties as citizens and men."

I am happy, however, to bear my testimony to the excellent and improving character of our common school teachers. We have those who make teaching a profession, and intend to follow it while they are able. They have done, and are doing a great work, in moulding the mental and moral character of human beings, and are really amongst the greatest benefactors to their race. Such men deserve every encouragement, and ought to be remunerated for their valuable services, far beyond what they have been accustomed to receive. Our Provincial Normal Schools are performing an excellent service for the country, by providing it with a superior class of teachers, and securing greater uniformity in the system of teaching.

I intended to make some observations on superior education ; but having already extended this lecture beyond its original limits, I find myself compelled to omit this branch of the subject. Perhaps I cannot better conclude, than by presenting to you the following plea for Free Schools, from the pen of the poet Wordsworth, who thus vindicates the right of the poorest child in Great Britain, to be *free* from the dominion of ignorance :

“ O for the coming of that glorious time,  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
 And best protection, this imperial realm,  
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation on her part, to *teach*  
 Those who are born to serve her and obey ;  
 Binding herself by statute to secure  
 For all the children whom her soil maintains  
 The rudiments of letters, and inform  
 The mind with moral and religious truth,  
 Both understood and practised,—so that none,  
 However destitute, be left to droop  
 By timely culture unsustained ; or run  
 Into a wild disorder ; or be forced  
 To drudge through weary life without the help  
 Of intellectual implements and tools ;  
 A savage horde among the civilized,  
 A servile band among the lordly free !  
 This sacred right the lisping babe proclaims  
 To be inherent, by his Maker’s will,  
 For the protection of his innocence :  
 And the rude boy—who, having overpast  
 The sinless age, by conscience is enrolled,  
 Yet mutinously knits his angry brow,  
 And lifts his wilful hand, on mischief bent,  
 Or turns the godlike faculty of speech  
 To impious use—by process indirect  
 Declares his due, while he makes known his need.

This sacred right is fruitlessly announced,  
This universal plea in vain addressed,  
To eyes and ears of parents who themselves  
Did, in the time of their necessity,  
Urge it in vain ; and, therefore, like a prayer  
That from the humblest floor ascends to Heaven,  
It mounts to reach the State's parental ear ;  
Who, if indeed she own a mother's heart,  
And be not most unfeelingly devoid  
Of gratitude to Providence, will grant  
Th' unquestionable good—which, as we, safe  
From interference and external force,  
May grant at leisure, without risk incurred,  
That what in wisdom for herself she doth,  
Others shall ne'er be able to undo."

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