

tion, for the education of their own children, not one shilling of which will ever find its way into the public chest.

It is urged that it would operate unfairly by taxing rich men, who would not send their children to common schools; old men who have educated their children; and single men who have none to educate. It would be well to avoid such inconveniences if it were possible, but if such considerations were allowed to operate, in other matters legislation would come to a stand still; and improvements would be unknown. We could not have, on this principle, a tax for lighting or cleansing our streets, keeping up a supply of water for extinguishing fires, nor any other regulations for the security of life or property; for every plan that might be proposed would be found to press with some inequality upon some individual. The greatest amount of benefit to the greatest number of persons, is received as an acknowledged principle by all clans of political economists. Property is by common consent assessed for the support of paupers and for the punishment of criminals; pauperism and crime are in a great measure the offspring of ignorance; and as prevention is better than cure, it is perfectly reasonable that the property of the country should be assessed for the education of the country. It is surely wiser to have good school houses than spacious gaols.

It may be said, it will be said, that however good the system may be the people are not yet prepared for it. I believe that they are as much prepared now as they ever will be, and that however long the matter may be deferred, all legislation without it will be defective and unsatisfactory. I believe further, that the present is, in one respect, a peculiarly favourable season for adopting the plan; for if the term of the House had nearly expired the action of the members who voted for it would be brought against them by their opponents, who would try to make political capital of a noble act of duty, and turn it to their disadvantage. But if the step was taken now, before another election three or four years hence, the people would be so well satisfied with the change that political opponents would take nothing by their motion.

Should it be deemed advisable at the present time to pass by the assessment system, I would suggest that by some means a further bonus be given to those parties who voluntarily adopt it, that we may at least gradually be led to the adoption of a system that in the United States and Canada has been found to work so well.

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