

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

[From the *Globe* of Saturday, November, 27, 1852.]

NORMAL SCHOOL OPENING.

Elsewhere will be found a full report of the addresses delivered on Wednesday evening, at the opening of the New Normal School. As was very happily said by one of the speakers, the occasion which called the audience together was suggestive of very pleasing thoughts in regard to our national system of education. That system has, of late years, acquired a form and consistency, a power and influence which cannot fail to gratify the feelings of every well-wisher of Canada. For many years, Parliament acknowledged, by its votes, the importance of education, and granted aid with what must be thought a liberal hand, considering the condition of the Colony at the time; but it has only been of very late years, that a lively sympathy has sprung up throughout all classes of the community, in favor of thorough instruction, that an efficient organization has been established to keep alive and strengthen that sympathy, and that we see very strong and gratifying proofs of the benefit of that organization. It must be acknowledged that to the Reverend gentleman who fills the post of Chief Superintendent of Schools the greatest honor is due for this pleasing result. We have often blamed Dr. Ryerson's past conduct, but it would be a gross act of injustice if we refrained from acknowledging, that in his situation of Superintendent of Education, he has been doing a great and noble work; that he has done more than any other man, to elevate the character of his fellow-countrymen. Where he found deadness, he has given life—where there was chaos he has produced order; it is to be hoped that ere his labors are ended, he will place our national system of common school education on such a fixed and permanent basis, that no length of time, no lassitude in its managers, no corrupt influences in the legislature—will be able to subvert it. He has worked earnestly, with his whole soul, in behalf of the instruction and enlightenment of the people. He may have committed errors in management—no man is perfect; he may be chargeable with some thoughts of self in his efforts—that is only to say that he is mortal, but no man need ask a nobler or more enduring monument of his labors, than that which Dr. Ryerson is at present raising. The energy given to the common school system by the power centred in the Council of Public Instruction and the Chief Superintendent, some years ago, is a sufficient defence of a step which was at one time considered of doubtful expediency. While the power of the people over their educational affairs has not been seriously interfered with, it is certain that a powerful stimulus has been given to the good cause. The chief difficulty of our Common School system has been the lack of competent teachers. There has been want of money to pay them, it is true, in our back-woods, but it may be safely said there never has been a good teacher in Canada, who could not obtain a handsome remuneration for his labors. Of late, the demand for well-trained instructors has been greater than ever—far greater than the supply; and the state of the market has had the usual consequence—an increase in price. Dr. Ryerson said on Wednesday that they had more applications for teachers at ninety and a hundred pounds per annum than they formerly had at forty and fifty. It is evident that some effort is necessary to supply this scarcity, and it is not the worst part of the centralized school system that it has taken up so spiritedly the means of remedy—an evidence of which we find in the building erected for the Normal School. This institution is, in fact, the heart of the educational body, the spring from which is destined to flow streams of pure water to moisten the dry educational field. It is to it that we must look for those who will go forth fully armed and equipped to fight our battle against the ignorance and error, the darkness and superstition which would impede our national progress.

Not the least gratifying part of the proceedings of Wednesday, was the hearty and spontaneous testimony given in behalf of national education by some of that class, who, in the mother country, have shown themselves in the opposite ranks. Mr. Chief Justice Robinson's address contained many important admissions of the benefits of secular knowledge, many compliments to a system of education which has been pronounced infidel and Godless by the Bishops of the church to which the learned gentleman is attached. It is true that the Chief Justice said something of religious education, in a careful manner, to avoid wounding the feelings of a mixed audience, from which we might suppose that he did not consider the question about sectarian schools as altogether settled, but the whole tone and spirit of his address was in favour of a national, general, system of instruction, in contradistinction to one conducted by the sects. The Rev. Dr. McCaul also, in the short speech which he made on very short notice, was almost all that could be desired on the great question to which we refer. In his concluding sentence, the eloquence and elegance of which drew down thunders of applause, the President of the College gave in his cordial adherence to the principle of free schools, expressing his ardent hope that, ere long, the son of the poorest man in Canada might enter at the Common School, and proceeding through the intermediate stages, take the highest honours of the University, without any expenditure

of his own means. Dr. McCaul never thought that the sectarian system of education would do this, we venture to say. If the people were to be taxed to support ten sets of Institutions, instead of one, we wonder how long free schools would be allowed to exist—one year, perhaps; certainly not two. Dr. McCaul also talked a little of the necessity of religious teaching, and congratulated himself that there was no party in the country that avowed its opposition to it. Dr. Ryerson carried out that idea very happily: he, too, was an advocate of religious education,—all were its friends; but to the various sects of Christians belonged the religious instruction of the people; and it was with that principle in view that, ever since the opening of the Normal School, the students had been taught once every week, by their own clergymen, and they were required to attend their own church once every Sabbath-day. The rev. gentleman did not hesitate to say, in continuation, that he dissented altogether from the idea, that besides teaching religion, the sects were the proper parties to give secular instruction.

The Reverend Superintendent and those who preceded him, were correct. There is none who does not say that religious teaching is the most important work which can be performed. The only question for discussion is, whether that work can be undertaken in Governmental schools. Experience has shown that where there is no national system of education, there is no thorough education of the masses; and we take it as acknowledged in Canada by all, that Government schools are necessary. If we introduce religious teaching into these schools, it is impossible that they can be attended by all classes of the population. If it is Protestantism that is taught, Roman Catholics will stay away—if it is Romanism, Protestants will be excluded. The chief advantage of Government schools is, that the whole population may receive benefit, that by one organization and one expenditure, every child may be brought under instruction. Shall we abandon the general system with all its merits, because we cannot teach with it the doctrines of the sects? Shall we leave the people to chance efforts in behalf of their intellectual enlightenment, because it is impossible that we can attend to the spiritual? May we not with safety and propriety leave the religious education of the people to those set apart for that purpose in great and growing numbers? What is there in the instruction of children in the rudiments of learning, which renders it necessary that it should be connected with the inculcation of theology? Our Common School teachers have much labour on their hands. They try with all their strength to give to their pupils a mere outline of knowledge—and often fail in doing that efficiently. Are they able to undertake the additional labour of religious teaching? Are they, in general, men to whom could be entrusted that onerous and difficult task? We could not find teachers for even a few of the chief sects, and if they were obtained, we could not provide means for their support.

What course is then open to us but to adopt the principle laid down by Dr. Ryerson? Let the State, a purely secular institution, attend to the secular instruction of the people, and let the churches give that training to their children which is their peculiar province.

[From the *Middlesex Prototype* of Wednesday, December 1, 1852.]

OPENING OF THE NORMAL SCHOOL.

On Wednesday last, the Normal School was opened in the city of Toronto. The splendid edifice, erected for training future instructors of the youth of Canada, having been so far completed as to answer all the purposes for which the building is designed, a great concourse of people assembled to witness the dedication of an institution, calculated to send to the remotest bounds of this extensive Province, for all future time, a class of teachers, male and female, fitted, from inclination, habit, training, and high moral character, to assume the important position of guiding and directing, in the proper channel, the minds and energies of the future rulers of Canada, and so instruct the youth of the country, that the sons and daughters of the Canadian people may, ere long, take rank amongst the most highly educated and intellectual people of America. The common schools of the country will, under the direction of these superior teachers, fitted for the task in the Normal School, send hundreds of ambitious and devoted pupils yearly to the higher seats of learning, and thus will the standard of education be raised to a principle hitherto unknown in the country. The sons of the farmer, the mechanic, and the merchant, will vie with each other, and all run on in the race of intellectual pursuits, until these distinctions, that have too long divided the people, will be forgotten; and the measure of a man's greatness, hereafter, will be his educational attainments, his high moral character, his respect for religion, and his known devotion to the interests and institutions of his country. Formerly, such distinctions could not be made, and, in the selection of officers for the different departments of government, both municipal and otherwise, men totally devoid of refinement, morality and education, were too frequently appointed to make laws, that they themselves were incapable of understanding; and even now, some of our magistrates, and municipal councillors, are a disgrace to the counties they aspire to govern, and a laugh-