

THE

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FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

## DRAWING IN SCHOOLS.

THERE is a matter to which we have, for some time past, wished to call the attention of teachers and friends of education generally, but have heretofore been prevented by the pressure of other demands upon our columns. We allude to the subject which furnishes a title for this article.

We must say at the outset that, after the primary branches of Common School Education,—Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic,—we regard Drawing as second to no other branch in which we now give instruction. Such an announcement may be a novelty to most of our readers; but we think a little reflection upon the subject will bring them to our way of thinking. If we consider this subject in its loftier bearings, we cannot but suspect there will be difficulties in impressing the general public with a sense of its importance. In a comparatively new country like Nova Scotia, little is known of *Art*—meaning Art, of course, in its æsthetic sense. It is useless here to investigate the cause: we know that such is the fact, and almost necessarily the fact, in all new countries. As a consequence it follows, that few people amongst us can comprehend the importance of cultivating the fine Arts. They have a tendency to refine, to purify, to elevate the tone of the general taste, the manners, and even the morals of the community in which that cultivation prevails. We must even go so far as to say that Art is one of the important handmaids of Religion. Such being the case, surely it behooves us, even from this point of view, to do all that we can in our educational institutions for the encouragement of Art—all, that is, that is consistent with our duty in the promotion of those primary branches of instruction a knowledge of which is essential to the due performance of the every day tasks, even of those belonging to the humblest class.

We do not mean to say that we should set about the ambitious project of rearing up a community of artists out of the young attendants at our public schools. But we should seek to cultivate what Art talent there is among our children. We know not what great abilities in this line may be lying dormant in many of their young minds. We, at present, offer no inducement, offer no opportunities, for calling them forth into light and activity. It is only the most powerful genius that will buck through all the trammels by which circumstances may surround it, and boldly assert itself to the admiration of the world. A few of such intellectual *phenomena* do appear throughout the world in the course of a century; but they are not to be reasonably looked for as of frequent occurrence. Nova Scotia may some day, even under our present repression of Art studies in their very elements, produce some great, original artist; but the probabilities are entirely unfavorable to any such expectation. Those who have become distinguished as such elsewhere, have, almost invariably, had their natural abilities carefully cultivated from the earliest age. In Nova Scotia, as already intimated, and as all our readers know, there has been made no provision for such cultivation. Nay, it has, through ignorance, been generally discouraged and even repressed. It would be difficult to furnish any good reason why. When we see a child exhibiting evidences of good ability in almost every other direction—music, for instance, we usually encourage and cultivate that ability; at all events we do not seek to smother it. But we are sorry to say the rule has been different with regard to the faculty for using the pencil with effect. Most of children have some inclination and ability for drawing. We see abundant evidences of this—sometimes very disagreeable ones—wherever we go—upon their slates,

in their books, on the walls of rooms they frequent, wherever they can find a tempting place to exercise their busy fingers upon. This tendency, we say, should be directed and cultivated.

When we come to look at the practical utility of a knowledge of Drawing, the necessity of its being made a branch of education in our common schools seems still more pressing; whilst the arguments in its favor are such as, we think, must commend themselves to every mind of ordinary intelligence. The pleasure experienced by every one who, in his walks through life, can sketch, even if roughly, that which he finds pleasing to the eye, the view of which he may wish to perpetuate, or may wish to convey to another, in itself suggests a potent reason for cultivating the ability to do so. The person who can sketch with facility, although making no pretensions to being an artist of a high order, possesses great sources of enjoyment unknown to those not similarly endowed. The *usefulness* of such a facility ought surely to be obvious to every person of common sense. Even a general knowledge of the principles of Drawing and a moderate degree of facility in the use of the pencil, are of inestimable value to every person, and especially to every man, in his discharge of the work-day duties of life. How often may we see a man striving, and perhaps painfully and vainly striving, for an hour together, to convey to another his idea of some object—some implement, or piece of machinery, the plan or appearance of a building, the lay of lands, the form of some simple object—when a few strokes of the pencil, made perhaps in as many minutes, would clearly and at once have given the notion he wished to convey. Often have we heard men, especially mechanics, engaged in their daily occupations, bitterly regret their inability to use the pencil, and tell of the hundreds, or thousands, of pounds it would have been in their pockets if, early in life, they had had some instruction in Drawing. In truth, every mechanic—we care not what—should be taught the use of the pencil as much as of any other implement of his trade. How much more is it required by the intending engineer, the architect, and members of other professions. The common school is the place to acquire the elements of the practical art.

We hesitate not to say that, for reasons only slightly touched upon above, Drawing should be taught in all of our common schools; and the sooner we can manage to have it introduced the better, as Music is now, to some extent, taught in those schools. We should indeed be sorry to see such musical instruction discontinued, and trust that it never will be; but we feel bound to state that if only one of the two branches is to be taught, Drawing is more important than Music. As an Art, the comparative value of the former will depend upon the taste of the judge; as to its practical utility, it is, of course, far before Music; whilst it is something in which the child is much less likely to receive instruction out of school than in Music. We would strongly recommend to those whose duty it is to take such matters into consideration to have Drawing introduced into all the schools of Halifax as a regular branch of instruction. In many, if not in most, other parts of the Province, the capital is looked to as an example in matters of School reform.

In Europe, and especially upon the continent of Europe, great attention is given to this matter. The *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, a few days since contained some editorial comments upon an address recently delivered by Secretary Northrop before the State Teachers Institute of Connecticut, on the contrasts between the European and American systems of Education, from which we make a brief extract bearing upon the subject of this article.