

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

FOR

Upper Canada.

VOL. III.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER, 1850.

No. 9.

WHAT COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION CAN DO FOR A COUNTRY.

In nearly all the Cities and Towns of the neighbouring States, public semi-annual examinations of the Elementary and better class of Schools take place under the direction of examining Committees appointed by the local School authorities for that purpose. These examinations are of several days continuance; and the examining Committees, at the close, report the results of their labours.

In the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, (the seat of Harvard University) the examination of the Schools (all of which are free) took place the last week in July. The *Cambridge Chronicle* of the 8th of August says:—

“The semi-annual examination of the Public Schools of this city, commenced on Thursday, July 25, with the Alphabet School, and was closed on Saturday, August 3rd, with the High School—the School Committee devoting *nine days* to the work. From all that we can learn we are satisfied our schools were never in a more flourishing condition than they are at the present time. We believe that it is now generally conceded that our mode of classification is one of the best that could have been devised. It consists of Alphabet, Primary, Middle, Grammar, and High School, and, we hope eventually to say, College.

“It was our design to speak of the different classes of schools as they appeared on the examination; but, as the High School is a kind of focus to which all the others tend, we devote our paper to it. That which follows will show what a FREE SCHOOL, for the teaching of every thing short of College and extended scientific education, is capable of doing.”

Then follow the Report of the Committee on the examination of the High School, and an address from the Mayor of the City, who concluded by calling upon the Hon. EDWARD EVERETT, LL.D. (former Governor of the State, United States Minister to England, and President of Harvard College) to address the assembly.

How delightful would it be to witness such examinations and proceedings twice a-year, in connexion with the Common Schools in every city and town in Upper Canada! What a brilliant prospect would it open up for our country to see the education of the people engaging the patriotic attention of the chief men in the land, and calling forth the public contributions of its first talent and learning in the periodical examinations and celebrations of Schools!

Such contributions from the lips of the Honorable EDWARD EVERETT have often enriched our pages, no doubt to the gratification and profit of our readers. We shall, on the present occasion, omit those portions of his noble speech which relate to the High and other Common Schools at Cambridge, and lay before our readers that part of it which discusses the great question of patriotism—the great problem of the age—WHAT COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION CAN DO FOR A COUNTRY.

Mr. EVERETT proceeds as follows:—

“Our little State of Massachusetts covers about eight thousand square miles. Not much of the soil is of high fertility; we have

no mines of the precious metals and little coal or iron; our climate is too severe or otherwise not adapted for any of the great agricultural staples, except Indian corn; and yet we have a population of a million. If the State of Texas were inhabited in the same proportion to the square mile, her population would equal that of the whole United States. At least I made a calculation some years ago, at the time of the first talk of annexation, that, according to the boundaries then claimed by Texas, she was twenty-six times as large as Massachusetts. How it would be with her present boundaries I do not know; I am not sure that she has any.

“Well, sir, what is it that has led to this result, as far as Massachusetts is concerned? What has enabled our noble little State, on her rocks and her sands, and within her narrow limits,—to rear and support this rapidly increasing population;—what enables her, besides constantly sending forth a swarm of emigrants,—to keep at home a population far greater in proportion to her size than that of any other State?”

“I take it that this result is mainly owing to the general intelligence of the community, promoted by many causes and influences, but mainly by the extension of the means of education to all the people. On this rock the corner stone of the infant settlement was laid; (I speak of human things) on this it has ever rested. I do not wish to claim anything for Massachusetts which is not strictly her due. I cheerfully concede to other States the possession, in some respects, of superior advantages. I acknowledge much that is good in all. I bear cheerful testimony to the liberal effort that have been made by some of them, and especially Connecticut and New-York, in this same good cause; but may I not claim for Massachusetts the palm in this respect? If the Genius of our common America should cast his eye over this great sisterhood of States, to see what they have done respectively for the education of their children, would he not apostrophize Massachusetts and say, ‘many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all!’

“But I do not wish to overstate the matter, and to ascribe too much to popular education as the cause of our prosperity. A great many other things, I know, have contributed to it. We have a temperate climate; our winters brace, while our summers are not long enough to enervate. Our soil, if not very fertile, no where generates disease. An extensive sea-board furnishes great facilities for commerce. Our granite and gravel make capital roads, and the former is an excellent material for building. Our abundant waterpower holds out great inducements to manufacturers. Then there are political and moral causes of prosperity of vast importance: free popular government, which extends an equal protection to all;—a greater degree of practical equality, then exists in any other highly civilized country;—a traditional respect for the law; a high state of public morals;—a pervading religious sentiment. All these are eminently conducive to the public prosperity. But I need not say, that some of these influences owe their existence to the intelligence which education has diffused and fostered in the community, and that all of them operate through that intelligence. Yes, sir, it is the intelligence of a people that makes its natural advantages available.

“There are other regions of the earth as highly favoured as our State in all natural endowments. If you take a terrestrial globe and turn it round, so that every part of its surface which lies in the same latitude;—this precious forty-second degree, (for our narrow little State does not in any part, I believe, run up to the forty-