

CANADIAN PRESS ON SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION.

EDUCATION.—We have borrowed from the *Journal of Education* two articles, which will be found in our first page, containing some notice of the progress of elementary instruction in Ireland, and in the State of New York. They are peculiarly interesting. The zealous activity displayed in promoting general education, on both sides of the Atlantic, is one of the most encouraging signs of the times. It is universally agreed that unless care be taken to enlighten and discipline the public mind, political freedom cannot be enjoyed in safety: and despotism, we all know, is never safe. The people *will be free*—that is, they will obtain self-government; but in order to use it aright, they must be well instructed. Liberty is a dangerous gift to the ignorant: it is a weapon they know not how to wield. But give them education, and they may be entrusted with freedom to any amount. Perhaps we ought not to say, “entrusted”—for freedom is their own, their birthright. Yet there is a preparation for its enjoyment, and that preparation, as is now commonly granted, society is bound to supply to its members, as far as it can be done without violating important principles. We refer to *religious principles*, which ought always to be held sacred. This has led to much discussion in England, and there has been great division of opinion on the duty of the State in this matter, and the limits within which its interference must be circumscribed. In North America, the duty is taken for granted. The State supplies the means of attaining knowledge, or empowers the people, in their respective localities, to tax themselves for that purpose; there is no legal provision for religious instruction, each community making its own arrangement; while the law, in Canada, expressly prohibits any compulsory attendance on lessons or exercises disapproved by parents or guardians. This is probably the wisest course that could be adopted. It is fair to all parties. We have noticed, with much satisfaction, the steady progress of the Common School system in Upper Canada. It works well. For want of full information, we are unable to offer an opinion respecting this part of the Province. We have no *Journal of Education* here—nor is the subject regarded as it ought to be. The opposition to the school law, which we have lately had occasion to refer to, indicates, in those who are concerned, a lamentable deficiency of enlightened views and correct feeling—in fact, an ignorance of the first elements of the science of Government, which cannot but be deeply deplored. Till an improvement takes place in the state of the popular mind, education in Lower Canada, will advance but slowly, and in consequence the ability for self-government will be but partially developed. A people so circumstanced will easily be impelled in any direction by those who know how to influence or rule their fellow-creatures; and on the occurrence of events tending to excite the fiercer passions, will most probably indulge in the most destructive excesses. Hence the importance of adopting measures to remove their prejudices, and dispose them to yield to liberal councils. There is yet room for improvement, even in Canada West. We should like to see a library in every school—and the walls well furnished with maps. We should like every school to have its garden plot, cultivated by the pupils, under the direction of the Teacher. We should like to see institutions for the promotion of knowledge and practical science, akin to Mechanics’ Institutes, and especially intended for young men, established in every School Section. We should rejoice to learn that the Clergy, of all denominations interest themselves in the spread of knowledge as well as religion, in order to bring the one under the influence of the other. We might enlarge on this theme—but for the present we forbear.—*Montreal Pilot*, 23rd of February, 1850.

THE NORMAL AND MODEL SCHOOL.—We cannot dismiss the subject without adverting to the great benefit to be derived to the *agriculturists*, as a class, from the Model and Common Schools, notwithstanding all the tinkering they have undergone. The institution of an Agricultural Professorship and an experimental farm can benefit but few, *directly*, and their great and good results will be seen and felt through the country but *slowly* and *indirectly*, though not the less surely. It is from the Common Schools, and through them the Normal School, that the Province will be made to feel the first advantages. Under the Normal School system, which is destined to work such a rapid and beneficial influence over our *hitherto hap-hazard* Common Schools, the lower classes will

learn not only to read, but to *think*, to observe, to compare; they will learn to appreciate information, and consequently to seek and to prize it—not like *philosophers* for its own sake, but like human beings, for its value in relation to their own every day work and comforts. They will be the nurses or mothers to the rural population, training up their young charge to a certain growth, and then sending forward to higher schools of intellect, those whose destiny leads them there, with minds well cultivated and prepared to receive that seed, which, with the blessing of Providence, will sooner or later ripen into an abundant harvest of good, for themselves, their families, and their country.—*Toronto Patriot*, March 9th, 1850.

FREE SCHOOLS.—We are in possession of the *Journal of Education* for the last month. We are pleased to see that the principle of *Free Schools* gains ground, and is well advocated by this *Journal*. Whatever may be the objections made by a few narrow-minded, selfish individuals to the adoption of this principle, it is nevertheless the true basis of popular education, and lies at the very foundation of national prosperity. Property, the possession of which it now made antagonistic to this principle, would itself be enhanced more by the universal diffusion of education than by any other thing.—*St. Catharines Journal*, March 14th, 1850.

Miscellaneous.

FACTS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

Every child under six or eight years of age has an intellectual or scientific taste; or a strong love for the productions and the operations he witnesses in the great “Cabinet,” and the great “Laboratory” of Nature. He is also disposed, by his own hands, to collect a cabinet from the productions, and imitate the operations he witnesses in the “laboratory,” for his own amusement and instruction.

At the age of sixteen or eighteen, most persons have nearly lost, and at twenty-five or thirty, nearly all have lost, the taste for science and for intellectual enjoyments, which their Creator originally implanted in their minds.

When children are encouraged and aided by parents and teachers, in their early attempts and scientific pursuits, their taste for science and for all intellectual and moral pleasures is greatly strengthened; never obliterated or weakened.

While children are advancing in the knowledge of things, they learn to read, spell and write, almost of course; and that with devoting very little time exclusively for that purpose. Pupils in the schools in Prussia and other parts of Germany, spend six months or a year in the study of the works of nature and art, before they commence their lessons in books or in letters in any form. When books are introduced they are used to aid the pupils in their scientific pursuits. One week is a common time for children to read plain sentences.

In American schools, experience shows, that books on geography, history, biography, botany, natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, and other sciences, make better readers and make good readers sooner, than any of the “*class readers*,” used exclusively in teaching reading.

A desire to be useful, is a prominent feature in the character of children. To do a favor to some one, to increase the happiness or relieve the distress of some person or animal, is to them a rich source of pleasure. The management of children, both at home and at school, is calculated to weaken this benevolent and generous principle, implanted in them by their Creator, and to strengthen the principle of selfishness. The change thus effected in the moral character of children, principally by their parents and teachers, is equally striking and lamentable.

Neither the fear of punishment, nor the desire of excelling others, will impel pupils so powerfully to study as the prospect of rendering their studies *immediately* useful to others. A map, or any other drawing, an illustration in arithmetic, projection of an eclipse, or other illustration of astronomy, of natural philosophy or chemistry, a collection of plants, minerals or shells, a “*geometrical album*,” or anything else in nature or art, collected or prepared for aiding the improvement of others, in some other family, school or country, will elicit greater effort, and far greater improvement, than any