

and even unprincipled, opposition thereby frequently engendered to the best of public measures, we are not disposed to encroach upon or abridge the wholesome privilege of dispassionate, independent inquiry into the intrinsic merits of every public question, or to deny that much good is derived from these being viewed and examined with a critical eye and probing hand; and, in proof of this, it is our intention to avail ourselves of this very privilege, in the course of whatever observations we may be induced to make in the present article. It is of the vicious *primum mobile*, and consequent uncharitable temper, alone, betrayed by certain writers, that we complain; but, unconscious of being actuated by any such unworthy incentives, we trust that we shall so express ourselves as to escape without any very serious animadversions from our readers on that score.

Having premised thus much, we proceed to commence our remarks on the two leading documents at the head of this article, by observing, that though it is now 50 years since that great *questio vexata*, the creation of a public fund, "for, first, the establishment and support of a respectable *Grammar School* in each District," and, "in due process of time, of a *College or University*," was first mooted in Upper Canada, the final arrangements connected with neither of these imposing branches of a Provincial Educational System have yet been carried into permanent successful effect!—a fate not much to be wondered at, when we consider that it was making a beginning at the wrong end, in attempting to complete the ornamental superstructure of so vast and influential a national edifice, without, in the first instance, laying that necessary and natural, substantial foundation—a system of sound elementary instruction for the great body of the people.

This strange error or oversight, however, was at last discovered, and redeemed about 20 years afterwards, *i. e.*, in 1816, when, the wants of the humbler classes of society demanding their legitimate share of attention, an Act was passed by the Provincial Parliament, for the establishment of COMMON SCHOOLS; and from that date to the present time, that estimable popular foundation has been gradually acquiring substantial depth and breadth, until it has at last happily assumed a degree of solidity and harmony, that, though still susceptible of very considerable improvement, will be found capable of supporting any ornamental superstructure, in the shape of *Grammar Schools* or *Colleges*, which the ensuing Parliament may choose to decide upon.

Did our circumscribed limits permit, we should be disposed to lay before our readers a preliminary connected sketch of the successive fiftful attempts at legislation on this important branch of education; but that being out of our power, we rest content with observing, that the first really decisive step in the improvement of Common Schools in Upper Canada took place in 1841, when the outline of the present system was adopted by the Provincial Parliament; that a second was attempted in 1843—when the previous arrangements were considerably modified; and that the third and last took place in 1846, when other modifications were made, and incorporated in the revised Act then passed—and still in force—and to which we must beg to refer our readers

for details. The same want of space also precludes our giving anything like a condensed view of the leading features of the system which *has* at length been adopted, either from the Reports before us, or the different authors from whom the Superintendent so copiously quotes; and we do so with less hesitation, as, fortunately, the former has, very judiciously, been extensively circulated in every part of the Province. All that we can at present promise is a few unconnected extracts from the former—more in justice to the writer, than with any idea of criticising or elucidating the merits of the question—that we may thereby be afforded greater scope for the humble efforts which we intend to make, towards counteracting a few illiberal prejudices, and answering some unreasonable objections which have been raised against various parts of the now promising foundation of our great educational edifice,—whether arising, on the one hand, from a sweeping *political* distrust of the principal workman employed, or, on the other, from baseless national prejudice against a few of the most useful materials, because, forsooth, they happen to be of *foreign* origin.

It is unfortunate for the Reverend and certainly talented author of the two Reports referred to, that he has long occupied no inconsiderable space, as a public writer, in the arena of political, sectarian, and even educational controversy; but, however that may have been, he having been at length selected to fill a most important *experimental* public office, aiming at the furtherance of a transcendantly great and good object, and the appointment being in every respect in keeping with the character of his sacred calling, as a preacher of the Gospel, it behoved even his bitterest opponents to suspend their warfare for a season, and give him a fair trial, before they made any further attempt to condemn either him or his labours. But, far from such having been the case, every casual opportunity seems to have been eagerly seized upon to lower his standing in public estimation, as well as to detract from the value or merit of his undeniably zealous exertions in behalf of the important matters committed to his investigation. Nothing daunted, however, the Reverend Gentleman appears to have held on "the even tenor of his way" unmoved, or, at most, to have been content with an occasional ejaculation of—"Strike, but hear me," until he had an opportunity of, in some degree, defending himself, on submitting unreservedly to the government and the people, the result of his unwearied investigations in various countries, in his *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction*—a document, from the perusal of which, whatever may be its peculiarities, we have derived great satisfaction; and from which, we conceive, no unprejudiced man can rise, without acknowledging himself materially instructed and better informed on the interesting and important subject therein discussed; but which some of the reverend writer's opponents seem to have considered so meritless and objectionable, that they deemed it their duty to condemn it "at one fell swoop," without, apparently, taking the trouble of giving it a perusal. Of this wholesale antagonism, however, more hereafter. In the meantime, we feel bound to allow the reverend writer to speak for, and defend himself, in the language of his