

**Failure of the Common School System in the United States.**

We have received an able and most telling pamphlet from Newark, New Jersey, U. S., entitled, "Does the Common School System Prevent Crime?" Very awful is the negative which it proves. While, alas, even serious men in Canada have been trifling, and cherishing the fatal delusion of mere secular education for the sake of some supposed, and yet mere passing expediency, our neighbours are fast awaking to the terrible ruin, both social and moral, which is threatening them in consequence of the unhappy mistake which they have made on this most vital question.

We have been regarded as suffering under a sort of monomania on this subject; we wish the notes of alarm which are, latterly, so frequently sounded in United States publications concerning their own Common School System could reach the ears of all clear minded and earnest Christians in this Province, and then they would find that we are far from being, as so many seem to imagine, almost alone in our fears. Especially do we wish that the pamphlet under consideration were universally disseminated here, as it soon should be were we wealthy.

It is not our design however to review this well-timed little publication, but to let it give its own important and earnest testimony, so far as our limits will permit. It thus opens:—

"The Common School System is proving a disastrous failure. \* \* \* The common watchword of the times has been '*universal education.*'

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"But while the intellect is so sharpened and informed, the moral powers are suffered to slumber and dwarf. The multitudes who leave school, so ready in figures, so skilful with the pen, so well instructed in the anatomy of their bodies and the mechanism of a steam engine, go forth into the world ignorant even of the ten commandments and the Lord's Prayer, with an uninformed and slumbering conscience, with impure minds and enlarged but ungoverned desires. Would not a careful investigation show that the Bible itself is not read in more than one-fourth of the schools of the land?

"Indeed the prevailing school system is daringly and criminally deficient. Yet if we could be assured that the multitudes of the young were receiving a moral training anywhere outside of the school-room, at home or at church, it would somewhat extenuate the enormity which is now perpetrated. But the

lamentable fact is, that five-sixths of the homes of the land are irreligious, five-sixths of the parents of America do not even attend any place of public worship, and are therefore of course unqualified to give a moral bent and religious instruction to their offspring. It was lately reported to the American Educational Society, that there are two millions of children between the age of five and fifteen who are receiving no moral education! Ought not this alarming host, who are so unprovided for both at home and at church, in their daily school instruction be made to receive some adequate moral and, religious training? But the popular common school system provides only for the communication of secular knowledge.

"Now is it to be believed that such a system tends to the glory of God, to the security of human life and property, or to the prevention of crime in general?

"The prevalent notion that mankind are vicious because ignorant, and that to make them virtuous it was only necessary to make them intelligent, is contradicted alike by sound philosophy and universal experience. \* \* \* Mere intellectual illumination, by making known a greater variety of attractive objects, will inflame the desires, excite the imagination and multiply cravings, which, though ever so unlawful, will be gratified, provided the chances of escaping with impunity can be devised."

But we must draw the attention of our readers to a few of the alarming statistics with which this writer supports his conclusive reasoning; thus—

"The Grand Jury for Boston (1853) in their report to the court, speak in the most forcible language of the increase of crime, especially juvenile crime. And Ex-Mayor Bigelow, of Boston, on a public occasion, lately said, 'At the rate with which violence and crime have recently increased, our jails, like our alms-houses, will scarcely be adequate to the imperious requirements of society.' Ex-Governor Clifford, in a late letter to a gentleman of West Newton, Mass., used the following remarkable language: 'I have a general impression derived from a long familiarity with the prosecution of crime, both as District Attorney and Attorney General, that the merely intellectual education of our schools in the absence of that moral culture and discipline, which in my judgment ought to be an essential part of every system of school education, furnishes but a feeble barrier to the assaults of temptation and the prevalence of crime; indeed without this sanctifying element, I am by no means certain that the mere cultivation of intellect does not increase the exposure to crime by enlarging the sphere of man's capacity to minister through its agency to his sensual and corrupt desires. I can safely say, as a general inference drawn from my own somewhat