

THE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR RURAL SCHOOLS.

It is now less than forty years since a general and wide spread apathy prevailed over all the land in relation to common or public schools. School houses were unseemly in appearance, inconvenient and uncomfortable in their arrangements, uninviting in their location and surroundings; teachers were poorly paid and more poorly qualified; apparatus was almost unknown; blackboards and charts and maps, were unthought of, and had any one proposed the purchase of a clock, he would have been regarded as a fit subject for a mad house.

Schools were seldom if ever visited by parents or citizens; the teacher kept school because hired to do so, and the children were sent to keep them out of the way. The public school was well enough for the poor, but not to be thought of for the sons and daughters of affluence.

It was under such a state of affairs that a few true friends of education set themselves about the work of reform. To accomplish the ends desired, it was deemed indispensable that there should be associated action and effort.

In the month of August 1830, several hundred persons mostly teachers assembled from several States of the Union and the different Provinces, and organized the American Institute of Instruction, the oldest educational association in America. Shortly after this the different Provinces commenced the agitation of Normal Schools, the first to take the lead among the latter being the present Province of Ontario. History informs us that the first Normal School in America, was opened at Lexington, Mass., in 1839. The attendance at first is represented as having been very limited, considerable opposition was manifested, but in spite of prejudice it grew in numbers and favor, until the Normal fever raged from ocean to ocean. Our present Province was not long in following the enlightened exam-

ple of Massachusetts. A decade later saw the Toronto Normal School in full operation. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and even Prince Edward Island followed very rapidly. It will thus be perceived that the first great step towards educational reform emanated from a few energetic wide awake teachers. They established "Institutes" for their mutual advancement and improvement. Out of these sprang Normal Schools, and as an awakening in the cause of popular education came educational periodicals.

In the space to which our essay is necessarily limited, it will be impossible for us to do justice to a subject upon which a volume might be appropriately written. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the three principal wants from which the country Schools of Ontario now suffer.

FIRST—CLAIMS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Experience has demonstrated the truth of the assertion that liberal appropriations, and legislative enactments cannot of themselves, impart to any system that vitality essential to success. An enlightened public opinion is absolutely prerequisite to ultimate and permanent success. Law is but a dead letter, a lifeless skeleton. Well directed popular will, is not a creature of impulse. It is controlled by motives that are first approved, then felt. The heart must be trained to feel after the intellect has been trained to perceive the claims of any cause upon us for sympathy and support.

Especially is this true of the great cause of popular education which touches us at more points, and affects more interests than any other. The social, the political, the physical, the intellectual, the moral interests of our children, are all ultimately connected with it. It appeals to us as parents, as citizens, as patriots and as philanthropists. A few of the claims I will briefly adduce.

1. It is a *supply* exactly adapted to the *want*.

The mind of the child ever seeks for