

# The Canada School Journal.

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## The Canada School Journal

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CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL HAS RECEIVED

*An Honorable Mention at Paris Exhibition, 1878.  
Recommended by the Minister of Education for Ontario.  
Recommended by the Council of Public Instruction, Quebec.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, New Brunswick.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, Nova Scotia.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, British Columbia.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, Manitoba.*

The Publishers frequently receive letters from their friends complaining of the non-receipt of the JOURNAL. In explanation they would state, as subscriptions are necessarily payable in advance, the mailing clerks have instructions to discontinue the paper when a subscription expires. The clerks are, of course, unable to make any distinction in a list containing names from all parts of the United States and Canada.

### CONDUCTORS OF INSTITUTES.

The county model school and the county convention, the two most recent additions to our educational machinery, may fairly be pronounced successful. They are each performing a work which could scarcely be accomplished in any other way, and they seem destined to produce great and lasting results. No one imagines, however, that they have sprung forth, complete and perfect, like the goddess of classical myth. The convention, especially, seems capable of much improvement, and this is a suitable moment for a few timely suggestions when the majority of our associations are just making arrangements for their next meeting.

First of all, a successful, live, profitable, convention will not be produced by "the fortuitous concourse" of a miscellaneous collection of items on the programme. Some great purpose, some commanding thought, must weld the items into a distinct whole, and combine variety into unity. The experience of the last decade has plainly shown that a programme without a leading idea cannot attract members from a distance, nor fire them with enthusiasm in their profession. We need not tell those who have labored to make our conventions successful, that it requires almost as much generalship as would suffice to win a battle. What troops to order to the front, what reserve forces to hold in readiness for emergencies, what cavalry, what infantry, what light skirmishers, what cannon to employ, what general plan of action to adopt—these are some of the difficult questions to be settled in the council of war, the decisions of which demand first-rate executive ability to carry them out to successful issue. Self-sacrifice, for the general good, and much labor, without the least hope of personal reward, have always distinguished our conventions. But we have lacked somewhat in the incisiveness, the attack, the unity of purpose, that naturally spring from the individuality of dictatorship.

In many of the United States the problem has been solved by appointing conductors of institutes from the ranks of leading educationists. A specialist, even if he be an extreme hobbyist, will be likely to excite interest and to precipitate that conflict of thought wherein lies the power of the convention. And he can scarcely fail to advance something new and stimulating to those who are by the nature of their work very liable to fall into the ruts of orthodox routine. His peculiar views and his special standpoint will tend to wake up thought and suggest new ideas pregnant with the germs of future progress, while his individuality will save the convention from aimlessness, and give it a pleasing spice of novelty. The experiment is by no means new in our own country, and the uniform success that has attended it warrants us in urging its general adoption. The funds of the association have never been more satisfactorily expended than in procuring the services of qualified conductors. But instead of arranging for single lectures, we should advance a step farther, and put the main action of the convention under the control of a single mind. The natural supplement to this would be local town and township institutes, held quarterly, in which all members would find ample scope for their energies, and help materially to forward the Canadian illumination.

### MACHINE EDUCATION.

In the *Popular Science Monthly* for February, there appeared an editorial article entitled "Machine Education." The writer favors his readers with the following definition: "By machine education, we mean the rigid mechanical, law-established routine applied to great multitudes of children of all conceivable sorts who are got together in large establishments and submitted to operations that go under the name of mental cultivation." The definition is emphasized by the remark that "machine education is of the very lowest sort, and the best that can be said of it is, that it is barely better than nothing at all." To make matters still worse, we are informed that "it is not capable of improvement. The method itself is radically false, so that the improvements of it but make it worse." We wish to enter a respectful, but firm, protest against the general drift and necessary implications of the articles in question. We will take the writer on his own ground. He draws a striking distinction between true and false theories of education, between education as a development of mental activity and power and as a mere storing of the brain, between the genuine office of the teacher in encouraging, inciting, and arousing the pupil to put forth his own efforts, and the mechanical work of stuffing him with barren acquisitions. These distinctions are true and solid. Wherever they are disregarded in practical educational work, in public schools just as elsewhere, energy is misdirected and serious loss must ensue. If, however, the grave arraignment be made that "the whole mechanism of the public