

# SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

## Journal of Education for Upper Canada.

*To the Teachers of Canada, Local Superintendents, and the Friends of Education generally :*

Because of a resolution passed at the October meeting of the "County of York Teachers' Association," appointing a Committee to agitate the question of a Provincial Teachers' Association, we take the liberty of addressing you on the subject.

The members of the County of York Teachers' Association, believing that the present is a favourable time for the Teachers of Canada to follow the example set them by the teachers of other countries by forming themselves into a National Association, have taken upon themselves the task of agitating the matter, and of bringing the desirability of such an organization before the teachers of the country, and are happy in being able to state that the movement has received the approval of the most prominent teachers in the Province, among whom are the Head Masters of the *Provincial Normal and Model Schools*. The benefits resulting from such institutions are manifold; and they have been found in other countries to exert a beneficial effect upon the profession of Teaching.

Satisfied that the influence of such a yearly conference of teachers would exalt the profession, and tend to place the teachers in their true position, the County of York Teachers' Association most earnestly and respectfully invites your co-operation in the matter—Believing that it is a duty which we owe to our country, and the profession to which we belong, to aid in elevating Canadian Teachers to a position consonant with their onerous duties, and to support every movement tending to better the profession. We are convinced that these unions of teachers cannot fail to be beneficial in keeping teachers alive to the great importance of their calling, the tendency among the members of which, unhappily, is to contract a routine and mechanical method of imparting instruction. This arises, we believe, in a measure from the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed as a profession—our calling separates us from each other—we are professionally isolated—all our fellow-laborers are engaged in teaching at the same time as we are—if we want to visit a neighbouring school, we are compelled to suspend the business of our own; the frequency of which would mar our success; so that notwithstanding the great benefits to be derived from mutual visits, for the above reason, coupled with the limited numbers of schools within visiting distance, the good derived from reciprocal professional calls is very limited; because such visits are few and almost impossible. But yearly conferences of teachers, if properly sustained and managed, are admirably adapted for the purpose of awakening our flagging zeal, and for bringing before the teachers the best methods of instruction. Model classes are there conducted by the most eminent and successful in the profession. The following are short sketches and notices of Teachers' Associations in different countries—the opinions of well known educationists—together with the Constitution of the National Teachers' Association of the United States. As the object of the preliminary meeting, which is to be held in Toronto on the twenty-fifth day of January, 1861, is to organize a provincial association and to draft a constitution, it is hoped that the following sketches and constitution will convey some information which may aid teachers to come prepared—we hope that every teacher [male and female] will come ready to take up the matter with energy and good will.

The Law of Prussia, in reference to Associations, is "The Provincial Consistories are required to choose able and zealous clerical inspectors, and to engage them to form and direct great associations between the masters of the town and rural schools, for the purpose of fostering among them a feeling of interest in their profession, of furthering the further development of their education, by regular reunions, by consultations, conversations, practical treatises, study of particular branches of instruction, and discussions on treatises read aloud in their public assemblies." James Kay, Esq., M.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge; Barrister-at-law, and late Travelling Bachelor of the University of Cambridge, says of the Prussian Associations:—"In order to increase the feeling of union and brotherhood which already exists in a high degree among the Prussian teachers, and in order to encourage them to renewed exertions, and to diminish as much as possible the feeling of isolation which must always exist in some degree, where an educated man finds himself placed in a solitary country parish, surrounded by peasants less cultivated than himself, and cut off from the literary society to which he had been accustomed at the Normal college, the government promotes the frequent holding of teachers' conferences, for the purpose of mutual improvement and encouragement. These conferences are held very often, over the whole of Germany, Switzerland, France and Holland, and the benefits resulting from them are very great indeed \* \* \* This plan of debating at the conferences, on methods of instruction, makes the teachers think and stimulates them to enquire how they can impart instruction in the most efficient manner. \* \* \* I was present at one of these teachers' conferences. It was attended

not only by the teachers from primary schools, but also by professors from the superior schools and colleges, and was presided over by the director of a normal college. *I do not think the importance of these meetings can be exaggerated.* \* \* \* In France and South Germany they

have so strongly felt the importance of these meetings, that the expenses of the teachers in travelling to them are borne by the government; and in Holland and the Duchy of Baden the government inspectors assist at them and join in the debates."

Mr. Woodbridge, in speaking of the Berne Cantonal society of Teachers has the following:—"This society was formed by the teachers assembled for instruction at Hofwyl in the summer of 1832, and consisted of 154 members, with few exceptions teachers of ordinary schools. Fellenberg was chosen president; and Vehrli the excellent teacher of the farm pupils of Hofwyl, vice-president. Its constitution presents, as the great objects of the society, union and co-operation in promoting the education of the people and elevating the character of the schools. The means proposed were, free communications between its members, consultations concerning the best mode of advancing the cause of schools and improving the condition of teachers. \* \* \* They urge that every branch of instruction, from the highest to the lowest, be discussed at these meetings; and that there should be a steady effort among the teachers to *advance in knowledge and skill.*" The following is from the report of Dr. Ryerson in 1846, *On a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada*. "Another important agency in the advancement of elementary Education—the existence as well as usefulness of which depends upon voluntary exertions—are the Meetings or Conferences of Teachers and other local administrators of the School Law—especially Superintendents and Visitors.

Such Conferences are held in France by a Special order of the Royal Council, which points out the members, the subjects, the modes of proceeding as well as the objects of them. They have already been productive of the happiest results in that country, although the regular establishment of them did not take place until February 10th, 1837. In Germany they constitute a prominent feature and means of both educational development and improvement. The first scholars and educators in Germany attend them; any thing new in the history of Education is warranted—discoveries, or improvements, or suggestions as to methods of teaching are stated and discussed; addresses by persons previously appointed are delivered; and all matters relating to the instruction and education of the people are proposed and considered. Some of the finest educational discourses which have ever been published were first delivered at these conferences. Such Conferences are now common in the States of Massachusetts and New York and are attended with the happiest effect. In Prussia as well as in France, the Government attaches the greatest importance to these conferences, and sedulously encourages them; and the holding of such meetings in the several districts of this Province under proper regulations, would, I am confident, contribute largely to the improvement of Teachers, and to excite in the public mind an increased interest in the education of the young." On this point the following remarks of the *Prize Essay of the London Central Education Society*, are worthy of grave consideration—especially in a country where the Teachers have not received a Normal School training. Mr. Lalor says, "The principle of association is peculiarly applicable to the science of Education. Conferences of Teachers might be easily prevented from degenerating into Debating Clubs or Convivial Meetings. Induced to come together at proper intervals, and under judicious arrangements, the association would furnish the strongest incentives to their zeal and industry. The sympathies of a common pursuit, the interchange of ideas, the communications of new discoveries, could not fail to make the meeting delightful. At present, practical knowledge of the most important kinds, acquired by long lives spent in teaching, goes out of the world with its possessors; there being no easy mode of communicating it to others; or (what is, perhaps, more important,) no means of giving it that degree of development which would show its value. Conferences of Teachers would suffer no man's experience to be lost. Every hint would be taken up and followed out by investigation. The resources of each would be drawn out; and men would learn the command of their powers, and the manner of keeping their position in society. The most accomplished minds would give a tone to the others; roughness and peculiarities of manners would be rubbed off, and each would feel that he was not solitary and unconnected, but a member of an important body. When men of common interests meet together, the topics which concern them most nearly must engage a share of their attention. If there be any grievance it will assume a distinct shape by discussion, and be put in the way of redress; if any improvement of condition be practicable, their