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OBJECTIONS TO THE FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN ENGLAND.

LONDON, LITTLE TOWER STREET, APRIL 5th, 1851.

To the Editor of the *Journal of Education* for Upper Canada.

SIR: Some of the opponents of the movement now making in England, in favour of the establishment by law of a national system of instruction in free schools, assert very positively that giving free instruction to the people has no tendency to increase the number of children under instruction. I observe with great pleasure the rapid extension of your system in Canada, and I am much mistaken if you are not in possession of information which will enable you to give the most direct contradiction to such an assertion. May I beg the favour of you, to say in your next number what is your experience as to the effect of making schools free, in increasing the number of scholars. You would be doing good service if you could give some statistics extending over a considerable space of time and tract of country. With best wishes for the continued success of your operations,

I am very respectfully, Your obedient Servant,
SAMUEL LUCAS.

REMARKS.—We regret our inability, owing to the very recent introduction into Upper Canada of the free school system, to furnish, as requested by our correspondent, statistics illustrative of the effect of the adoption of the free school principle upon the attendance of pupils, in Canada, 'extending over any considerable space of time or tract of country.' The period of our free school operations is of quite too recent a date to permit of any extended observations or statistical information as to effects or results. So far, however, they are entirely satisfactory.

Previous to the year 1848, the free school system was but partially known in Upper Canada; up to that time, therefore, no statistics on the subject exist of any practical value. During the year 1849, we had occasion, in reviewing our educational progress in 1848, to remark upon the effect of the system of free schools upon the school attendance in those localities in which it had been adopted in 1848, with a view to stimulate other parts of the country to try its effect upon their school attendance. Our remarks and accompanying statistics, taken from the *Journal of Education* for June, 1849, page 88, are as follows:—

If the adoption, in very numerous instances of the *free school system* in various parts of the Province, be a proof of the spread of sounder principles than has heretofore prevailed in regard to a more generous system of universal education, then we have cause for rejoicing for the future prosperity of Upper Canada.

In various parts of the Niagara, Prince Edward, Talbot, Brock, and other Districts, this patriotic and popular mode of raising the teacher's salary has been adopted, and the fruits are seen in the much larger attendance of pupils, the tranquillity of the school sections, the absence of all causes of local differences between trustees and their neighbours, and the teacher on school matters, and the general prosperity of the schools themselves. We give some of the statistics of a few districts for the last year, showing the effects of even the partial adoption of the free school system in a district upon the school attendance of such district, as compared with other districts and towns in which no movement has been made in this direction. The contrast it will be perceived is very striking:—

Districts and towns in which the free school system has been in partial operation during the year 1848:—

	School Population.	Pupils.
Niagara District,.....	11,848	9,348
Niagara Town, (adopted fully)	668	716*
Prince Edward District,.....	5,634	4,212
Talbot District,.....	6,694	4,365
Brock District,	9,414	5,811

* Including pupils from beyond the corporation limits of the town.

Districts and towns in which the free school system has not been in operation during the year 1848.

	School Population.	Pupils.
Home District,	28,589	13,784
City of Toronto,.....	5,500	1,678
Colborne District,	7,700	2,995
Huron District,	5,482	2,459
City of Kingston,.....	3,461	524

In contrasting (in the same number of the *Journal*, page 96,) the effects of free schools upon the school attendance in the city of Toronto and the town of Niagara, in 1848, we remarked:—

It will be curious and interesting to note the difference in the effect of the operation of the *partial* and *universal* systems of popular education on the school attendance of the pupils. Last year, (1848,) out of a school population of 5,500, but 1,678 are reported as having attended the common schools—and those only during six months of the year! While in the town of Niagara, under the free school system, with a school population of 668, 716—including pupils above the age of 16 years, &c.—are reported as having attended the common schools during the entire year. The contrast is striking; but it is the result of the operation of the same school law in the two ex-capitals of Upper Canada during the same year.

It is gratifying to add, that the present year witnesses the full and complete adoption, recently, of the free school system, in the present capital of United Canada, as well as in the ancient town of Niagara. In both places the effect is highly satisfactory.

As it regards the effects of the operation of a system of free schools, supported by a general assessment upon property upon school attendance in Upper Canada during the years 1849–50, we need only refer our correspondent to the extracts from the remarks accompanying various local superintendents' statistical school reports for last year, published in the *March*, *April*, and *present* number of this *Journal*. The extracts confirm in an emphatic and gratifying manner our decided opinion of the "school filling" character of the system of free schools at present in operation in Upper Canada. They moreover evince the determination of the inhabitants of several school sections, to sustain their schools entirely, in future, upon this more popular and less expensive plan.

PROGRESS OF POPULAR EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

In the Feb. No. of the 3rd Vol. of this *Journal*, we had great pleasure in referring to the proceedings of the Nova Scotia Legislature in making provision for the establishment of a system of Common Schools, and for the appointment of a Superintendent for that Province. From the first annual Report of this officer, lately laid before the legislature, and containing 128 pages, we make the following extracts, illustrative of the zeal and ability of the Superintendent; and exhibiting the actual state and prospects of education in our sister Province: of his report, Mr. Dawson remarks:—

"It includes a narrative of my proceedings in discharge of the duties of the office of Superintendent of Education, remarks on the state of education and suggestions for improvement, and statistical tables containing abstracts of the Reports of the Boards of Commissioners. The details embraced in these subjects, I have arranged under the following heads:—(A.) *Narrative of proceedings.* 1. Tour in the United States. 2. Preparation and Distribution of Forms of Reports, &c. 3. Public Meetings and Lectures. 4. Inspection of Schools. 5. Supply of Books and Apparatus. 6. Associations and Institutes. 7. Supply of Teachers to destitute Districts. (B.) *State of Education and Suggestions for Improvement.* 8. Boards of Commissioners. 9. School Trustees. 10. Teachers. 11. Support of Schools and Assessment. 12. Attendance. 13. School Houses and Furniture. 14. School Districts. 15. Common Schools, their Studies and Discipline. 16. Grammar Schools and Academies. 17. Establishment of a Normal School. 18. Notices of the Commissioners' Districts, Meetings, &c. (C.) *Statistical Report.*"

After furnishing minute information relating to the state of schools in various places visited, during his tour in the United States, Mr. Dawson thus concludes:—

"Had longer time been at my disposal, I might, in the States which I have visited, as well as in other parts of the United States