

just because they lie beyond the range of public discussion. Education becomes a matter of police, the moment you make it compulsory. It is in perfect harmony with the other parts of the Prussian police; but, in spite of its adoption by one or two republican States, it is not in accordance with the genius of free institutions. Ignorance is bad; but is tyranny better? Is it permissible to do a wrong that a good result may be obtained? If the question of compulsory education is to be canvassed, these queries must receive attention.

With us, there is a prior question to be discussed. The stomach takes precedence of the brain. It must first be provided for. If there were among us the same systematic provision for the poor that exists in some of the States where compulsory education is enforced, the question would be much simplified. Even then, it would be no easy task to popularize compulsion; but in the actual state of things, the question of practicability has first to be settled. Let this be done; and the way to the discussion of the other questions will have been cleared.—*Leader*.

### III. Papers on Canadian Historical Subjects, &c.

#### 1. HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOR UPPER CANADA.

It has long been matter of surprise to many persons why it we have not a historical society in this section of the Province. Quebec has long had pre-eminence of the other cities of Canada in this respect. Its Historical and Literary Society dates its origin back to the days when the Earl of Dalhousie was governor of Canada. Since then it has done a good deal to further the objects for which the Society was formed. It has collected many rare and valuable manuscripts and old works, which, but for the fostering care of this society, might have slumbered unknown and unappreciated on the shelves of a private library—if preserved at all. They would have been useless for reference, and of no service to those whose work it is to treat of the history of the country. No one can visit the rooms of the Historical Society in Quebec, without being convinced of the great service it has done to literature in this Province. And not alone are old books and manuscripts preserved—papers on literary and scientific subjects are periodically read before the members of the Society, and published in the “transactions” of the association.

Why should Upper Canada be behind the Lower Province in a matter of so much importance as this? Perhaps this section of the country is not so rich in the materials for such an association. Quebec and its environs for miles around, as well as many other parts of Lower Canada, abound in historical associations and reminiscences. Its mineral resources are greater than ours; and the French people are perhaps more tenacious of traditions than we practical, unpoetical Britishers. This may all be so. But, still, we are not wanting in the materials for a Historical Society. We can point to our battle fields—our Lundy's Lane and Queenston Heights; we are not altogether bare of minerals; and our Flora is sufficiently rich and beautiful for the production of “papers” without number. And our advancement in those material elements of a people's progress, which form the more substantial portion of its history, has been great indeed. We need, too, an incentive to literary pursuits. We are fast growing into that position when our literature—we use the word in its broadest significance—must become something more than the occasional publication of a story or a few verses of poetry in the columns of a newspaper. Many attempts have been made to establish a purely literary journal in the Province, but all such attempts have hitherto signally failed. The plants have been of tender growth; they appeared to thrive for a time, but the winter's blast came on, and they were unable to withstand them. The day is fast approaching when we must render a better account of ourselves than this in the thorny but pleasant paths of literature.

The earlier works upon the history of Canada—works published two centuries and a quarter ago and never re-printed—are now worth something like their weight in gold; and in a few years they will not be obtainable at all. Some of them are not now. Very few of them can ever be reprinted, on account of their bulk and cost. Of the *Relation des Jesuites* there were only four known copies in the world, before it was reprinted. No amount of money would have purchased this extensive work, if it had not been reprinted at great cost. A single volume of *Sagard*, published in 1636, was sold for \$120 at auction, in Canada; and we doubt very much whether the best edition of Lescarbot—that of 1618—be procurable at any price. Is there no object in collecting and preserving from destruction these precious relics of the early literature of Canada? Is it not worth while to learn something of the history, the manners, and the customs of those aboriginal races which are fast disappearing from among us? Their story has been told at great length; but how few, even of literary men, know comparatively anything about it.

Some things may as well be done to-morrow as to-day; and some will not admit of delay. To the latter class belongs the history of a country. Time is every day either absolutely destroying our precious historical materials or rendering them more difficult of attainment. Go to Paris; visit the secondary towns in France; try your luck in the other capitals of Europe, and see what you can do in the way of collecting the earlier works upon Canada. Rise early and go to bed late, and you will look in vain for weeks for some of them, but every week makes the matter worse. Having said this much in favour of some means being taken to collect and preserve among us, Upper Canada, in some place of safety, at least one copy of all procurable works upon Canada, we are not blind to the difficulty of the undertaking. Even where there are unlimited available resources in money, a library of old books cannot be created; the books cannot be had for money. It has recently been remarked by *Blackwood*, that with all the wealth at the command of some of the great American libraries, they are all lamentably deficient. So far as money would procure they have procured books; but here they must stop. Now what is the result? There are hundreds of thousands of important works in Europe of the advantage of which Americans are deprived. But if you have scarcely any means, you are still in a worse position to make a good historical collection. At the same time, if everything cannot be done, it is no reason why something should not be done.—*Leader*.

#### 2. UPPER CANADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

A meeting of gentlemen was held on the 14th of November, in the office of the Chief Superintendent of Education, Normal School Buildings, for the purpose of organising an Upper Canadian Historical Society. Those present were the Hon. W. H. Merritt, Col. Jarvis, Rev. Dr. Ryerson, J. P. Merritt, Esq., of St. Catharines, George Coventry, Esq., of Cobourg, A. De Grassi, Esq., J. George Hodgins, Esq., Thomas Hodgins, Esq., and Dr. Canniff. Hon. Mr. Merritt was appointed chairman, and Mr. Coventry Secretary. After a good deal of conversation, the opinion of the gentlemen present appeared to be that the Society it is proposed to establish should have for its object the collection of documents and of facts calculated to throw light on the history of Canada. Many families in the Province, it was said, have papers in their possession of great interest and value, which, if not speedily collected, will in all probability be lost beyond recovery. Then there are the old settlers, who from recollection and from the traditions handed down to them, will be able to give information upon many matters now obscure, and it is proposed that gentlemen having a taste for such pursuits shall collect these reminiscences of the settlers and furnish them to the Society. The manuscripts thus obtained would be submitted to a committee of competent persons, and such of them as might be found worthy would be published. Dr. Ryerson mentioned that for some time past he had been collecting books and papers relative to the early history of Canada, and had in his possession one hundred and fifty volumes, some of which were printed early in the seventeenth century. He also said that a portion of the funds at his disposal might legally be appropriated to carry out some of the objects of the Society. He called attention besides to a volume issued from the State Paper Office in London, containing a calendar of documents relative to Colonial affairs, some of which of a very early date, having reference to Canada, it would be desirable to have copied. Reference was made to the proceedings of the New York and Massachusetts Historical Societies, and to the benefit they had conferred by their investigations. One gentleman having objected to the introduction of political matter, it was pointed out that documents furnishing information upon the state of the country could be collected, but that it would not be for the Society to pronounce any opinion upon them. Its duty would be accomplished when they had been placed within reach of those who may aspire to be the historians of Canada. The meeting appeared to be in favour of placing the Society upon as wide a basis as possible, and of securing at least the patronage, if not the co-operation, of the Judges and other learned and influential members of the community. Some gentlemen present were desirous of constituting the Society at once, but a committee was at length appointed to draw up a constitution, and to solicit the co-operation of gentlemen who, as members, would be likely to advance the objects in view. The committee consists of Colonel Jarvis, Mr. De Grassi, Dr. Ryerson, Mr. J. G. Hodgins, Mr. Coventry, Dr. Canniff, and the Editor of *Leader*. The committee will report to a meeting called at their convenience.—*Leader and Globe Report*.

#### 3. UPPER CANADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

We have given in another column the *Leader's* account of the formation of the above Society, but we cannot allow an event so full of interest and so important in its bearing upon the future of Canada in a literary point of view, to take place without a word of