

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

THE following paper was written for the Teachers' Association recently held in this city. I, however, did not deem it expedient to read it at the time appointed. With the exception of some passages omitted, that it might not occupy too much space, it is now presented to those for whom it was designed:

These annual meetings of ours have always, I trust, proved interesting and instructive to those who have taken part in them. I know not what may be the popular idea of their character and usefulness, yet I cannot but think that the reflecting friend of education must look upon them with great interest. To the mind of such a one, our meeting must be associated with momentous considerations, and very properly so, if, as it is supposed, we come together with our minds attuned to the work we profess to have in hand.

Our ostensible and avowed object in assembling here is, by associated and combined effort, to advance the work of popular education. For what more important work could we be called together? When one reflects on what popular education means, there is really attached to these meetings—being, as they purport to be, voluntary assemblages of men and women—the advancement of one of the highest and holiest objects that an intelligent being can have in view.

Education in its popular significance, which I need not stop to define, has become a something of incalculable importance. Indeed it was so always, but of late its importance has, in the land we live in, as in many others, come to be in a greater measure felt and appreciated. I have qualified the expression by saying in a *greater measure*, because I believe that, even in the most enlightened communities, the advantages, the necessities, the blessings of education, are not even yet duly appreciated, except by the more deeply thinking few.

Its practical advantages are indeed now pretty generally admitted. People have come to see and feel that in every walk of life the man of education possesses great and numerous advantages over him that is ignorant and uncultivated. It is no longer safe for an uncultivated man to enter the pulpit as an expounder of divine truths; however earnest in his calling the defects of his education will certainly avert and chain the attention of his hearers in a way and to an extent which shall not fail to seriously impair his influence. So it is in all others of what is called the *learned* professions—although it is to be hoped that at no very remote day all will be alike learned.

The man who enters the profession of Law or Medicine with only such a smattering of education as just barely enables him to attain that position, has great difficulties and dangers to encounter when brought into competition with men who have had a sound education, and this disadvantage too under which such men labor, is increasing every year. The uneducated farmer, or mechanic, or merchant, now finds difficulties in carrying out his occupation, which were not experienced, or certainly not recognized, by former generations. This is a result of the great progress of civilization. Education, considered with regard to its practical uses, is thus ever creating a necessity for its own further extension.

Taking a broader view of the subject, we find that education does the work of legislation. Look at the work which engages our parliaments, and other legislative bodies by whatever name they are designated. If we examine into it in detail, we shall find that for the most part, it amounts to one continued battle against ignorance. Nothing is to be found worse than associated ignorance in any land, it is a vast and terrible power, and the more enlightened any nation or country becomes, the more fully and plainly it realizes this fact.

To contend against ignorance, to battle it, to destroy it if pos-

sible, has taxed the energies, and has been the principal aim and occupation of the wisest statesmen which the world has produced. Ignorance may almost be said to be the path to crime. It is indeed contended sometimes, and with some reason, that there is no necessary connection between the two. It is said: the better educated the man, the greater the criminal. It must be admitted that in the case of a man of an essentially evil nature, education enables him the more skillfully and successfully to carry out his evil devices, and may consequently be said to make him the greater criminal. Such cases as these, let us hope, are exceptional. We know that much of crime is directly caused by ignorance, and we know that ignorance is the most fertile of all the causes of those political convulsions and acts of national wrong, which have brought so much distress into the world. We know that in those countries where the greater attention has been given to popular education, we find the least crime. So easily demonstrable is this result, that we can with perfect confidence draw the inference that it *pay* to educate; it pays, because it lessens the expense of maintaining public order and good government. In short, on looking abroad to-day anywhere or everywhere what do we see as the great elevating cause to nations? Popular Education. And what the cause of their degradation? The neglect of that education.

Our system of education in Nova Scotia, upon which I propose making a few remarks, is one which affords us many grounds for congratulation, while it still shows room for improvement. Our system embraces colleges, academies, and common schools, and here in the city of Halifax we can boast of one school of science. Religious instruction will not be dwelt upon in the course of my remarks, for the simple reason that it does not belong to our provincial system of education, not that I undervalue religious instruction, on the contrary, we must regard it as fundamental in any complete system. It must be fundamental, because it has to do with man's spiritual interest, and this transcends all others. Our common schools do not provide this religious instruction, and this fact should stimulate all religious bodies to efforts in that direction. Such instruction is of course largely supplied in our churches and Sunday schools, and were it not for this, the school system of Nova Scotia as a whole, would be deficient in an element of value, for which no possible substitute can be provided.

At the top of our educational system we have six collegiate institutions, imparting instruction in the higher branches usually taught in colleges elsewhere. The denominational character of most of these institutions has led to a controversy over which the public mind is, in no slight degree, excited. There are those who believe that the existing colleges should be upheld, independent of each other, and as their denominational founders intended them to be. Others maintain that, while so many colleges are thus kept up, none of them can be efficient, and that the efforts and means now scattered over six, should be concentrated upon one Provincial University. Whatever may be the final result of the controversy, it is very desirable that the public mind should be at rest about it. Until it is, the collegiate institutions which we have, must suffer. For, many persons who do not believe in their efficiency, send their sons out of the province to be educated at institutions of unquestionable standing. That must be a regrettable state of affairs that causes such steps to be even supposed necessary. A number of our common school pupils are, through these colleges, enabled to obtain a higher class education. Inducements should be created and urged to increase this number, for all professional education *at least*, should have as an underlying ground work, a sound collegiate course.

As to our academies, if they are worth having at all, they are