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I. Papers on Education in Canada.

1. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF OUR COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Hon. J. S. Sanborn's Opening Address before the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of the Province of Quebec.

Its first object is to put into the hands of the rising generation facilities with which to educate themselves. The State recognizes the duty devolving upon it to provide common school instruction. That every individual in the community should know how to read and write, is for the common good. In an age like the present, when books are so numerous and so cheap, and periodicals and newspaper literature upon all subjects, circulate everywhere, ability to read and write opens to a man the avenues for self-education to any extent to which he has a desire and a will to improve himself.

It is only one in many who will have the energy and perseverance to make of himself an Elihu Burritt, a Hugh Miller, or a Horace Greeley, but whenever the elements of education are furnished to the masses, we find some of the leading minds of the age, with only common school instruction, thereafter educate themselves. To afford facilities for such spirits to develop themselves, is a powerful incentive in a public point of view to secure common school instruction to all. Another reason for common school instruction is the security it gives to property. Education in a Christian country cannot be entirely separate from moral improvement. It has been often questioned whether the mere acquisition of knowledge improves the heart. We will leave this point to the speculation of the curious. If a man

cannot read, he cannot know except by hearsay, anything of the written laws of the country. Ignorance of the law is no excuse for the violation of it. The least the State can do then, is to afford means for every man's knowing his duties to the Government. Reading induces reflection, and reflection strengthens a sense of public duty. It is a low, narrow view of a person's interest, in most cases, that leads to crime. When the mind is enlarged by information, even if the moral sense is weak, reasoning and reflecting upon causes and results tend to make one believe the maxim that honesty is the best policy. A proper comprehension of the moral economy of society leads every man to perceive that the observance of rules made for the common good is the best security of his individual rights. Another reason why society at large has an interest in general education is that it tends to the greater production of wealth. The more generally information is circulated, the greater are the facilities for individual material prosperity. The mind is stimulated to greater exertions.

The farmer acquires the knowledge of improved husbandry, the mechanic seeks out new inventions. Every improved machine that produces greater results with less labor, adds to the common wealth of the country. Every farmer who acquires the knowledge which enables him to increase the products of his farm, is thus contributing to the common granary of the community.

It is said that in parts of Mexico, at the present time, farmers cut their hay with a knife. Such a practice could not obtain where every person could read, and where even a common newspaper could find its way.

The common education of the whole community is indispensable to a proper appropriation of the people's franchises. In a country like ours, where the choice of their representatives is committed to the people, reading is the great safeguard of public rights. It is the only means of rendering this system a common benefit. Men who read and inform themselves, as every one who can read may do, cannot be led blindly. They exercise their political privileges with more or less reflection. This measure of instruction is particularly necessary for the success of our municipal institutions. The principal reason why our municipal institutions in many localities have become a snare to the people is the prevalence of ignorance of even the elements of education.