

## “ S U G G E S T I O N S ”

On the Improvement of our Common Schools. By EDMUND H. DUVAL, Esq., Head Master of the Training School, Saint John, N. B.

MR DUVAL, previous to the action of the New Brunswick legislature in 1858, on the subject of common school instruction, laid before the public a pamphlet of twenty-seven pages, containing a number of valuable suggestions, many of which, if adopted, would be conducive to the best interests of parish school education: but, strange to say, they have passed with the legislature as so much waste paper,—not one of the many useful suggestions laid down by the learned gentleman has been introduced into the new school bill. This proves to us the utter futility of troubling the legislature with any thing, except the party acting can bring such a political power to bear upon the so called wisdom of the country, as will jeopardise their offices, then they will come up to the mark, and even where no principle exists, by such a course right and justice may be obtained.

Mr Duval has entered into a discussion of the merits and demerits of our common school systems with a mind matured in the matter. After successfully combating the folly of some political economists, who insist that the legislature should not give encouragement to education, but let each denomination educate its own people, says: “The only question now, being how that money may be most judiciously spent, so as to aid the promotion of virtue and intelligence, give security to life and property, and perpetuate those civil and religious liberties which probably we enjoy to a greater extent than any other people on the globe.”

While we firmly believe in the superiority of the principle, of allowing the people to act on the subject of education in their municipal capacity,—having county organisations, county boards of education, and having the county grammar schools converted into training schools, and investing the trustees with the power to examine and inspect the schools in their several localities—and be paid for it; and also having competent lecturers to enter every locality and

call the attention of the people generally to the benefits of education. Still, if we are to have a provincial board of education, who are to be clothed with authority to control, and make regulations for the schools of the province, and send inspectors to examine them, let us have such board chosen as Mr Duval says, “not on account of any political party bias, but simply on account of their literary standing and their adaptation to promote the education of the country.”

But “the right man in the right place,” is well said by our author to be, in these times, “an expression of mere political cant,”—it is utterly useless in the present state of political parties, who have nothing but office to fight for as party differences, to get men placed in power independently of political party. The best institutions of the country—the dearest rights of the people—must be made to succumb to keep men in power—to keep half a score of officials in office, each receiving from £400 to £800 per annum out of the revenues of the province. It applies equally the same to all parties. The schools will never prosper where such is the case. Educational institutions should be governed separate and apart from all party distinctions; they are the fountains which should be freely opened for the reception of all without regard to political party; but when men are placed over these establishments whose political feelings run so high as to lead them to keep up a system of canvass for the party to which they belong, the result will prove injurious to educational progress.

We fully coincide with Mr Duval in the belief that “an active, intelligent, urbane, experienced and practical man, visiting under the direction of the board every part of the province, exercising a general supervision of the schools, and delivering lectures, might infuse such a spirit into the public mind as would awaken parents from their apathy, and induce them to secure for their children, even at a personal sacrifice, a thorough education; and would also be the means, no doubt, of changing the character of the many “miserable hovels, called school-houses, standing by the road sides, as monuments of our shame, into neat commodious, well ventilated and clean