

2. MEMORANDUM ON THE DRAFT OF BILL FOR THE FURTHER PROMOTION OF EDUCATION IN THE CITIES AND TOWNS OF UPPER CANADA. BY THE REV. DR. RYERSON.

I have proposed the accompanying draft of School Bill of seven clauses relative to cities and towns, as the result of my own observations and reflection, and without consulting any party; but since then I have conversed with the most intelligent members of different denominations and parties, and have met with a cordial approval of the objects and provisions of this bill.

2. The necessity of some further provision in order to secure school instruction to a large class of now neglected, and to a great extent, abandoned youth in cities and towns, is deeply felt and freely acknowledged. In the towns and cities there is a considerable proportion of the children of school age not returned as attending any school, whether the public common schools are free or not. The school population of Toronto, between the ages of 5 and 16 years, was, January 1, 1861, 11,595; the whole number of children attending schools (including separate schools) during any part of the year 1860, was 8,518; the number of children between those ages returned as not attending any school was, therefore, 3,077. Making all due allowances for those who might be attending private schools, or who were employed in some industrial occupation, it leaves a balance of not less than 2,500 children of school age, or about 25 per cent. of the school population of Toronto, not attending any school,—and that in the midst of free schools, of excellent school-houses, well furnished, and provided with good teachers! It is this class of persons that swell the calendar of juvenile crime. Dr. W. Nelson, one of the Prison Inspectors, remarks that the current yearly expenses of each juvenile culprit in the Reformatory Prison is nearly one hundred dollars, and states it “a well established fact that each individual thief causes, on an average, loss to the community of over four hundred dollars a year, and this irrespective of the injury inflicted upon persons and property by assaults, attempts at murder, and arson.”—(Parliamentary Sessional Papers for 1861, No. 24.) The attention of the Toronto press has been directed to this subject, as also that of the Board of School Trustees. In one report the Chief of Police mentions the commitment of forty boys for theft, and one hundred and seventeen for drunkenness and other disorderly conduct. One of the Judges of the Superior Court, in a charge to a Toronto Jury, remarked:—“The streets of Toronto, like those of too many other towns, still present the miserable spectacle of idle, untaught children, male and female—a crop too rapidly ripening for the dram shop, the brothel, and the prison, and that too under the shadow of spacious and admirably kept school houses, into which all may enter free of cost. Most nobly does Toronto provide the means of free education.” “But year after year the great evil continues unabated, and those whose heavy responsibility it is to act as judges or jurors in Criminal Courts, naturally ask if such things are always to be? It was the work of centuries to teach nations that their duties towards criminals extended beyond punishment. The labors and lives of great and good men and women, and a wider knowledge of social economy, but above all, a nobler appreciation of the spirit of that Gospel which proclaims deliverance to the prisoners and captives, have at last awakened us to the belief that the reformation of the offenders is at least as important to society as punishment.”

3. Systematic efforts for the “reformation of offenders” is a great improvement upon the former notions and system of prison discipline; but it is equally christian, and much more humane and patriotic, to prevent crime, than to reform the criminals; to extinguish the fountain whence crime flows, than to reform its victims—to prevent the youth from going to prison, than to attempt his reformation there.

4. The giant evil of youthful demoralization is confessedly increasing in our cities and towns; and the importance of arresting it as far as possible cannot be over-estimated in regard either to these centres of population themselves, or in respect to the country at large. In comparatively new cities and towns, and a young country, the foundation of society should be deeply and broadly laid in religion, virtue and knowledge, and for that purpose every possible religious influence and benevolent effort should be developed and associated with the instruction of the masses in rearing the structure of society.

5. The chief and almost only remedy which has been proposed for the evils of youthful ignorance and crime in our cities and towns, is coercion—compulsory attendance at school. Every member of society has undoubtedly a right to such an education as will fit him for his duties as a Christian citizen, as much as he has a right to food and clothes; and society has a right, and it is in duty bound to see that each of its members is fitted for his duties, and not trained to be a public pest and burden. I have frequently urged this view of the subject, and have suggested and prepared measures to give it practical effect as an element of our public school system, especially in cities and towns. But I have found an utter unwillingness on the part of

public men of different parties to do what seemed to intrench upon individual and parental rights. To render any such provision effectual in any city or town, it would be necessary to provide a building and officers for a Reformatory School, and premises connected with it for cultivation, for learning trades, with prison-like enclosures. Then provision must be made for the thorough religious instruction and training of the inmates. The expense and difficulties connected with the management of such an establishment, are such as a municipality will not incur, and such as the Government and Legislature are not likely to undertake in connection with each city and town. To compel any class of children to attend the public schools has proved impracticable; and, as it has been truly urged, could that be done, secular instruction alone would not reach the seat of the moral evils to be corrected, of the moral and religious feelings, on the influence and culture of which depend chiefly and essentially the results desired.

6. Under these circumstances, I propose to develop and encourage the exercise of a voluntary religious and moral agency which has hitherto remained almost dormant in this country, which is practically discouraged by our free public school system; but which has accomplished and is accomplishing immense good on behalf of the neglected and vicious poor in many towns in England and Scotland, and which involves, in the economy of the Divine government, and in the moral and intellectual constitution of man, the potent and supreme remedy for the world's vice and misery. I refer to that religious and moral agency which has established ragged schools in London and Edinburgh, and which has produced such marvellous results upon a hitherto abandoned and almost helpless class of town populations. I will not extend this paper by giving more than one illustration—a part of the statement of the Reverend Dr. Guthrie, of Edinburgh, before *The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* in 1860. He says:—“It is little more than a dozen years since, of every 100 criminals in our prison there were five under fourteen years of age, and no less than 552 commitments of children between fourteen and sixteen years of age. The following tables, which show how the prison grew empty as the schools grew full, demonstrate that in them governments have the best cure for crime.” Dr. Guthrie then gives tables which show that the percentage of criminals in Edinburgh before the establishment of ragged schools in 1847, was 56, and in 1859, was reduced to 12; and that the number of prisoners between 14 and 16 years of age, committed to Edinburgh jail, had in the same time been gradually reduced from 552 to 130. He then proceeds as follows:—“These returns demonstrate the power and success of ragged schools; since in the short space of four years we reduced the commitments of juveniles to one-tenth of what they were before the schools were opened; and what variation appears in these tables proves the difficulties that hamper us, and the need of what we wish the State to lend us help—a wider application of our system. But this does not exhaust our claims on the countenance of Government. From our educational schools we have sent forth 1,000 children—who would have been curses—to be blessings to the community. We have saved the State, I may say, a thousand criminals, and given her a thousand citizens. She would have punished the criminals at an expense of £300,000; the citizens that we have given her have not cost a tenth part of that sum. So that, sinking higher considerations—the value of immortal souls, the claims of brotherhood, the welfare and well-doing of our fellow creatures—confining our attention to the low ground of economy, regarding the whole affair as one of pounds, shillings and pence,—I think that Government is bound to deal with ragged schools in a spirit, not indeed of wasteful profusion, but of the utmost liberality.”—(Transactions, &c., pp. 499, 500.) If this needed confirmation, we have it in *The Slicing Scale*—a remarkable work by Mr. McLevy, Deputy Chief of Police in Edinburgh—where it is stated in substance that, in consequence of these philanthropical measures, juvenile crime and vagrancy are fast disappearing from the city.

7. But I am far from proposing the establishment of ragged, or of any description of pauper schools in Upper Canada. Our whole school system is founded on the opposite principle—that of the mutual rights and obligations of the citizen and the State—not of the pauper and the donor. But I propose that our school system, which has not the vital power of religious zeal and benevolence to bring into the schools large numbers of the most needy and dangerous classes in cities and towns, shall be supplemented by developing and encouraging that religious spirit of benevolence and zeal which, under great disadvantages, has wrought out such beneficial results by the establishment and success of ragged schools, and which, in heathen lands, in connection with Christian Missions, has given large accessions of converted youth to Christendom itself.

8. I propose and provide in the accompanying draft of bill, that the congregation of any religious persuasion in any city or town, or any two or more congregations united, or any number of benevolent individuals, may establish one or more schools in such city or town;