

and a Newton, gathered the first gleanings of so rich a harvest. But, also, we inherit with them no obsolete shackles and time-honoured abuses, to trammel us in our course. The borders of our educational system require only to be guarded from insidious encroachments, and protected from the well-meant but mischievous zeal of those who would engraft upon this free growth of the nineteenth century, the obsolete tests, and archaic or sectarian offshoots of long-buried generations. Our best inheritance from the past is its experience. We have prejudices and sectarian barriers enough of our own, without seeking to lay upon ourselves a yoke which our fathers found it hard enough to bear.

Nor is it in that direction only that we are untrammelled with the prejudices, no less than with the endowments of a venerable past. It is impossible to study the recent report of the commission appointed to inquire into the condition of the great public schools of England, without perceiving that, along with noble legacies, they also inherit not a few of the cobwebs and the rust of antiquity. The generous spirit of loving veneration enkindled in their classic shades, finds expression in many a tender reminiscence; as when the poet Gray, looking forth on Erin's "antique towers," exclaims:—

"Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!  
Ah, fields below'd in vain!  
Where once my careless childhood strayed,  
A stranger yet to pain."

Or where Wordsworth apostrophises:—

"The sacred nurseries of blooming youth,  
In whose Collegiate shelter England's Flowers  
Expand, enjoying through their vernal hours  
The air of liberty, the light of truth."

And reverts to the time when he paced the long avenue, or roamed by the Cam:—

"An eager Novice robed in flattering gown."

But when we turn from those fond reminiscences—which awaken a kindred response in all who have been privileged to enjoy in youth the fostering care of such an *Alma Mater*—and substitute for them the prosaic utterances of Sons of Eton and Oxford addressed to the commission of enquiry, we strangely reverse the picture. Obsolete features of a system devised for a totally different state of society, are sacred in their eyes as the Geese of the Roman Capitol; and even the cumbrous furniture and incongruous vestments inherited by public schools of England from ages which introduced them—not as antiquarian relics, but with every purpose of practical utility—are guarded from improvement as akin to impiety and sacrilege. It is impossible to look on such manifestations of unreasoning conservatism, thus clinging to worn out legacies of the past all the more passionately because of their utter inaptitude to the wants of the living age, without feeling that in our unshackled freedom we enjoy some compensation for our poverty, and can turn our limited resources to the best account, if we but have the wisdom, as we have the will to do it.

Let us then—while gratefully remembering all that we inherit from those ancient seats of learning on which England looks with loving pride, and all that they are still accomplishing for the progress of scholarship and science—retain a just estimate of the advantages we enjoy in this favoured Province of the same great Empire. Still more let us not fail to appreciate our own responsibilities, entrusted as we are with the sowing of the first seeds of knowledge in the virgin soil of this young country. The destinies of a great future are in our hands. We are privileged to form and fashion as it were, the young giant's limbs; and if it be a true figure of speech that "as the twig is bent, the tree inclines," we are now setting influences in motion, which will operate, not years only, but centuries after we are returned to dust. The minds of the rising generation are in your hands as clay in the hands of the potter. Your lessons stamp their impress on each. Your teachings are no idle words; but impulses pregnant with good or evil—far-reaching and comprehensive as time itself; for

"Words are things; and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions think."

But you have now left behind you for a brief period, the school-room and its responsible duties; and assemble here as a deliberative body, uniting in your collective capacity much of the best educational experience of the Province. Important questions are to be submitted to you, with the result, I doubt not, alike of pleasure and profit to all in the free interchange of opinions. It cannot fail to be the case that differences of views will arise between those with whom the modifications of our school system originate, and you who are required to carry these ideas into practical operation. Under any system this must be the case, and especially is it to be

looked for as inevitable in one of so recent development, and wrought out amid a people hewing out new homes for themselves from the virgin forest. But in such opportunities of friendly intercourse and exchange of thought as your annual conventions supply, lies one important means for turning this diversity of sentiment to practical account.

Important changes, for example, are now in contemplation in reference to the apportionment of the Grammar School fund. The proper source and value of certificates, Provincial or otherwise, for teachers, is under review. More than one influence is at work tending to awaken renewed attention to the demand for greater facilities for the higher education of girls throughout the Province; and here at least, and probably in other large cities, the question of what is to be done with our young parish population, is forced upon us with an imperativeness that cannot long be resisted. Our Common Schools are free. The education they offer is the passport to future success in life; and yet hundreds of our city children roam idly through the streets, heedless of the inestimable advantages placed within their reach, training too frequently in vice and crime, candidates for the gaol, the penitentiary, and the gallows. Have we then done all our duty to these wretched children in opening schools, the value of which they cannot appreciate, and which their dissolute and criminal parents regard with indifference or contempt?

Is it not a wrong done to the community to allow a child thus to be trained in our midst in ignorance and crime, to grow up to inherit the privileges of a freeman, and yet wholly incapable of exercising them except for evil? We may doom that child to a police-cell or the dungeon of a gaol; and it is a melancholy fact to see how many children of tender years annually expiate their first petty crimes in this manner, and are thus, as it were, indentured to a life of shame. We may employ the constable, the gaoler, aye, even the hangman, to do his wretched work on these children fashioned in the image of God, and born to the inheritance of a freedom as ample as any people ever enjoyed. It is incompatible with our duty; is it not even urged upon us by every motive of interest and self-defence, to employ a like compulsion while it is still time, and train these infants while yet they can scarcely discriminate between right and wrong, into cultured, virtuous, God-fearing members of society, rather than abandon them, like noxious weeds, to grow up as pests of the community; and swell the charges of our criminal expenditure to an amount that might endow with scholarships every Grammar School in the Province.

Those are some of the questions calling for your earnest deliberation, and others no less interesting to you in a professional point of view will be immediately brought under your notice in the reports of the committees appointed at last meeting. I commend them to your consideration; and trust that in all your deliberations, you will be under the guidance of the Great Teacher; and so directed that you may be able to develop the educational resources of this Province into a system adequate for the training of a loyal, an intelligent, and a happy people, for the full enjoyment of all the blessings we inherit. And if it be, that in the fulness of time, England, the ark of Europe's liberties, is destined to become the mother of nations, where she has already peopled new worlds with her sons, may it be your proud distinction to have imbued the minds of those who are to work out the destinies of their country, with refined culture and high-toned christian principles, that as it widens its boundaries, pressing westward in the path of the setting sun, it may find its fittest emblem in the glory and beauty of that western sky.

The address was received, at various points and upon conclusion, with loud applause.

*Treasurer's Report.*—J. B. McGann, Esq., the Treasurer, presented his report, showing a balance on hand of \$136 46.

*Arbitrations.*—Mr. McMurchie, from the committee appointed at last session to report upon arbitrations between teachers and trustees, presented the report of that Committee, recommending that instead of the local superintendent being always the third arbitrator, the two arbitrators first chosen be empowered to agree upon any third party. He moved the adoption of the report. Mr. R. Lewis, on behalf of the Committee, explained the reasons which led them to the conclusion reported. The principal reason was, that the local superintendents were generally established in their neighbourhoods, while teachers were often changed, and hence the tendency was found to be to side with the locality against the teacher. Mr. T. G. Chestnut said that the committee were not unanimous in the sentiment expressed by Mr. Lewis. At all events the views of the committee did not take so general a range. Their desire was simply to allow freedom of choice on the part of the arbitrator. In some cases the local superintendent had already expressed himself as to the merits of the case, rendering him an improper party to be chosen. Mr. C. McCarty, who seconded the adoption of the report, remarked that he did so because he felt it was often of importance