

led the way, supported in its difficult course by the aid and counsel of the Prince Consort, no Society or Institution existed which offered to young men from sixteen years of age and upwards, a wholesome stimulus to study, or gave them the means by which their industry, their perseverance, their self-culture, could be tested and acknowledged, and brought prominently before their friends and the public.

That this or some similar system for encouraging private study after leaving school had become absolutely necessary, from the universality of education, was never so apparent as now, when the attractions of sensation novels, worthless as vehicles for conveying wholesome instruction, if not absolutely injurious, by unduly exciting feelings and sentiments calculated to lower rather than to elevate the tastes and principles of their readers, and when the temptation to devote too much time in reading the interesting and varied information contained in the daily press is considered, information conveyed in so condensed and popular a form as almost to preclude reflection, and to lead involuntarily to the adoption of the views of others rather than to the formation of individual opinions, and the tendency of which is to discourage sound and systematic study—I say that with such inducements to desultory reading, any education entered upon voluntarily, to be followed by an examination, must raise the tone of mind, elevate the thoughts, give precision to their expression, whether in writing or verbally, and induce a correctness of reasoning and of analysis, which will produce most beneficial effects in after-life.

The efforts of the Society to obtain the sanction and co-operation of the public to this novel and voluntary system of education and examination, differing so entirely from anything previously attempted, were slow, but they were sure.

Three years were spent in maturing the plan, and it was not till February, 1856, that the first regular programme was issued, nor until June of the same year that the first examination was held. There were then only fifty-two candidates. Last year there were very nearly a thousand.

Such was the effect produced by these examinations, that strength was given to a suggestion of one of our examiners, that the Universities should do for the class immediately above those for whom our examinations were intended—that which we were so successfully doing in our special sphere—and the result was the establishment of the middle-class examinations of Oxford and Cambridge, success in which bids fair to be the test by which the value of the education obtained in the private schools of the country will hereafter be measured.

Many of the objections to competitive examinations among the higher classes of students, whether at the University or at the middle-class examinations, or at the examinations for civil or military appointments, do not apply to ours.

Cramming, which is now a profession, cannot be adopted by the candidates who appear before our examiners. In the first place, they cannot afford to pay for such a system, and if they could they are so spread over the country that it would be almost impossible, except in a few large towns, to obtain the necessary help; and I believe that the honours gained by our candidates must, as a

whole, be more honestly won than those by any other class. The examinations are not entered upon to gain a particular position in college, or a particular office or promotion in military or naval life, by young men most of whom have more or less money at their disposal, but by those who hope to gain the notice of their employers by great sacrifices and severe labour after their day's business is over. Such men would mostly scorn cramming. They are seeking for a test of their voluntarily acquired knowledge, not simply for a pass to some place or for promotion. The effect is therefore greater; the merit is also greater; and, class for class, in the course of time the result will be greater.

I hope, then, without wishing to disparage the exertions of any other body, I have not unfairly endeavoured to maintain the claims of this Society to the honour of leading the movement for the voluntary examination of students anxious to secure some public acknowledgment of their industry and talent.

Turning now to another view of the subject, when we consider the influence that the upper stratum of the working classes exerts over the entire body, and that the working classes form the base of our industrial fabric, too high a value can scarcely be attached to every step which encourages them to attain by their own independent exertions, and from books of their own selection, an acquaintance with sound principles of political economy, which will influence their own conduct and enable them to influence that of others.

Differences between masters and workmen, originating mostly in ignorance and misunderstanding, will doubtless be lessened by a certain number of young men voluntarily submitting, year after year, to a difficult examination to test the extent of their self-education, and thereby becoming able to appreciate, to understand, and to explain to their fellow workmen the great social and economical principles on which their success depends. The accomplishment of these great objects has been for many years past the aim of our educational proceedings."

#### TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

It is nearly four years since the Board of Arts and Manufactures for Upper Canada determined upon issuing a monthly journal, devoted to giving publicity to the transactions of the Board, and to the advocacy of the Industrial interests of the Province; and also of the interests of its Mechanics' Institutes and similar associations calculated to benefit the industrial classes.

The news of the day, and all political questions, were abundantly provided for by our spirited newspaper press; the mere literary reader by the numerous magazines and journals imported from other countries; agricultural and horticultural matters by our Canadian and other agricultural publications; but of journals in the interests of arts and manufactures nothing was published in the Province, and very little brought here from