

might almost say conducted to every farmer's, mechanic's and labourer's dwelling; for the law has provided amply and certainly for placing, at no distant day, the education which can be obtained in this Normal School, within the easy reach of all. There will be no impediment from distance, no difficulty from straitened means; the most densely crowded quarters of our towns, and cities, and the remotest corners of our rural districts, will be sure to have their school houses, their teachers, their books and their maps.

Whoever reads the common school acts and considers the provision which they make for diffusing the system of instruction which they authorize, will see that its effects must inevitably pervade the whole mass of our population. And at what a time is its efficiency about to be felt! I speak with reference to the impulse given to agriculture and commerce, the spirit of enterprise called forth by the improvements in science, and the remarkable proofs which we are witnessing of the vivifying influence of increased population and of increased wealth. It would be difficult, I think, to point out a country in which at any period of its history the results of such a system could have deserved to be regarded with greater interest—or watched with more intense anxiety. It is not only the city which this building adorns that is concerned in these results,—not merely the surrounding country, whose inhabitants will enjoy more convenient access to this institution—not *Upper Canada* alone, for the *Lower* portion of the Province is scarcely less directly interested in whatever must influence the composition and acts and counsels of a government and legislature common to both. We may say with truth, that the interest even extends much farther. It is common for us to hear of that great experiment in government in which the vast republic near us is engaged. The world, it is said, has a deep interest in the result, and none it is most true, have stronger motives than ourselves for wishing that the experiment may prove successful in attaining the great objects of all good governments, by preserving order within the boundaries of the country governed, for it is unfortunate to live near unruly neighbours, foreign or domestic, and unsafe while we happen to be the weaker party. But in Canada, and the other Provinces of British North America, we have an experiment of our own going on, in a smaller way to be sure, but still on a scale that is rapidly expanding—and an experiment of no light interest to our glorious mother country, or to mankind. We occupy a peculiar and a somewhat critical position on this continent, and more than we can foresee may probably depend upon the manner in which our descendants may be able to sustain themselves in it. It will be their part, as it is now ours, to demonstrate that all such freedom of action as is consistent with rational liberty, with public peace, and with individual security, can be enjoyed under a constitutional monarchy as fully as under the purest democracy on earth—to prove that in proportion as intelligence increases what is meant by liberty is better understood, and what is soundest and most stable in government is better appreciated and more firmly supported. The glorious career of England among the nations of the world demands of us this tribute to the tried excellence of her admirable constitution; it should be our pride to shew that far removed as we are from the splendours of Royalty and the influences of a Court, monarchy is not blindly preferred among us from a senseless attachment to antiquated prejudices, nor reluctantly tolerated from a sense of duty or a dread of change; but that on the contrary, it is cherished in the affections, and supported by the free and firm will of an intelligent people, whose love of order has been strengthened as their knowledge has increased—a people who regard with loyal pleasure the obligations of duty which bind them to the Crown, and who value their kingly form of government not only because they believe it to be the most favourable to stability and peace, but especially for the security it affords to life and property, the steady support which it gives to the laws, and the certainty with which it ensures the actual enjoyment of all that deserves to be dignified with the name of freedom. As soon as the legislature of Canada determined to apply so large a proportion of its revenue to the support of common schools, it became necessary to the satisfactory and useful working of the system that an institution should be formed for the instruction of the teachers, and it was a great advantage that before the circumstances of this country first called for such a measure, and rendered its application practicable on a large scale, the efforts of many enlightened and judicious persons in other countries had been for years directed to the subject; and all the questions of discipline

distribution of time, methods of imparting knowledge, subjects of instruction, and the extent to which each can be carried, had engaged attention and had stood the test of experience. Many valuable books had been compiled expressly for the use of such schools, and great care and diligence had been used in making selections from the abundant stores of knowledge already available. And so far as those political considerations are concerned, which it would be culpable ever to lose sight of, we can fortunately profit without hesitation by all these important aids, being bound by the common tie of allegiance to the same Crown, and having the same predilections in favour of British institutions as our fellow-subjects of the United Kingdom. Without such a general preparatory system as we see here in operation, the instruction of the great mass of our population would be left in a measure to chance. The teachers might be many of them ignorant pretenders, without experience, without method, and in some other respects very improper persons to be entrusted with the education of youth. There could be little or no security for what they might teach, or how they might attempt to teach, nor any certainty that the good which might be acquired from their precepts would not be more than counter-balanced by the ill effects of their example. Indeed the footing which our common school teachers were formerly upon, in regard to income, gave no adequate remuneration to intelligent and industrious men to devote their time to the service. But this disadvantage is removed, as well as other obstacles, which were inseparable from the condition of a thinly peopled and uncleared country, traversed only by miserable roads, and henceforward, as soon at least as the benefits of this great Provincial institution can be fully felt, the common schools will be dispensing throughout the whole of Upper Canada, by means of properly trained teachers, and under vigilant superintendence, a system of education which has been carefully considered and arranged, and which has been for some time practically exemplified. An observation of some years has enabled most of us to form an opinion of its sufficiency. Speaking only for myself, I have much pleasure in saying that the degree of proficiency which has been actually attained, goes far, very far beyond what I had imagined it would have been attempted to aim at. It is evident, indeed, that the details of the system have been studied with great care, and that a conformity to the approved method has been strictly exacted; and I believe few, if any, have been present at a periodical examination of the Normal School without feeling a strong conviction that what we have now most to hope for and desire is, that such a course of instruction as they have seen exhibited, should be carried on with unrelaxed diligence and care. Of course, I shall be understood to be speaking only with reference to those branches of knowledge which formed the subjects of examination. There is, we all know, a difficulty which has met at the threshold those who have been influential in establishing systems of national education; I mean that which arises from the number of religious sects into which the population is divided. This is not the occasion for entering into any discussion upon that painfully interesting question. Whatever difficulty it has occasioned in England or Ireland must be expected to be found here, applying with at least equal, if not more than equal force. I should be unwilling to suppose that any doubt could exist as to my own opinion on this question; and scarcely less unwilling to be thought so unjust and uncandid as not to acknowledge and make allowance for the difficulties which surround it. They are such I believe, as no person can fully estimate, until he has been called upon to deal with them, under the responsibility which the duties of Government impose. In the mean time, resting assured as we may, that no general system of instruction can be permanently successful which has not the confidence and cordial approval of the sincerely religious portion of the community—that portion, I mean, who will think it worse than folly to aim at *being wise above that which is written*—we must wait with hope and patience for the solution which this difficulty, to which I allude, may receive in other countries more competent to grapple with it—trusting that what may ultimately be found to be the safe and satisfactory course, may, by the wisdom and good feeling of the majority, be adopted among ourselves. When conflicting opinions upon this subject shall have been reconciled, so as to secure the full confidence and approval of those who are not indifferent to religious duties and considerations, it may be hoped that the system which is now being matured may arrive at that state of perfection, in regard to the regulations connected with it, that the Legislature may be able to