

The elementary provincial schools of Ontario, until the year 1871, were called Common Schools. This name, however, appears to have excited a prejudice against them, which, it might have been hoped, time would abate and even extinguish. The word common, used in this connection, was somewhat fastidiously regarded by many as synonymous with vulgar or low, and not a few whose pretensions to superiority and refinement partook of the ludicrous, breathed the spirit towards these schools if they did not indulge in the language of the exquisite Roman poet who wrote—" *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*" Gray has happily reminded us, in the case of a man recovering from sickness, that

"The meanest flow'ret of the vale,
The humblest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are ope'ning paradise—"

and the offering of our "common prayer and supplication" to that common Father, whose word teaches us to "honour all men," should enkindle within us a kindly and equitable feeling towards all the partakers of our common nature. Perhaps in time such sentiments as these would spontaneously have appeared and flourished in Ontario. It has seemed good, however, to our legislators to remove from before the eyes of our more assuming fellow-subjects the temptation to arrogance which existed in the epithet "common" as applied to our elementary schools; and now, while common as ever in the Massachusetts sense of the term, they are styled by law the Public Schools of Ontario. By the same authority, the former Grammar Schools are now the High Schools of the province. They are not, indeed, strictly, as in the United States, a higher step or platform of that educational pyramid, of which the Public Schools are the base and the University is the apex; but a distinct structure to which a few choice materials may be supplied from the Public Schools,

while the larger portion is obtained from other quarries.

The Public School System of Ontario had its origin in 1844. It is for the most part an eclectic system, in which the characteristics of the Massachusetts, New York, and Irish systems can be distinctly discerned. Its framer, who has also been from the first its principal administrator, received the title of "Superintendent of Schools," which has expanded into his very comprehensive title of "Chief Superintendent of Education." In 1846, a Board of Education was created which is now styled the "Council of Public Instruction," the members of which are of various religious denominations, and are appointed, it seems, partly on that ground. The powers of this Council and of the Chief Superintendent, although not legislative, are very extensive—administrative and, in some degree, judicial—suggestive indeed of the "giant's strength," and pre-supposing much of equity, discretion, and good-will in those in whom they are vested, lest they should be tempted to "use them like a giant." The subordinate administration of our Public School affairs is committed to local boards of school trustees, who are elected by the rate-payers, and to county, city, or town inspectors, who are appointed by county councils, or city or town public school boards, and whose qualifications are prescribed by law and certified by the Council of Public Instruction. Connected with the Provincial Education Office, which has become in style and title "the Department of Education," is a large establishment for the purchase and sale of school-books, prize-books, maps, educational apparatus, and books for school and public libraries. The propriety of the existence of this establishment has long been a matter of earnest public controversy. On one side it has been represented as a great and unmingled public benefit, on the other as an interference on the part of the Government with the freedom and healthful competition of trade. By