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### Address TO THE INHABITANTS OF UPPER CANADA.

#### ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERSEVERE IN THE CAUSE OF COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION.

BY THE CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS.

It appears appropriate to commence each year by addressing those for whose interests this *Journal* is continued, on the great objects to which it is devoted; that by awakening afresh the recollection of first principles and analyzing the criteria of Educational progress, we may be eventually animated to prosecute, with becoming energy and zeal, the noblest work of any country—the Christian, and universal and practical education of its youthful population.

The first number of last year's *Journal of Education* contained an Address to the people of Upper Canada on the system of FREE SCHOOLS—a system which is based upon the principle that every child in the land has a right to such an education as will make him a useful member of society, and that every inhabitant of the land is bound to contribute to that national object according to his property—a system the life of which is the genius of Christianity, the soul of patriotism, the spirit of the highest civilization. It is my present object to present some of those grounds of encouragement, with which the facts and experience of the past year furnish us, to persevere in the work of educating our own and our country's offspring.

1. And the first encouraging omen which I shall mention is the deep hold which the principle of Free Schools has taken of the public mind in Upper Canada. The first public enunciation of this principle in 1846, was received with general surprise and doubt, with wide spread suspicion, and in many instances with avowed hostility. In some cases it was dismissed by an editorial sneer; and in other cases it met with a less courteous reception; was at one time assailed as a public pauper, and at another time denounced as a conspirator against individual liberty. But like many of the most important reforms and improvements in the institutions of society which were once misunderstood, denounced and ridiculed, the principle of Free Schools has risen above misconception, and therefore above misrepresentation and reproach, and stands forth now as much an object of respect and admiration, as it was a short time since an object of suspicion and contempt. The explanatory and matter-of-fact free-school Address of last January, called forth an approving response from several influential members of the Canadian Press; and it is a somewhat singular coincidence, that during that same month the Superintendent of Schools for the State of New-York called the earnest attention of the Legislature and citizens of the State to the great importance of establishing Free Schools throughout the whole State. He at the same time submitted the draft of a Bill, which provided that on the vote of a majority, every individual in the State would be compelled to adopt the system of free schools. I submitted a draft of a bill, giving liberty and power to the inhabitants of each school-section (but not compelling them) through their Trustee-representatives to adopt the free-school system without reference either to the Executive Government or the Municipal Council. In the State of New-York, the compulsory and general free-school bill has become law; in Upper Canada the draft of bill submitted to facilitate the establishment of the local and voluntary free-school system has not been

adopted, and more forms and obstacles are interposed by the new School Act in the way of establishing the free-school system in any section than existed under the Act of last year. But notwithstanding this partial impediment in legislation (which I have reason to believe was unintentional on the part of the Government) the principle of free-schools has been advancing among the people in every County of Upper Canada; and we hear of the inhabitants of many sections submitting to all the forms and applications required by the law in order, if possible, to obtain the establishment of free-schools; nay, more, we are assured that the conviction is becoming very general among the people, that the free-school system is the only true one—the only one that will educate all their children—the only one that will command good teachers and erect good schools throughout the land. We indulge the sanguine hope, that, the first year of the approaching half-century will witness the establishment of free-schools in many whole Counties, if not throughout the whole Province of Upper Canada.

Let every friend of sound and universal education be impressed with the fact, that that object has never been, and can never be attained except where all the people of all ranks and classes are combined for the education of all. For more than thirty years has a famed system of Common Schools been established in the neighbouring State of New-York; and yet throughout the rural country parts of that State official reports show that comparatively little progress has been made in the character and efficiency of the Schools; while during the last few years the most astonishing advancement has been made in the schools of cities and towns. The whole circle of legislative change and amendment has been completed in the State School Law; so that during the last year or two, the school legislators have found themselves unconsciously adopting many of the leading provisions of the first State School law, passed more than thirty years ago. The School Law had undergone every variety of modification, yet a large proportion of the country schools had undergone little or no change. In 1844, a State Normal School was established to accomplish what legislative and ordinary exertions had failed to effect; but it was manifest that the grand fulcrum for intellectually uplifting the whole community was still wanting, and the example of the Free School in cities and towns and states was showing with increased clearness what that fulcrum was. It has at length been adopted, and on it is placed the lever of the whole State education machinery, and to that is applied the concentrated power of public opinion, ambition and patriotism in the cause of education. The result cannot be mistaken, though the power of human imagination is inadequate to picture it.

And why may not the goal which has been sought for during more than thirty years by our New York neighbours, be reached by the people of Upper Canada in five years? Why may we not march directly to the consummation which has cost others so many years of varied experiment and earnest disputation? In leading his army across the Alps, NAPOLEON profited by the experience and losses of HANNIBAL; and amateur travellers now avail themselves, as a pleasurable excursion, of the Simplon highway of NAPOLEON,—constructed at the expense of so much labour and treasure. Who would think of crossing the Atlantic in the petty bark of COLUMBUS since the invention of steam-packets? We should not be less wise and less practical in the momentous affairs of common schools. They require the simple application of a few great principles; they demand, not legislative experiments, but patriotic exertion—the united hearts and hands of all for the common interests of all.