

happens that there is not room for more light even after the best exertions of all parties. There is commonly much writing in the newspapers, there are long debates in "the House," there are squabbles in committee, there are petitions and counter petitions, there are meetings of the cabinet, and suggestions from the venerable Chief Superintendent of Education, and sometimes with no other result than a general bewilderment of the legislators, and a withdrawal of "the bill." It is reasonable to suppose that an interchange of views among the teachers of the land may help on the formation of an enlightened public opinion, on which after all, the success of our system of public instruction must mainly depend. I welcome you, therefore, teachers of Ontario, to this your customary gathering, and exhort you to an earnest and thoughtful investigation of the principles, methods and results of the noble calling in which you are engaged.

In our last Convention, there was nothing to mar the harmony of our proceedings, and I trust we shall have on this occasion the same courtesy and order, the same willingness to communicate and receive information. The people of Canada, and especially of Ontario, may congratulate themselves that they begin their national career under a good system of popular education. In most countries, it has been otherwise. Even England herself, in so many ways the foremost among the nations, presents to us to-day, after a history of a thousand years, the melancholy picture of a great people unable to agree upon anything like a uniform and efficient scheme of common school training. With some European nations it is not quite so bad, but no people ever began its history under circumstances so auspicious in this respect as our own community. Here the schoolmaster is early in the field, pre-occupying the ground, leading the van, and preparing the way for all other agencies of a true civilization: elsewhere he has commonly come in at first as the helper of a favoured few, and only tardily and under many impediments has found access to the multitude.

Paul, speaking of his intended visit to the Romans, tells them that though he "oftentimes purposed to come unto them he had been let hitherto." So a long time stood the schoolmaster looking wistfully at the neglected masses of the old world, but was hindered, and to a large extent is still hindered, from diffusing the sweet and precious gospel of knowledge. Hindered by ages of violence and barbarism; hindered by devastating and wicked wars waged at the beck of some Alexander or Napoleon; hindered by ecclesiastical crotchets and still worse ecclesiastical cruelties;