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VAGRANT CHILDREN IN CITIES AND TOWNS.

Circular from the Chief Superintendent of Education to the Board of School Trustees in the Cities and Towns of Upper Canada.

GENTLEMEN,—I beg to call your serious and earnest attention to the condition of those children in cities and towns who do not attend any school, public or private.

I had hoped that when the public schools should be made free in our cities and towns, no persons in them would be found to refuse or neglect availing themselves of such a privilege, facility, and inducement to educate their children. I confess the results of the trial have come short of my expectations. Very considerable numbers of children in these centres of population are growing up with no other education than a training in idleness, vagrancy, and crime. The existence of such a class in any community is a public loss and danger, and ominous of future evil.

It is perfectly clear, that making good schools free to all does not secure the education of all.

I have, at different times, submitted three propositions or plans for the accomplishment of the object of free schools in cities and towns. First,—That as the property of all is taxed for the common school education of all, all should be compelled to allow their children the means of such education, at either public or private schools. Or, secondly, that each municipality should be empowered to deal with the vagrancy of children of school age, or the neglect of their education, as a crime, subject to such penalties and such measures for its prevention, as each municipality, in its own discretion, might from time to time adopt. Or, thirdly, that the aid of religious

benevolence should be invoked and encouraged to supplement the agency of our present school system.

Neither of the two former propositions having been entertained by the Government, to whom they were submitted, I proposed the last in a draft of a bill, accompanied by an explanatory letter, last year. The members of the Government before whom this measure was laid, retired from office before taking it into consideration, and I have not renewed it by submitting it to the present Government. There is, therefore, now no proposition under the consideration of Government, in respect to children whose school education is wholly neglected.

I beg, therefore, to solicit your practical attention to the subject; and shall be happy to receive and consider any suggestions you may think proper to offer, before bringing the subject again under the consideration of the Government.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

Education Office,

Toronto, 22nd Nov., 1862.

E. RYERSON,

Chief Superintendent.

2. JUVENILE OFFENDERS.

Montreal journals call attention to the large number of juvenile offenders who have been tried at the sitting of the Court of Queen's Bench in that city which has just closed. It is said that a majority of the prisoners tried at this session were boys from ten to fifteen years of age. This is a somewhat startling fact, and very naturally suggests the inquiry—how far have the reformatory institutions of the country answered the purpose for which they were founded? The inquiry is of a provincial character, though it does not thrust itself on public attention in Upper Canada with the same degree of force as in the lower section of the Province. The majority of offenders at our *Nisi Prius* courts is, happily, not composed of the younger classes of society. Yet it is a fact that hardly an assize court passes in this city at which the Grand Jury does not refer disapprovingly to the continual intermingling of young and old offenders in the cells of the county jail. That the evil, then, is felt, to some degree in Upper as well as in Lower Canada, is evident. How to remedy this evil may well engage the time and study of social economists and those who have the direction of public affairs.

In England the same matter has lately been the subject of discussion. The question on which opinion differs, is not as