

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

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UNIVERSAL EDUCATION.

THE object of our school system is the free education of all the Children of Nova Scotia. The inception of this noble idea was most happy, and places the author among the true benefactors of his country. The mind that takes in this thought, that sees it in the issues to which it points, associating with it the yet untold blessing of knowledge, finds in the scheme itself, and its results, all the elements of the truly sublime, for assuredly if any thought has a just claim to this distinction, it is that which embraces in its design a well-laid plan for conferring the blessing of education on generations that are yet to be.

The people of Nova Scotia have taken hold of this thought, and it is widely permeating the various grades and sections of the country. To recede from it is an impossibility, to advance is a necessity, and that too, of the present day. To meet this necessity is a tax on the thought and energy of all who are ambitious to share the labor and honor of this great work.

The education of all the children of our land is the work now devolving upon the Government, Commissioners, Trustees and Ratepayers.

The Autumn approaches when the annual arrangements for schools are made, when monies are voted, trustees elected, teachers chosen, and a general review made of the past year with reference to enlarged efforts for the future. In view of such arrangements one of the first questions to engage attention, relates to the ability of the school section to meet the wants associated with the general plan of universal education. Are the school accommodations adequate to the requirements of this plan? If every child should be schooled, then, evidently, there should be school accommodations for every child; there should be school houses to hold all the children. While it is to be confessed, that much yet remains to be done before this point is reached, there is nevertheless such an approximation to it, as even the most enthusiastic a few short years since, scarcely anticipated.

We can scarcely indulge the hope that the progress of the next six years will be as the last six, yet when the people awake to the importance of educating their children, and they assuredly are awakening to this, much larger results ought to be anticipated from the enlarged means at the disposal of a willing people.

It should be the ambition of every one, however associated with the school system, to look well to the inquiry we have suggested. Is there room enough in our school houses for every child?

Our school system imposes this as a duty, and every section should be alive to this duty. There ought not to be a section without a school house. Until this is the case, Council, Commissioners, Trustees, Inspectors, all are at fault, and are only supplying to a part the means of success and elevation in life; while from others this boon is withheld.

But it is not enough that house accommodation be supplied. Having attended to this, the next is to see that in each section there is a good school. A poor school cannot do the work of education. Poor schools are therefore no credit to the country, and bring no blessing to the people. There are those who often amuse their families and friends by presenting pictures of schools of by-gone days in rural districts. The little dilapidated school house doing the manifold duties of a school house, a church, a hall for singing, temperance lectures and other entertainments, sometimes grave, sometimes ludicrous. The teacher that came and boarded round, his little pack on his shoulder, his deep-toned unmistakable brogue, and often strong attachment to the village inn; the old-fashioned lessons, the stern discipline; all this crowds rapidly into one's mind as me-

mory brings up our country schools at a period within the memory of men yet living. If poor schools will educate a people and fit them for the duties and demands of the times, then these old appliances of knowledge ought not to have been supplanted; and the hand that upraised their foundations was ruthless and unhallowed. Would such now—would they ever—educate the country? Poor schools can never do that which we claim as the prerogative of the good. The rich will have such, the poor claim them as their right and should have them.

Good schools leaven society with an infusion into every strata of the social fabric, of the real element of true manhood. They leaven with knowledge, with culture, with expanded thought, and with noble conception of the capabilities of the human soul. Such infusions into the youth of any land will ensure success, and true greatness.

What is the secret of that indomitable energy and power now displayed by Prussia, as her generals roll back the invading legions of France from their Fatherland? It is that in Germany they have a place in school for every youth, and every school is a good one. All this conquest so glorious to Germany has for its starting point the free and efficient day school. We say to parents, trustees, rate-payers, do not tolerate a poor school; it can never do its work, and will only drag as a burden on your section. Doubtless the section that can endure a poor school can support a good one, upon the self evident fact that a good thing is always the cheapest, while a poor article is always dear.

May not a question be here proposed? If school accommodations are provided for every youth, and a good school secured, is it not evident that every child should go to school? Duty is always imperative! Compulsory attendance has been urged by many friends of education; others, more cautious, hesitate and inquire: are we ripe for such a measure? If to educate the youth is the duty of the Government, and if a large expenditure of money provide education for all; if the future of the country is to be what the coming generations make it; then we confess, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that follows, that there should be some means employed by which every child should be constrained to attend school, and share the blessing his country provides.

There is much pertinency in the question: Have parents such a right over their children as to bring them up and cast them in ignorance upon society? Should they be allowed thus to sacrifice, at once, the interests of society and of the individual? However, we believe that this country does not now need such a compulsory law. Provide good schools, and such will operate upon the surrounding community with an attraction sufficiently energetic to draw to its privileges the youth, and awaken emulation in the mind of parents, so that a good school will act by forces inseparable from itself, and by these forces do more effectually the very thing that a compulsory law contemplates. Good schools will therefore supersede the necessity of such constrainings. As we have hinted, there are few Nova Scotians who do not value education, and who, when its privileges are at the door, will not embrace them.

We think that trustees might clothe themselves with an influence that would do much in inducing a more general attendance. The influence of a few christian men in a community, especially a rural one, is often more potent than law, over the poor and humble classes of society, for such, trustees can, if they will, exercise a mighty power for good. Their appearance in the dwellings of the poor, inquiring why the children are not at school—manifesting an interest in the matter, administering words of encouragement, and if needs be, of friendly admonition—will