

this Act, and the best means of efficiently and economically organizing common schools in cities and towns.\* There is one provision of this Act on which I desire to offer a few words of explanation, as its nature and objects have been misapprehended. I refer to the power which it gives to the School authorities of each City and Town to establish "denominational or mixed schools," as they may judge expedient. It has not perhaps occurred to those who have commented on this clause, that a similar provision, under a much more objectionable form, has been incorporated into each of the three Common School Acts for Upper Canada which have been passed since 1840. It has been provided in each of these Acts that *any ten householders* of any school section can demand a separate school, and a portion of the School Fund to support it. I have never seen the necessity for such a provision in connexion with another section of the common school law, which provides that "no child shall be compelled to read any religious book, or attend any religious exercise," contrary to the wishes of his parents or guardians; and besides the apparent inexpediency of this provision of the law, it has been seriously objected to as inequitable, permitting the Roman Catholic persuasion to have a denominational school, but not granting one Protestant persuasion the same privilege. It has been maintained that all religious persuasions should be placed upon equal footing before the law; that although several Protestant persuasions may be agreed as to the translation of the Scriptures which should be used, they are not agreed as to the kind and extent of the religious instruction which should be given,—the very object contemplated in the establishment of a separate school: and therefore each Protestant persuasion should be placed upon the same footing with the Roman Catholic persuasion. This is the case under the provisions of the City and Town School Act, and therefore the authorities of no religious persuasion have opposed or petitioned against it, as some of them did against the previous School Act. But the City and Town Common School Act does not give the power to any one persuasion, much less to any ten householders of it, to demand a separate school: that power is taken from all religious persuasions, and given to the public school authorities appointed by the elected representatives of each town or city.

Under this Act, the efficiency of a Common School Section cannot be destroyed, and the interests of such Section divided, at the pleasure of any ten sectarian householders. The authorities who are responsible for all the schools in each city or town, and for the means necessary to support them, are to judge whether any denominational school at all is expedient—where it may be established if permitted, and what amount of support it shall receive; nor does this Act permit the election of any sectarian trustees, nor the appointment of a teacher by any religious persuasion, even for a denominational school. Every teacher of such school must be approved of by the town or city school authorities. There are, therefore, guards and restrictions connected with the establishment of a denominational school in cities and towns under the new Act, which did not previously exist; it, in fact, leaves the applications or pretensions of each religious persuasion to the judgment of those who provide the greater part of the local School Fund, and relieves the Government and Legislature from the influence of any such sectarian pressure. The effect of this Act has already been to lessen rather than increase denominational schools, while it places all legal persuasions upon the same legal footing, and leaves none of them any plausible ground to attack the law or oppose the school system. My Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada, as well as various decisions and opinions which I have given, amply show that I am far from advocating the establishment of denominational schools; but I was not prepared to condemn what had been unanimously sanctioned by two successive Parliaments, and in adopting that provision to the present System of schools in cities and towns, I know not how it can be placed upon a more equitable and less exceptionable footing.

#### MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

I beg, in conclusion, to refer to the copies of printed Circulars, given in the Appendix to this Report, as to the spirit and manner in which I have endeavoured to carry the Common School Law into

effect, in regard to Districts, Cities, and Towns. In addition to actual experiment, the Law has been subjected to an unprecedented test of popular inquiry and criticism. At public school meetings held during the last autumn in the various districts of Upper Canada, I invited all parties concerned to make any objections, inquiries, or suggestions they might think proper, respecting the provisions of the Common School Act. At those meetings several valuable suggestions were made as to amendments in certain provisions of the law: my own experience and observation have suggested several others. I am required by the Act to submit to Your Excellency such "plans, statements, and suggestions for the improvement of common schools, and relating to education in Upper Canada," as I may deem useful and expedient; but I think it will be more convenient and advisable for me to submit such plans and suggestions in another document, which I hope to lay before Your Excellency in the course of a few days.

I have the honour to be, Your Excellency's  
Most obedient and humble servant,

E. RYERSON.

EDUCATION OFFICE,  
Toronto, August, 1849.

## JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

TORONTO, AUGUST, 1849.

### NOBLE PROPOSAL FOR THE PROMOTION OF EDUCATION IN UPPER CANADA.

We have been accustomed to transmit a few copies of the *Journal of Education* to Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, from one of whom we have received by the steamer *Cambria* the following note containing the benevolent and most magnificent proposition of promoting the establishment of 500 schools in Upper Canada. In our next number (if possible) we will fully comply with the request made. In the mean time we shall be thankful to any person interested in the great object proposed for suggestions on the subject, between this and the 30th of September.

To the Proprietor of the *Journal of Education*, Toronto, Canada.

MY DEAR SIR,—It will afford me much pleasure in placing at your command a special sum towards the promotion of education in the Colony, in the opening of 500 schools in the interior, for a sound religious and scientific education.

You will be so good, My Dear Sir, as to prepare a statement at length of the probable sum necessary for this object with a statement of the localities where you would recommend the opening of the same.

Besides the special sum I give for this object, I will endeavour to enlist the patronage of friends in behalf of your plan; and I have not the smallest doubt such an amount will be raised as will enable you to enter upon the most extensive operations in all directions. The details of your plans had better embody a special impression, as doubtless it will be perused with great interest, and attended with the most happy, the most beneficial, the most permanent results.

It certainly seems now impossible to resist the conclusion that the time is now come for this important question engaging the most serious consideration.

Would you recommend the opening also of Agricultural schools for the specific training of those desirous of the same?

I am,

My Dear Sir,

Yours, &c.,

LONDON, July 20th, 1849.

M. P.

\* See *Journal of Education for U. C.*, vol. I., pp. 16-24.