

QUESTIONS TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS.

Is there a School in operation in your District? If so, do your children attend it regularly? Is it not sad if, in a civilized country at this period of the world's history, and with a public provision for the support of Schools, any neighbourhood should so far forget its own interests as to be for any considerable time destitute of the means of education? And is it not still more sad to see children wandering idly about, and growing up in ignorance when there is a School near their door?

Are you too poor to establish a school? Surely the united means of the district can do something towards it, and a really poor district may receive some additional aid from the public grant. If any money can be saved from anything not absolutely necessary, the education of the children should receive a large share of it. It is a poor economy to let the soil lie barren, if any sacrifice can procure seed for it; and the cultivation of those rational powers on which man depends for his progress in every useful effort, is of no less importance than that of the ground.

Are you a disunited people, and being of different minds on public or religious grounds, or having personal quarrels, do you make that a reason for neglecting the cause of education? Is it not truly wise and reasonable to injure your own offspring because you hate your neighbour, or think he hates you; or to sacrifice the best interests of the community at the shrine of party difference? It is time that this folly were at an end; and that all men felt that it is at once most creditable and profitable to any man or party to show by deeds that his views or principles do not prevent him from uniting with others in advancing public interests. The man who refuses to co-operate with those who are not his friends or not of his party, for the common good, pursues a course at once traitorous to his country, and suicidal to himself and his party.

Perhaps you cannot find a good teacher. This is a serious difficulty. The work of teaching is arduous and difficult, and requires great skill, patience, judgment and rectitude. It is a great mistake to suppose that lazy persons, or persons of small ability, are good enough to educate even small children. It is good to have a high idea of the importance of the teacher's office. But let not this discourage. Let the Trustees make diligent enquiry, and let the people offer as great inducements as they can afford, and I have no doubt some faithful and competent man or woman may be found. If not, perhaps the commissioners or superintendent could find a suitable person. The difficulty should make you appreciate the importance of a Normal School, which would enable young persons, perhaps from your own districts, on easy terms, to fit themselves for the work.

Possibly there is a school in your district, but you are too poor to take the benefit of it; or perhaps you can pay fees only for a small part of the year, or for a portion of your children at a time. This is a case demanding much sympathy, both

on its own account and for the sake of the country. The poor man who is bringing up an industrious, respectable and intelligent family is a great benefactor to his country, and if he be prevented from doing so, not only he and his children, but the public too, experience serious loss. There is, however, at least one resource,—you can send your children to school as free scholars; and it is not a very rational pride that refuses to do this when need requires. The fact that either you or your neighbours may be in such circumstances, should at least induce you to think of the importance of having Free Schools, supported by a general tax upon the property of the community.

But you cannot spare the labour of your children. Inquire, however, if it be not injustice to your children, to break them in to the active work of life, before their minds and bodies have acquired sufficient growth and training; would you break in any domestic animal so early, that its body would be dwarfed and deformed for life; and if not, is it justifiable to stop short the mental improvement of children, and perhaps, by forcing them prematurely into hard labour, condemn them for life to the dwarfishness of ignorance and mental weakness that shall incapacitate them from doing much good to themselves or others. Remember that good school instruction is just as practical as the learning of a trade, and if your children must work early, send them to school early, and keep them there constantly while they can go.

But perhaps you have a school in operation, and you are one of its supporters. In that case let us inquire into its condition and management. Do you often visit it to inquire into its state? Do you send your children regularly and punctually, and do you train them to respect the school and the teacher, and to study diligently whatever is appointed to them? Is the teacher respected, encouraged and supported as the importance of the work demands, or are you so foolish as to suppose that any man can labour from day to day, with energy, devotion and faithfulness, amid chilling neglect, at "thankless work for scanty pay."

Is the school house a good building, comfortably seated and well ventilated? Has it a space of ground as a play ground for the children? Is it sufficiently supplied with fuel, and is it in its internal cleanliness and neatness fitted to give the children high ideas on these subjects? Is it provided with blackboards, wall maps or globes, and are the pupils well supplied with books? Is it in short, such a place that teacher and pupils can work in it with ease, comfort and animation? Look in next time you pass, and inquire if these things be so. If not, there is a demand for exertion—public, united and earnest exertion—to remedy these deficiencies.

Perhaps you may be disposed to inquire—"what have you to do with me and my children? may I not do with them as I please?" True, they are your own, but the laws of your country do not allow you to destroy or degrade them, or to bring them to be useless or injurious to the

community. The laws enacted by your countrymen, might indeed as justly punish you for depriving your children of the means of instruction, as for maltreating or destroying them. The laws, however, providing means of instruction, trust to your own affection and good sense to use the facilities prepared for you; and now they only gently hint to you, through the officer appointed to the oversight of this matter, the nature of your duties, and ask you to employ a portion of your talents, your means and your time, in the great work of providing at least a good common school training for every young person growing up in the country, in order that the country may grow and flourish in all departments of useful and honorable exertion, and that you and your children along with others may enjoy the benefits.

THE RAILWAY & EDUCATION.

All parties seem agreed that we must have the great British American Railway, but little has yet been said of an educational element that enters largely into the question of its ultimate success. Just as in opening a canal between two seas, it is necessary to consider their relative levels, so in opening the great iron thoroughfares of nations we must think of the intellectual levels of the countries which they will connect. The result of this enquiry will determine whether, as a people, we are to be the masters or the servants of those with whom we shall be connected. On the one hand, we may see all positions of respectability and emolument, and all the most valuable resources of this rich country falling into the hands of more intelligent foreigners.—On the other we may find ourselves borne down and outvoted by swarms of uneducated strangers.—The only effectual preventive of these opposite evils, is good and universally diffused education, such as shall effectually provide for the practical training of our youth, and of the children of every poor emigrant. With, or before the Railway, we should have the Free School. This alone can enable our young Nova Scotians to stand erect in presence of our enquiring and intelligent New England neighbors, and can break the shackles of ignorance from the minds of every poor family that may reach our shores.

NORMAL SCHOOLS.

On the 2nd July the corner stone of the new building for the Provincial Normal School of Upper Canada, was laid with great ceremony, in presence of the Gov. General and a large concourse of spectators. It is to be a noble building, of 184 feet frontage, and will cost, with its site, £15,000. Lower Canada, we hear, has given a grant for a similar purpose.—Connecticut has just dedicated a splendid building to the same use. Michigan and North Carolina have each made appropriations for State Normal Schools; and Massachusetts which already has three, has voted a grant for a fourth. So the good work goes on. Nova Scotia without a Normal School, will soon be behind every other country that has a system of public instruction.