

PUBLIC MEN AND PUBLIC LIFE IN CANADA

introduction of municipal councils in 1852, and the increased powers given by the Legislature to the people to elect boards of trustees to manage and improve their educational affairs. In the early days of settlement the Public Schools were comparatively few and poor, but it deserves to be recorded to their credit, that many of the early teachers were men of such force of character, and so practical and conscientious in their teaching, that they turned out better scholars than very many of those who enjoy the more learned and ornamental system of the present day.

Nevertheless, the surroundings of all but the wealthy classes, and especially of the farmers, were rude and backward, judged by present standards. The houses of the latter were scantily, often indeed roughly furnished, and a bit of green sod, or a clump of trees or shrubs, or a bed of flowers to brighten up the front yard, was a veritable oasis in the desert.

At harvest time the scythe and the cradle had not generally given place to the mower and reaper. The latter were for some time regarded as luxuries rather than necessities, and on looking back and remembering the immense crops of wheat then raised—it being wheat or nothing in those days—it seems marvellous how it could have been all cut by hand with such unwieldy tools. At church, at weddings and other social events, imported goods were rapidly coming in for wear, but in the country Canadian homespun and the coarse tweeds and other woollens made at the old-fashioned woollen mills were still generally