

Dawson having taken their places on the platform with the Superintendent of Education, the Reverend Dr. Leach, Canon of the Cathedral and Vice-Principal of the University was requested by the Chairman to open the meeting with prayer:

The Rev. Canon Leach having offered up a prayer, the Chairman rose to introduce the proceedings, and was received with great applause. He said:—Before any other proceeding, I think it my duty to communicate to this meeting, the following letter from His Excellency the Governor General:—

TORONTO, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, }  
February 6th 1857. }

Sir,—I have received your letter of the 5th instant, inviting me to be present on the 3rd of March next, at the opening of the two Normal Schools established in Montreal. Unfortunately the fact that the Legislative Session commences on the 26th February, makes it necessary for me to remain at Toronto, as I cannot undertake to absent myself for a few days so soon after the opening of Parliament. I regret this the more, whilst I appreciate very highly the future usefulness of the institutions about to be opened to the public. At the same time, I do full justice to the zeal you have shown in their complete organization.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

EDMUND HEAD.

I must add, that the Premier of our Provincial Cabinet, the Hon. Colonel Taché, the Hon. Mr. Cartier, Attorney General, and the Hon. Mr. Lemieux, the Commissioner of Public Works, have desired me to express to this meeting, the great disappointment they feel at their being prevented, by their official duties, from attending. Other members of both houses of Parliament, and my worthy predecessor in office, Dr. Meilleur, have written to me to the same effect. The inauguration of the two Normal Schools that are this day thrown open to the youth of Lower Canada is of the greatest importance to the welfare of this country; and the anxiety shown by His Excellency the Governor General, and the distinguished gentlemen whom I have alluded to, is not to be wondered at. This event—as important in the history of Canada as the celebration of the opening of any of our Railroads or the storming of any fort or citadel—this event is nothing more than one fact, in a succession of facts, that are marking the steady and unswerving progress of Canada. Since the opening of the first School at Quebec, in 1632, what a change has taken place! That first School was conducted by Father Lejeune. The second year of its existence, it had but twenty pupils, some of them Indian boys, whom the Missionaries had collected together from the wigwams in the forest, perhaps poor and helpless children, whom their parents thought unfit for the noble pursuits of war or hunting. Others, hardy peasant boys, whom their sires, simple-hearted emigrants from Brittany, or from Normandy, sent from their farms at great distances every day to reap in the town—a new kind of harvest, unknown, perhaps, to themselves in the old country. Such was Father Lejeune's school, and, considering the great work he was then beginning, dreaming, as perhaps he did, of the great edifice, the corner-stone of which he was laying, well might the good Father have written as he did to his superior in France, that he would not change his class for the best university of Europe. And now we have, according to official statistics, 5 universities, (3 in Lower Canada and 2 in Upper Canada,) 35 colleges, (25 in Lower Canada and 10 in Upper Canada,) 208 grammar schools and academies, (114 in Lower Canada and 94 in Upper Canada,) 4 normal schools, (3 in Lower Canada and 1 in Upper Canada,) 6,335 model and elementary schools, (3,599 in Upper Canada and 2,736 in Lower Canada,) giving altogether a total of 6,578 educational institutions, of which 3,710 are in Upper Canada and 2,868 in Lower Canada, with a total number of pupils of 373,586, of which 210,817 are in Upper Canada and 131,769 in Lower Canada.

I am aware that strength does not always side with numbers, and I would not be prepared to boast of those statistics, encouraging as they are, were I not convinced that great progress has been made in the method of teaching in our common schools, and had not our colleges and academies given themselves the best evidence of their efficiency, by the many men of learning whom they have produced, and of whom I see such a brilliant array in this hall. If, in the number of schools and the number of pupils, Lower Canada appears at present not to equal the other section of the Province, it must be remembered that our system of common schools had found great difficulties to contend with in establishing itself, through the imperfections of our Municipal institutions, and that we are rapidly gaining ground, and may expect soon to approach the lofty figures

to which our brethren in the West have so happily attained. As to the religious and moral tendency of the education given, it is well tested by the statistics of crime which by recent observation have been found less appalling in Lower Canada than in any other section of this continent.

The Jacques Cartier Normal School opened this day with 18 male pupil-teachers on the roll; McGill Normal School with 5 male pupil-teachers and 25 female pupil-teachers, and the Laval Normal School—which, I hope, we shall be able to inaugurate in a few weeks, with something like 20 male pupil-teachers—as a beginning, will complete our system of public instruction, by placing, as it were, between our colleges and primary schools, what I may call *reservoirs* which will distribute to the latter the streams of knowledge they will receive from the former. The word Normal, as every one knows, comes from the Latin word *norma*, which means rule. It is very much like the word *forma*, from which you have your word form. Rule is to the moral world, what form or shape is to the physical world. It is impossible for our imagination to conceive a physical object without a shape, and it is equally impossible to dream of any moral being, or of anything in the moral world, without a rule that governs it. Religion, philosophy, jurisprudence, are collections of rules for the guidance of mankind, in the various circumstances of life. Religion, of course, is the rule of all rules, given by God himself; it is the great normal school of humanity, by which preceding generations of men had been enabled to train other generations to the love of God and of mankind, and to the practice of virtue, thereby enabling them to fulfil every holy and pious duty. If anything requires rule, it is certainly education. Nothing could be more dangerous than spontaneous or capricious action on the part of each individual teacher. Although nature has imparted to parents an instinctive knowledge of the art of teaching, they have still a great deal to learn from experience, and those who do not apply themselves earnestly and strenuously to the work, fail most lamentably. But teachers, who have to supply the place of parents, without having received, in relation to other children than their own, the natural gift with which Providence has blessed the father and mother of every family, and who do not find in children, to the same extent, that natural affection, that implicit confidence, that veneration in which love and fear are so happily blended, and which parents can turn to such good account,—teachers, require training before they can venture to assume functions so delicate and so important—before they can become, if I may be permitted to use the term—the artificial parents of their pupils. Such training, however, cannot be completed by precept alone. Here, as elsewhere, theory requires to be confirmed by experience, and the practice of teaching must go, *pari passu*, with the expounding of its rules. This is nothing more than what is done in relation to all other professions. A young man who wishes to be admitted to the Bar, does not confine himself to the lectures of his professors, or to the reading of his books; he attends Courts of Law, and so familiarises himself with the practice of his profession. The same thing takes place with the student of medicine, who follows his professor in the hospital. All kinds of trades, even the meanest, are prepared by some apprenticeship. A Normal School, therefore, must consist of two distinct departments. The one, the Normal School proper, where the rules of the art of teaching are expounded; the other, the Model School, where they are illustrated by practice. Such institutions have now become most popular in every country.—They were first organized in Germany; France then adopted them, and Ireland followed. They are now numerous throughout the whole of North America, and have recently become prosperous in England where they had been introduced many years ago. Upper Canada, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward's Island have preceded us in the establishment of Normal Schools; and had it not been that our numerous colleges, and still more so, our numerous girls' academies, have supplied in part, the absence of such institutions, it would be difficult to comprehend how we have arrived at our present condition in relation to public instruction—having but few efforts to make to stand equal to other more highly favored nations.—The McGill Normal School is chiefly intended to meet the wants of the whole Protestant population of Lower Canada. As to its material condition, it has been placed in a building, an inspection of which will show that nothing has been spared to render it worthy of the great and noble object we have in view. It is located in a commanding position, from which students may contemplate the rapid progress of this great commercial city, as it extends itself in every direction; from which they may view the chimneys of its manufactories and the glittering spires and domes of its churches and of its many monuments. As to the moral direction of the McGill Normal School, it comes under a code of general rules prepared for all our Normal Schools, and of special regulations, which, from time to time, will