

II. Papers on Teachers' Associations.

1. UPPER CANADA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

The fifth annual session of the Upper Canada Teachers' Association was opened in the Temperance Hall, Temperance Street, in this city, on the 8th Aug. Dr. Daniel Wilson, the President of the Association, opened the proceedings of the session by prayer. The Secretary then read the roll of officers, and also the resolutions discussed at last meeting; also several letters of apology from the Institute of Central Canada, informing the Association that Mr. Thorburn and Mr. Richard Phillips were a delegation from that Association; a letter from Rev. Dr. McCaul, regretting his inability to be present; from the Teachers' Associations of the counties of Durham and Brant, in reference to resolutions to be brought before the Association; from Hon. W. F. McMaster, Rev. Dr. Willis, and Prof. Young, regretting that circumstances will not allow of their addressing the Association, as they had been invited to do. Mr. R. Alexander, of Newmarket, appointed at last meeting of the Association as a delegate to represent Canada at the sixth annual meeting of the Teachers' Association of the United States, held at Ogdensburg, was called upon, and read a somewhat lengthy report of his visit and of the proceedings of that Association. With reference to the order of proceedings in the Association, he could only report one feature as in advance of their own method of doing business, and that was, that a paper was there read by some member upon each subject discussed, as an opening of the discussion. At the afternoon session, Dr. Wilson delivered the following address:—The gratifying duty again devolves on me, as your President, of welcoming the friends of education to this, the 5th Annual Convention of the Teachers of Upper Canada. Young as our educational system is; young, indeed, as is the country for which it is provided, it may be questioned if we are not to blame for undue tardiness, rather than for an excess of zeal, in thus seeking to organize the teachers of Canada into a deliberative body, for the consideration of all questions affecting their profession. Certain it is, at any rate, that the time is fully ripe for such conjoint action; and it affords me no slight pleasure to be able to congratulate the members of this Association on the evidence of its growing strength and efficiency as an adjunct of our comprehensive educational system.

"The training and acquirements of teachers; the selection and sanctioning of text books; the apportionment of school funds; the organization of union, model, and central high schools; and the powers vested in superintendents, inspectors, and trustees—these and many similar questions are annually brought under the consideration of city, county, or provincial boards; or submitted anew to the Legislative Assembly of the Province. Deeply as each one of you is interested in such questions, your individual opinion can carry little weight; but it is scarcely possible to over-estimate your influence as a united body; and I trust the time is not far distant when every teacher of Upper Canada will consider it his duty no less than his privilege to be a member of this association. With hearty co-operation on the part of all, and your deliberations conducted with the prudence and wisdom becoming an assembly of educated men, your decisions cannot fail to carry weight, and to influence the future course of legislative action. Union is the source of strength throughout the whole social fabric. National and friendly Societies, Boards of Trade, Agricultural Associations, and other kindred organizations, suffice to show how thoroughly this is recognized in every sphere of life; but no class of men stands so much in need of it as your own. The duties of your profession keep you apart. Your battles are fought and your triumphs achieved single-handed; and too frequently, when the best interests of the profession are brought in jeopardy, by some overbearing official, or mercenary Board of Trustees, the victim succumbs to their injustice without even a consciousness of sympathy, much less with the hearty support of his brethren. Every teacher, moreover, experiences difficulties in the progress of his work; and the more thoroughly he is gifted with all the natural and acquired requisites of a good teacher, the more frequently will he find his practices fall short of the high standard of excellency which his mind had conceived. But gathered thus in annual convention, such difficulties are the very vantage ground for future progress. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The difficulties which have impeded his solitude will here furnish a basis for useful discussion; elicit the accumulated knowledge derived from varied experience; and stimulate the indolent and indifferent to a sense of virtuous shame at their own self-complacent ease.

"The members of our profession occupy a peculiar position in every state of society; but nowhere more so than in a young community like this. Isolated and apart, each of you has been absor-

bed in his special duties since last we met here for mutual council; not forgetful, I will believe, of the great issues which your duties involve. As teachers of youth, it is scarcely possible for us to exaggerate our responsibilities. With the young and impressible mind spread out before us, as a pure tablet on which we may write what we will; to us especially must the Divine maxim come home with peculiar force, that "for every idle word we must give an account." Education is not merely that which is derived from the text books which Councils of Public Instruction or University Senates may authorize. It is daily and hourly progressing amid all the impressions which the susceptible mind of youth derives through every gateway of knowledge which the senses supply. The courtesy of the gentleman and the high principle of the Christian teach by every word and action; and no one is thoroughly qualified for his high calling as the instructor of the rising generation who does not superadd to all else that school inspectors, trustees, or professors may certify of him, the indispensable requisites of the Christian gentleman. Courtesy, and that high principle which is derived from the religion of the heart, smooth a thousand difficulties in the school-room; and, daily exhibited there, give a tone to its social life, of far more real value than much that is dwelt upon by modern educationists, as foremost among the essential acquirements of youth.

The young mind may be compared to a calm, pellucid stream which reflects alike the sunshine and the shadow, and derives all its colour from the objects that surrounded it. How much then does it become the teacher to guard that pure mirror from being clouded by the storms of passion, or defaced with the soil of impurity.

"The personal influence of a conscientious teacher, unconsciously operating in every word of encouragement or reproof, trains the youthful mind to yield to generous impulses, and develops into healthful activity the moral principles, without which mere intellectual culture may be a curse instead of a blessing. I feel as though I owed an apology to you for dwelling on ideas so trite, and, as I may presume, familiar to you all. Nevertheless, I could name masters who have fallen under my own observation, of cultivated minds, and gifted with many special requirements of the teacher, who mar all their work by the lack of that genial courtesy which is the very life and sunshine of the school-room.

"During a recent visit to Boston, I was deeply interested in the discussion with Dr. Howe—so well known to all as the teacher of the remarkable blind and deaf mute, Laura Bridgeman—on the condition and prospects of the coloured population of Canada. The influence of the prejudices of caste, especially in the school-room, was freely debated, in reference to Canadian and New England schools. "But, after all," he added, "I must confess much seemed to me, during my visit to Canada, to depend with you on the personal feeling of the teacher. Where he contemptuously designated his coloured pupils as niggers, his prejudices found a responsive echo in every unreasoning little aristocrat. But," he added, "whereas in the chief school in Hamilton, its excellent teacher, Mr. Macallum, recognized no other difference in the coloured child than that which called for a greater exercise of tender courtesy and help, to lift him up from his degradation to the common birthright of humanity, the effect was conspicuous in the friendly rivalry of white and black children in all the emulations of the school and the play-ground."

No better illustration could be found of that undesigned and unconscious education which we are daily communicating in the school-room or the college-hall. Yet what education can be more important than that on which may depend the social relations of diverse sections of the community? Sectarian jealousies, prejudices of race, of caste, or creed; elements of disunion that go far to counteract the healthful working of our free institutions; may all be fostered by the idle words of a rancorous partizan, or softened and eradicated by the gentle courtesies of a sincere Christian, undesignedly exhibited day by day in the intercourse even with children of tender years.

Let the consciousness of such far-reaching influences stimulate and encourage the humblest member of our profession in his arduous and often ill-requited task. Some of you gather here to aid in our common deliberations, from the log-house or homely frame-building of our remotest clearings, where savage haunted wastes are being reclaimed to the service of civilization, and where by the wise providence of our national system, you are called to cast in the first seeds into the intellectual soil; to claim the infant mind as a heritage of that civilization of the future; and amid many privations and difficulties, are inaugurating that education of the new generation which is the indispensable basis of the well-being of a free people. I may confess now, after a sojourn of twelve years has made me a thorough Canadian; that the memory of many loved friends, and the charms of Edinburgh's unrivalled social circles, long held me back from a complete naturalization in my new-