

The Canadian system of education, in those main features of it which are common to both provinces, makes no pretence of being original. It confesses to a borrowed and eclectic character.\* The neighbouring States of New York and Massachusetts, the Irish, English, and Prussian systems, have all contributed elements, which have been combined with considerable skill, and the whole administered with remarkable energy, by those to whom its construction was confided. It appears to me, however, that its fundamental ideas were first developed by Mr. (now, I believe, Sir Arthur) Buller, in the masterly report on the state of education in Canada, which he addressed in the year 1838 to Lord Durham, the then Governor General, in which he sketched the programme of a system, "making," as he candidly admitted, "no attempt at originality, but keeping constantly in view, as models, the system in force in Prussia and the United States, particularly the latter, as being most adapted to the circumstances of the colony."<sup>†</sup>

As a result of Mr. Buller's recommendations, (not, however, till after the legislative union of the provinces which Lord Durham had suggested as the best remedy for the various political ills under which they severally laboured), a law was passed in 1841, covering both provinces in its range, for the establishment and maintenance of public schools. It provided for the appointment of a Superintendent of Education for the whole province, with two Assistant Superintendents under him, one for each of the sections. A sum of \$200,000 was appropriated for the support of schools, which was to be distributed among the several municipal districts, in proportion to the number of children of school age in each of them; \$80,000 being assigned to Upper and \$120,000 to Lower Canada, such being the then ratio of their respective populations.

The circumstances of the two sections, however, particularly in the proportions of Roman Catholics to Protestants in each, and the extent to which the Roman Catholic religion may be said to be established in Lower Canada, were soon found to be so different, that insuperable difficulties were encountered in working a combined system under one central administration, and in 1845 the law was changed. The nominal office of Chief Superintendent was abolished, and the entire executive administration of the system was confined to the sectional Superintendents, and the provinces for all educational purposes again became separated. The law itself was thoroughly revised, and adapted to the peculiar wants of each province as ascertained by experience; and ever since, there have been two systems at work, identical in their leading idea, differing, sometimes widely, in their details, administered by independent executives, and without any organic relations at all.

After giving an elaborate analysis of the Upper Canada School system, Mr. Fraser proceeds: Such, in its leading features, is the constitution of the Upper Canada system of common schools; but before we proceed to observe the manner and record the results of its practical working, it is proper to premise that it is a purely permissive, not a compulsory system, and its adoption by any municipality is entirely voluntary. That, under these free conditions, it has succeeded in the course of 20 years in covering the province with a net-work of schools, and that in the year 1863 it had on its schools' rolls, for a greater or less period of time, the names of 339,817 children, between 5 and 16 years of age, out of a school population within those ages of 412,367, is perhaps the strongest of all proofs that could be adduced that, whether perfect or not in all its parts, it is at least adapted to the wants of the people, and commends itself both to their sentiments and their good sense.

As it was vacation time when I visited Hamilton, I had no opportunity of estimating the character of Canadian instruction there. The opinion I have formed of it I derived from what I saw in the schools at Toronto, at Ottawa, and at Clifton. The phenomena were so very uniform and similar, that even with so limited an experience one may venture to speak generally. I could not help being struck by the correspondence of the results produced by a Canadian school to those produced by an ordinary English elementary school, and by the contrast that both systems present to the more brilliant and showy, but perhaps less solid and permanent,

\* "The chief outlines of the system are similar to those in other countries. We are indebted, in a great degree, to New York for the machinery of our schools, to Massachusetts for the principle on which they are supported, to Ireland for an admirable series of common school books, and to Germany for our system of Normal School training. All, however, are so modified and blended to suit the circumstances of the country, that they are no longer exotic, but 'racy of the soil' (*Sketch of Education in Upper and Lower Canada, by J. George Hodgins, p. 3*). "There is one feature of the English system"—since abandoned by us—"which I have thought very admirable, and which I have incorporated into that of Upper Canada—namely, that of supplying the schools with maps, apparatus, and libraries" (*Dr. Ryerson's Report for 1857, p. 32*).

† *Mr. Buller's Report, p. 21.*

acquirements of an American school. The range of subjects taught and learnt in the best schools in Toronto does not go beyond the standard of most of our town schools, nor indeed of many of our best village schools. Reading, writing, and cyphering, geography and history, English grammar, including etymology (to which much attention is paid with manifest advantage), the elements of geometry, algebra, and mensuration, a little drawing and a little singing; that is all that I found constituting the circle of instruction in one of the most advanced Toronto schools. The chief specialities of the Canadian methods were long lessons, generally a continuous hour to each subject; in reading, the requirement that the pupils should possess themselves of the *matter* of the lesson; in teaching grammar, the stress laid on the distinction between prefixes, roots, and affixes, and on etymology generally; and, generally, the discouragement given to rapid answering and the time allowed for reflection and thought. Entering a Canadian school, with American impressions fresh upon the mind, the first feeling is one of disappointment. One misses the life, the motion, the vivacity, the precision—in a word, the brilliancy. But as you stay, and pass both teacher and pupils in review, the feeling of disappointment gives way to a feeling of surprise. You find that this plain, unpretending teacher has the power, and has successfully used the power, of communicating real, solid knowledge and good sense to those youthful minds, which, if they do not move rapidly, at least grasp, when they do take hold, firmly. If there is an appearance of what the Americans call "loose ends" in the school, it is only an appearance. The knowledge is stowed away compactly enough in its proper compartments, and is at hand, not perhaps very promptly, but pretty surely, when wanted. To set off against their quickness, I heard many random answers in American schools; while, *per contra* to the slowness of the Canadian scholar, I seldom got a reply very wide of the mark. The whole teaching was homely, but it was sound. I chanced to meet a schoolmaster at Toronto who had kept school in Canada, and was then keeping school at Haarlem, New York, and he gave Canadian education the preference for thoroughness and solid results. Each system—or rather I should say the result of each system, seems to harmonize best with the character of the respective peoples. The Canadian chooses his type of school as the Vicar of Wakefield's wife chose her wedding-gown, and as the Vicar of Wakefield chose his wife, "not for a fine glossy surface, but for such qualities as will wear well." I cannot say, judging from the schools which I have seen—which I take to be types of their best schools—that their choice has been misplaced, or that they have any reason to be disappointed with the results. I speak of the general character of education to which they evidently lean. That the actual results should be unequal, often in the widest possible degree, is true of education under all systems, everywhere.

One of the most interesting features in the Canadian system, is the way in which it has endeavoured to deal with what we find to be one of our most formidable difficulties, the religious difficulty. In Canada it has been dealt with by the use of two expedients; one by prescribing certain rules and regulations, which it was hoped would allow of religious instruction being given in the schools without introducing sectarianism or hurting consciences; the other by permitting, in certain cases, the establishment of "separate," which are practically denominational, and in fact Roman Catholic schools.

The permission under certain circumstances to establish separate, that is, denominational, schools, is a peculiar feature of the system both of Upper and Lower Canada. Dr. Ryerson thinks that the admission of the principle is a thing to be regretted, though at the same time he considers that the disadvantages which it entails entirely rest with those who avail themselves of its provisions, and he would not desire to see any coercion used either to repeal or modify them.

#### THE GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.

The idea of the grammar school, as we have already seen, was historically prior in its conception in Canada to the idea of the common school. So long ago as 1807 an Act of the Legislature established a classical and mathematical school in each of the eight districts into which Upper Canada was then divided, and endowed them with an income of \$400 each. The present venerable Bishop of Toronto was the Principal of one of these original grammar schools.

The present county grammar school system, however, dates from 1853, and had, therefore, been in operation ten years at the date of the latest Report that is before me—the Report for 1863. It has been subjected more than once to modifications in detail; and a new set of stringent regulations were to come into operation on the 1st of January, in this present year (1866), for the purpose of infusing greater life and efficiency into what is felt to be still the most "feeble and defective part" in the organization of Canadian schools.

The intention of the grammar school, which is outside and inde-