

The educational history of Ontario naturally divides itself into three periods, viz :

1. The early settlement, or United Empire Loyalist period.
2. The period preceding the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1840.
3. The period since that union, and including the administration of the Education Department by the Rev. Dr. Ryerson, down to 1876.

The first and second periods, I shall touch upon very briefly in this abstract, omitting all but a brief reference to the Colonial Chapter in the history of education on this continent.

During the early settlement period, and that preceding the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1840, two social forces (which took an educational form later on) were slowly shaping themselves into an antagonistic attitude to each other. This was apparent from the position which the representatives of these forces assumed on the religious, political, and other questions of the day. As yet the question of an educational system for the Province—beyond that of a University and district Grammar Schools—had, down to 1836, taken no definite shape in the public mind. Indeed, such a thing, as we now regard it, was not deemed practical, except by a few leading men who were years in advance of their times.

The first real systematic efforts put forth in America to promote popular education began in New England, and thence spread in all directions. In 1635, the first school was opened in Boston ; and, in 1647, the first legislative enactment in favour of schools was passed in Massachusetts. In 1670, the Governor of Connecticut declared that "one-fourth of the revenue was devoted to schools." Hon. John Eaton, United States Commissioner of Education, in his valuable and comprehensive report for 1875, says :—

"History, with hardly a dissenting voice, accorded to the English colonists of New England the credit of having developed those forms of action, in reference to the education of children, which contained more than any other the distinct features of the systems adopted in this country."

Trained in such an educational school, and animated with the educational zeal of these old colonial times, the "United Empire Loyalists" brought with them into Canada their love for education and their devotion to the sovereign.

The U. E. Loyalists removed to British America in 1783, the year of their exile. Most of them settled in Upper Canada, along the north shore of the Upper St. Lawrence, and the corresponding margin of Lakes Ontario and Erie. They brought with them from the old colonies their educational traditions and their devotion to the flag of the Empire. Those of them who had settled along the Bay of Quinté, united in 1789, in framing a memorial to