

THE  
EDUCATIONAL RECORD  
OF THE  
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

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No. 6.

JUNE, 1881.

Vol. I.

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THE BRITISH AND CANADIAN SCHOOL, MONTREAL.

A CHAPTER FROM THE EARLY HISTORY OF POPULAR EDUCATION IN  
THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

*(Continued.)*

The sectarian difficulty being thus happily overcome, the Society proceeded to consider the financial problem. How may popular education be gratuitously, or almost gratuitously, imparted without too heavy demands on the supporters and patrons of schools? The answer, it was supposed, had been satisfactorily given by Bell and Lancaster in the invention of the monitorial system. If children could be brought to teach one another, the cost of instruction might be made very small. Knowledge, imparted to the pupils of the highest class by the schoolmaster himself, might dribble down from scholar to scholar, until the youngest pupils should be saturated with it at an insignificant expense of time, trouble, and money. Of this plan Dr. Bell said:—

“The system has no parallel in scholastic history. In a school, it gives to the master the hundred eyes of Argus, the hundred hands of Briareus, and the wings of Mercury. By multiplying his ministers at pleasure, it gives him indefinite powers; in other words, it enables him to instruct as many pupils as his school-room will contain.”

To quote from the title page of Dr. Bell's first pamphlet on the subject, published in 1797, “it was a system by which a school or family may teach itself under the superintendence of the