

of Russia and other autocratic countries. 3rd. a union of the voluntary and State system, as in England and other European countries by a state and local system; 4th, a governmental and municipal system combined, as in Canada.

With the knowledge that all human systems are inherently imperfect, it becomes a question with educationists which of these four educational organizations would in its practical operation be most free from this inherent imperfection, and which, by a judicious system of "checks and guarantees," would reduce the evils of this imperfection to a minimum. The voluntary system we are compelled to dismiss as impracticable in a mixed community like ours. The second, or purely official system, is alien to our institutions. The third involves somewhat of a contradiction—since the State system must necessarily, by its fixed laws, embarrass, if not forbid, the freedom which is characteristic of a voluntary system. (This evil is now being felt in England.) The fourth is therefore the only one that is practicable among us. Of the operation of this system, in its relation to the State, we have now had large experience, and can, therefore, discuss without prejudice or feeling, some of the defects which it is alleged adhere to such a system.

The question of flexibility in education has been frequently raised in the United States—a country in which an official or State system combined with the local, has, perhaps, of all other countries the fullest scope and means for the freest development. The flexibility which is there permitted, the lightness of State control, which is nevertheless supplemented under official sanction by the constant discussion which every part of the school system undergoes at Teachers' County and State Conventions are, in so democratic a country, its greatest safeguards. With us the case is to some extent different. Like the English system, ours in Ontario is in its legal requirements somewhat rigid, and owing partly to the absence of official participation in convention meetings is wanting in flexibility and freedom. Under these circumstances, the opinions of recent English writers on this subject are valuable. What these opinions are, may be gathered from a spirited article on "*State Education: A Help or Hindrance?*" by Mr. A. Herbert, in the July number of the *Fortnightly Review*. Mr. Herbert says:

"At present we have one system of education applied to the whole of England. The local character of the school boards deceives us, and makes us believe that some variety of freedom of action exists. In reality they have only power to apply an established system. They must use the same class of teachers; . . . the children must be prepared for the same examinations and pass in the same standards. . . .

Now if any one wishes to realize the full mischief which this uniformity works, let him think of what would be the result of a uniform method being established everywhere—in religion, art, science, or any trade or profession. Let him remember that canon of Mr. Herbert Spencer, so pregnant with meaning that progress is difference. Therefore, if you desire progress, you must not make it difficult for men to think and act differently; you must not dull their senses with routine or stamp their imagination with the official pattern of some

great department If, for example, a man holding new views about education can at once address himself to those in sympathy with him, can at once [as in the case of the new departure in education at Quincy, Mass.] collect funds and proceed to try his experiment, he sees his goal in front of him, and labours in the expectation of obtaining some practical result of his labour. But if some great official system blocks the way, if he has to overcome the stolid resistance of a department it becomes unlikely that his energy . . . will be sufficient to inspire a successful resistance to such obstacles."

Mr. Herbert, writing from an English standpoint, puts an extreme case which is not likely to have its counterpart in Canada; but the principle of flexibility and freedom which he discusses, commends itself to every well-wisher of our school system. England has differed educationally both from the United States and Canada in one important particular. Until recently he has not brought to bear the potent and salutary influence of educational conventions and associations in aid of the successful administration of her school system. These conventions can, when wisely and judiciously conducted, be turned into potent instruments for good in suggesting improvements in the details and machinery of our school system. They can also prevent that antagonism and friction in its working and administration which must necessarily take place when the judicious counsels of experienced educators have no recognized voice in the state, or are unheeded by those who are practically responsible for the growth and prosperity of the educational system in their hands. We trust that the present Provincial Convention will prove a highly practical and successful gathering of earnest educators.

ONTARIO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

The Twentieth Annual Convention of this important body will be held in the Normal School Hall, on Tuesday, 10th of August, and the two following days. The meeting promises to be one of unusual interest. There are several professional subjects on the programme which are of great practical importance, and the subject of Recent School Legislation is to occupy the attention of the general Association as well as the Public School Teachers' section. The question of the constitution of the Association will be decided, and will doubtless provoke a very animated discussion. We hope that an equitable basis for a representative association may be adopted.

—The question of "Conduct at School" and general instruction in manners is being sharply agitated in some parts of Scotland. The descriptions given of the behaviour of the boys in many districts would seem to warrant some decided action. It is useless to expect the schools to do all the moral training of the rising generation, or even the major part of it. The home should do most of the theoretical and practical teaching of good behaviour and good morals. Nevertheless, the schools have a vast influence over those who attend them, and the