

FREE SCHOOLS IN THE CITY OF TORONTO.

In the May number of this *Journal* for last year, we deplored the closing of the City Schools by the Corporation, "while juvenile crime increased and abounded beyond all precedent." We were opposed at the time by some members of the Press in the City, who denounced the principle of *Free Schools* as a means of ameliorating the sad condition into which unrestrained crime and juvenile depravity would ultimately plunge us. Since that period the question has forced itself upon public attention, and we were happy indeed to meet with the following remarks on the subject in a late number of the *Toronto Patriot* :—

"A few days ago we were led to some consideration relative to the necessity which exists for using every endeavour to obviate the dreadful national evil of a vicious pauperised population—vicious because ignorant—irreclaimable when grown up to a certain point. We then pointed to two objects of prominent importance, viz.: the education of juvenile paupers, and the reclamation of juvenile criminals—both presenting great difficulties, both requiring the interference of the State, and both, if neglected, bringing forth the fearful retribution of national demoralization and crime from the awful effects of which no class can hope to escape. If there is one argument stronger than another in favor of the Common Schools being *free*, it is this : that there is a large portion of the community who will not, or cannot give any care towards the management, much less the education of even their own children, but who will not interfere to prevent it, provided they themselves are not called upon for expense or thought concerning it. Destitute children ought to be children of the State, and surely the uncared for children of the idle and profligate are worse off than the merely destitute. The results drawn from the "Ragged Schools" in England and Scotland, corroborated by our satisfactory though limited experience here, most strongly prove the important fact, that the great majority of the children of the pauper population, and we suppose all other children, *will learn if they only have the opportunity*, and are *kindly treated*. Is it not then the duty of the State to give them that opportunity, and thus open at least to them the knowledge of good, from which their position otherwise shuts them out hopelessly? At a public meeting, lately held in Manchester, the Chairman maintained that the ratio of crime is directly inversely proportioned to the amount of education. 'We shall be told that people in superior circumstances, generally, have a superior education, and are not exposed to the same temptations that those occupying a lower class are. I grant that to some extent this is true; but not by any means to the extent they go, when they seek to draw any important conclusions from it. From the returns which I have given you, you will find that only one out of 150,000 of the population have been committed for crimes. I could show you that out of 8,000,000 females in this country, a whole year has passed without a single educated female being committed for trial for any offence whatever. But there are in London, as you well know, a number of well-educated—I'll call them gentlemen, or educated men, if you please—who have to struggle day by day, and hour by hour, against an amount of privation which, in my humble judgment, few people in this part of the country understand. You shall take your actors, your authors, your artists, your men connected with various learned professions, your teachers, your decayed families, and others, of whom you have an enormous mass in London, and I'll show you that in the year 1840, whilst you had fifteen hundred uneducated people committed to prison in Lancashire, in the County of Middlesex, in which London is situated, not one educated person was committed to prison for any offence whatever!"

"This is the cheapest mode of reducing the expenses of the administration of Justice. The reformation of Juvenile criminals is the next great object to the real philanthropist. (We say juvenile, because in the case of the practised or grown up criminal, reformation is almost hopeless.) Though compared to the former, this is indeed a work of difficulty, it is still of vast importance. Difficult as it is, how can any Christian community rest satisfied to permit young offenders—some guilty perhaps through mere idleness, others from bad example, and others again from compulsion—to grow up hardened in the ways of vice, and pursuing paths which

can terminate but at the gallows, without making a strong effort to save them? Punishment, however, will not do this. **NOTHING BUT EDUCATION can succeed in accomplishing it.** This is the true secret. It will be seen at once, that by *Education* we mean, teaching the individual some mode of employing his time profitably, besides impressing religious principles of thought and action—thus developing the powers, intellectual and manual, and directing them into legitimate channels. To confine or flog, or place in solitary durance, is of no use, unless the means of moral and religious instruction be superadded and combined with some mechanical occupation which will employ both the head and the hands; and by which, when the individual is discharged from prison, he will be able to earn a comfortable subsistence by his own industry.

"We are told however that all plans for this purpose are very expensive. So they are—but are not all other items connected with 'criminal justice' very expensive. The City of Toronto pays now £750 per annum for the use of the District Gaol.

"We would respectfully press upon all our Municipal Councils, and other influential parties, as well as *upon all who pay taxes*, the importance of a strong and united effort in that direction. Not merely are our ideas as philanthropists engaged in it, but our social, domestic, and selfish feelings are concerned. If we would keep our families from demoralization, our property protected, and our taxes low, the education of the pauper population, and the reformation of juvenile offenders, must be ever prominent in our minds."

From the *St. Catherines Journal*, May 16th.

FREE SCHOOLS—ST. CATHERINES.

On Saturday evening last, we were favored by hearing Dr. Ryerson deliver a lecture on the subject of Common Schools. The Rev. gentleman introduced the subject by modestly stating that his object was not to lecture, but rather to suggest to general consideration a few subjects for thought, or may be, action. The necessity of education was well illustrated by a comparison of man with many animals, who do by instinct that which requires education to produce in man. The importance of building suitable houses for purposes of education, and employing suitable teachers, was eloquently and forcibly dwelt on. Then came the matter to be taught—useful knowledge, fitting the recipient for his probable calling in life, should be imparted, and the mind developed, so as to use and apply the materials supplied to it by education. Man's responsibility to his God and his fellows, and subsequently the necessity of making him acquainted with the laws of God, was forcibly dwelt on by Dr. Ryerson. Then came a lucid, forcible and argumentative appeal as to the natural rights of every child, whether rich or poor. If there be such a thing as natural rights, they must embrace a just and righteous claim to education. Natural rights, and equal rights and privileges, were household words among us; but how could we consistently continue to retain or use such words, if we did not provide education for the child of the poor man as well as the rich? We submit to be taxed in proportion to our properties for every other necessary purpose, and why not for this? The Doctor, as the advocate of the poor man's child, was irresistible, and his arguments derived from political economy, and the Bible, deserves to be written in letters of gold. On this part of his subject he departed from the cold, cautious and argumentative strain in which he had previously conducted his address, and waxed warm, because he evidently felt the force and importance of making this claim well understood. The cold, selfish and narrow-minded policy of the men who have educated their own children, either by private or public means, and would leave the numerous offspring of the poor to "perish for lack of knowledge," received no mercy at the hands of the speaker. In no part of Canada West could these truths be more required than in St. Catherines, and most sincerely do we wish that Dr. Ryerson may comply with an application about to be made to him, by the inhabitants of this place, to come and deliver a public lecture on this same subject, in our Town Hall. The audience was small, owing to a defective notice, but we can promise the Doctor, an overflowing audience, should he come again with due notice. The Doctor's allusions to the free school systems of Prussia, Switzerland, and the States of America, were interesting and humiliating. We attach, and have long done so, vast importance to this simple principle of *free schools*. If we may not compel every man to educate his child, let us at least make provision for every man's child. Then the poor man will have no apology, and