



THE  
COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM,  
ITS PRINCIPLE, OPERATION AND  
RESULTS,

BY ANGUS DALLAS.

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"There is, we all know, a difficulty which has met at the threshold those who have been influential in establishing systems of national education ; I mean that which arises from the number of religious sects into which the population is divided. This is not the occasion for entering into any discussion upon that painfully interesting question. Whatever difficulty it has occasioned in England or Ireland must be expected to be found here, applying with at least equal, if not more than equal force. I should be unwilling to suppose that any doubt could exist as to my own opinion on this question ; and scarcely less unwilling to be thought so unjust and uncandid as not to acknowledge and make allowance for the difficulties which surround it. They are such, I believe, as no person can fully estimate, until he has been called upon to deal with them, under the responsibility which the duties of government impose. In the mean time, resting assured as we may, that no general system of instruction can be permanently successful which has not the confidence and cordial approval of the sincerely religious portions of the community—that portion, I mean, who will think it worse than folly to aim at being wise above that which is written—we must wait with hope and patience for the solution which this difficulty, to which I allude, may receive in other countries more competent to grapple with it—trusting that what may ultimately be found to be the safe and satisfactory course, may, by the wisdom and good feeling of the majority, be adopted among ourselves."—*Speech of Chief Justice Robinson, at the opening of the Provincial Normal School, Nov. 24, 1852.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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The present Common School Law of Upper Canada has now been in operation for a period of seven years, during which time ample opportunity has been afforded to examine its details and its applicability to the circumstances of this Province; and if no satisfactory conclusion has been arrived at, decisive of its good or bad tendencies, the fault cannot be ascribed to any want of interest and attention on the part of the press and the public. On various occasions attempts have been made to question its results, and criticisms have appeared, expressing the sentiments of respectable sections of the people, against the very principle on which the whole superstructure of our common schools is based. These utterances, however, have, without exception, been either combated or stifled by a powerful machinery, maintained at the public cost, under government auspices, and directed by an influential political leader.

It is by no means necessary to attach blame to the successive administrations by which the exorbitant discretionary power of the educational department was begun, extended, and consolidated; for, with a low electoral qualification, the executive is most frequently obliged to bend to political influences, and to do what it has no power to resist or is too weak to avoid. But it cannot be denied that the creation of a gigantic apparatus, to curb and control public opinion, on the merits of an experiment of which, at the commencement, every one, even the government itself, was profoundly ignorant, was a proceeding alike hazardous to the interests of the various denominations which had conscientious scruples to obey, and to the educational progress and well-being of the Province at large. The Annual Reports and the Journal of Education, here alluded to, have not been employed in the legitimate business, alone, of furnishing information to the government and the Municipalities on matters connected with the regulations of the Council of Public Instruction, modifications and amendments of the law and the financial affairs of the schools, but have been directed, also, in a most energetic way, to the propagation of educational doctrines which are hostile to our form of government, as well as to our domestic relations, on the ground of religion and the general circumstances of a mixed and heterogeneous community. Against such an apparatus that portion of the press which was opposed to the system could not contend. Criticism, thereby, has been precluded, and the consequence is that after a seven years' trial, what is known respecting the principle, opera-

tion and results of the experiment is limited to the *ex parte* information conveyed through the machinery of the Education Office.

It unfortunately also often happens, as in the present case, that, in the process of carrying a favorite theory into practice, those who undertake the work, either blinded by preconceived notions or reluctant to acknowledge adverse results, take diligent precautions to conceal the facts. In this respect and with reference to the school system of Canada and the United States, no small amount of industry has been exerted to create a belief that it is in practice what it has been represented in theory. Any circumstance or occurrence inimical to the preservation of a friendly public feeling has been carefully suppressed, without apparently reflecting that the discovery of such conduct, sooner or later, would be sure to meet with general indignation. This has been an evil. It is a calamity under which we at present suffer. Enquiry at this moment is dreaded. Not a word must be tolerated against the experiment now so long in progress; and it is almost superfluous to repeat that, wherever, during several years past, a solitary voice has ventured, at any time, to express a doubt on the correctness of the anticipations held out by the friends of the present system, even such expression of doubt has been met by any thing but a desire that it should be heard. The most selfish motives have uniformly been attributed to the questioner. A dislike to pay the school assessment has been imputed as the sole reason of his dissent; and in this way insult has been offered to whomsoever curiosity or duty may have led to the expression of an opinion. Now such treatment might have carried some share of plausibility had it come from persons not deriving their subsistence from the school fund and no way interested, directly or indirectly in its pecuniary concerns. But such is not the case. Those who have shown the greatest eagerness to frown down attempts at enquiry, and who have been foremost to make accusations of unworthy motives, are the chief and local superintendents, those interested in the book, map and publishing department, the trustees who benefit often to some extent by the distribution of the patronage at their disposal, and numbers besides who speculate, prospectively, on some recompense, in return for support, in most cases, obsequiously tendered to the head of the Education Office. The general and local reports confirm what is here stated. What is the consequence, in a public sense, of this multiplicity of interests so centralised? It is this: A degree of ignorance almost incredible exists, with respect not only to the source, the history and the general principles of American Common Schools, but even on the facts as they have been developed, within our own borders and amongst ourselves.

In addition to this and for the purpose of bringing into favorable notice the Apostles of the secular school system, the Annual Reports and the Journal of Education have been made the vehicles for disseminating their doctrines, and more particularly those of the famous Horace Mann. No opportunity has been suffered to escape wherein it was possible to present the Boston School authorities as embodying

the climax of educational wisdom. Horace Mann, Professor Stowe, Edward Everett, that "great American statesman, Daniel Webster," and men of a similar stamp have been held up to the Canadian people, month after month and year after year, through this official channel, as objects on whom to bestow something little short of hero worship. The object of the following pages is to meet these representations, and to produce a body of evidence, bearing on the school question, that will enable the Canadian public to form a true estimate of the position assumed by the eulogists of Mr. Mann; conscious that no system can prosper where only one side is open to inspection; that *ex parte* statements are not sufficient to satisfy enquiry; also, that antagonism is the essential element of progress; and, above all, that to a free government, the unfettered expression of critical opinions is its surest safeguard. In the execution of this task the course of proceeding will be first, to point out the line of demarkation which distinguishes European from American notions of what properly constitutes education; second, to show that, in Europe, the teacher is a religious moral centre, while, in America, he is purely a secular machine; and, in the third place, to demonstrate, from official sources, the harmonious and successful operation and results of Common Schools, in Europe, wherever they have been established, and, at the same time, how it is, that the reverse is the case with the American schools, which, without exception, are characterised by deeply rooted elements of political and religious discord.

Before proceeding, however, to the execution of the plan here laid down, a few remarks are called for on some other general tendencies, existing in concurrence with those above alluded to, but apparently in an isolated sphere.

Two things were wanted to make the Canadian school law of 1847 an exact copy of the school law of Massachusetts. One was the centralization, not only of the common schools but of the whole educational machinery from the Common Schools up to the University, in the hands of the government; the other an enactment making free schools compulsory. As a means, partly, for the accomplishment of these objects, the Amended Grammar School Act, and the Supplementary Common School Act were passed at the same time, and were assented to on the 14th June, 1853. By the former, the Grammar School Trustees are empowered,

"To employ such means as they may judge expedient, in concurrence with the Trustees of the school section or the Board of Common School Trustees in the township, village, town or city in which such Grammar School may be situated, for uniting one or more of the Common Schools of such township, village, town or city, or departments of them, with such Grammar School."

The latter in a similar manner provides as follows,

"And be it enacted that the Trustees of each (common) school section **shall** have authority to take such steps as they may judge expedient to unite their school with any public Grammar School, which shall be situate within, or adjacent to the limits of their school section."

Another provision in the Amended Grammar School Act requires

particular notice, inasmuch as it threatens the very existence of the Grammar Schools, as a distinct class of schools. Hitherto the teachers have been graduates of some College or University; but, by the Amended Act, the Grammar Schools are to be supplied with teachers from the Normal School; a measure that, coupled with the amalgamation of the Grammar and Common Schools, would very soon reduce them to the standard of Common Schools having teachers with a first-class certificate. The Act provides:—

*“That no person (except a Graduate of some University or University College) shall hereafter be appointed Master of a Grammar School, unless he shall have previously obtained a Certificate of qualification from a Committee of Examiners, (one of whom shall be the Head Master of the Normal School,) appointed by the Council of Public Instruction.”*

Since the passage of these two Acts, attempts have been made by the Common School Trustees to carry them into force. Last year, in Toronto, which is considered the focus of Mr. Mann's disciples, an effort was made on the Grammar School, by the Free School Trustees, but without success. This year the attempt is to be renewed, and the inducements held out are, that the Grammar School, when incorporated, or rather absorbed by the Common Schools, shall be made free and be dignified with one of the new school houses recently erected; or, if no smaller bait shall suffice, a splendid and showy edifice shall be provided for by local assessment. It fortunately happens, however, that those who have an opportunity of testifying to the excellent condition and management of the Toronto Grammar School and the discreditable contrast exhibited by the condition of the Free Common Schools have evinced no desire to witness a union such as that contemplated by the Free School Trustees.

But these attempts are only one indication of the carrying out of the consolidation scheme. What is calculated to occasion more uneasiness, to those who entertain no Spartan predilections, is the enunciation of the school doctrines of Boston, by the heads of the Toronto University. It is, by no means, a pleasing duty to have to animadvert on the language made use of by the President and Chancellor of that institution; but these learned gentlemen have identified themselves so directly, and, in a manner so undisguised, with the principles of the present Common School system, that it is not possible to avoid referring to the evidence which their speeches supply, to prove, by their inconsiderate remarks, not only how little the system has been canvassed and how little is understood concerning it, but what, moreover, is of much more significance, the use to which such displays of ignorance are converted by the head of the Education Office. On the occasion of the ceremony, at the opening of the Provincial Normal School in 1852, the President of the Toronto University, in the course of his speech, said—

*“That he conceived to be the perfection of national education,—which places the humblest man, so far as the prospects of his children are concerned, in a position equal to that of the man of the amplest means. They all knew many, who have sprung from that class, who have done honour to England,*

and he doubted not, that ere his own career was closed, he would have the gratification of seeing some of the same class gracing the highest positions in the Province—who were originally educated at the common schools from the public funds—who from the common school proceeded to the grammar school, where they also received free education.”

It is sufficient to point out, here, to the learned President, the only inference to be deduced from his argument. It is no less than this;—that the Boston system is not only the perfection of national education, but *being the only known free system* is consequently the best in the world. As to the use made of the argument and the inference there can be but one opinion.

Again, at the Convocation of the University in November last, the Chancellor, in the course of his address, when referring to the religious element, expressed sentiments precisely similar to what had been enunciated by the President of the University, in his inaugural lecture delivered in the month of October in the preceding year, namely, 1853. The Chancellor said,

*“But the christian religion is a spiritual and not a ceremonial religion. It appeals to the heart and not to the senses.”*

“If that be the true nature of the christian religion, then I am at a loss to discover how it can be objected that this is either an un-Christian or an anti-christian institution, so long as it holds fast to that great foundation of our faith, the Bible. But the Bible and the great fundamental truths of the Bible are acknowledged by all Christian denominations alike. With that great bond of union and agreement, the Senate feels that the minor differences between Christian and Christian may well be sunk, in carrying on this great work of Education, as comparatively unimportant.”

When we reflect that the complete ignoring of all religious differences emanated from Boston and is enforced no where else, as an inflexible rule, except in some of the States of the American Union and in the University of Toronto, it will readily be perceived that the Chancellor's remarks amount to an unqualified approval of that feature of the Boston school law which disallows religious differences; and, as a necessary consequence, are tantamount to an attempted justification of a Canadian law to enforce a similar uniformity in the common schools of the Province, without reference to the diversity of local circumstances. This spirituality of the Christian religion is the very foundation on which the Boston school authorities have constructed their system. They repudiate all ceremonies, for they maintain that Christianity is not a ceremonial religion; and as will be seen, in the course of this exposition, the Christianity which they profess to be the basis of their educational efforts, when stripped of its external appendages, is nothing better than pure and unadulterated deism. These remarks of the Chancellor, while, as in the preceding case they serve the purpose of those who are striving to give a complete Bostonian conformation to our school system, are an additional proof of the state of public opinion, produced by a forestalling of the reading community, through the instrumentality of the unconstitutional power which the Government has placed at the disposal of the Education Office.

Had the Annual Reports and the Journal of Education been devoted, exclusively, as they ought to have been, to the communication of official intelligence connected with the practical business of the department, and refrained from dogmatical disquisitions, which should at all times be beyond the legitimate functions of a government official, the public press would have got fair play, the principles and results of the school system would have been thoroughly scrutinized, and we should now have been in possession of something like a tolerably correct knowledge of the truth or falsehood of what the system has been represented to be. The adoption of an opposite course has produced effects the very reverse; for not only have we to regret the mischief arising from publicly expressed sentiments, on the part of prominent functionaries in our higher schools, but we have been doomed during a period now of seven years to witness the dissemination, throughout the length and breadth of the land, of dogmas which could have been proved, at any moment, to be utterly fallacious.

The remarks of Chief Justice Robinson, at the opening of the Normal School, have not attracted that notice which their importance really deserves. They contain words of wisdom. And if we consider the occasion on which they were made,—the purpose for which they were intended,—and, more than all, their deep significance, we cannot help feeling surprised that no advantage was taken of the opportunity to turn them to account. It is, however, a source of consolation, amid the general contamination of the public sentiment, and the neutralized efficiency of the Provincial press, in the way already specified, that one public functionary—the highest on the judicial bench—has had the candor and the courage to beard the lion in his den; and to proclaim, from the very platform whereon stood the eulogist and champion of the Boston school system, that the said system could not succeed,—that it was worse than folly for its promoters to aim at being wise above that which is written,—and that Canada must look elsewhere, for a school system, than to Boston authorities and their Canadian satellites.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RELIGIOUS BASIS OF THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF EUROPE.

The great dissimilarity of opinions among leading educationists of the present day, and, consequently, the marked contrast observable in the practical character of institutions designed, apparently, to serve the same ultimate purpose, will be found, upon examination, to depend on the manner in which the work of education is regarded—as a work of discipline or of instruction. Thus, at the very threshold of our subject, the first point to be decided—though a simple one—is that on which hang all the subsequent issues.

If education commences at birth, and extends to the period when the individual is competent, by age, to quit the parental roof; if it consists in a nurturing of both mind and body, a continual process of training, in order to form habits and manners and modes of thinking, then is the business of education disciplinary; the parent becomes the responsible educator; the delegation of whose natural duties can be transferred only to one who is competent to take the place and assume the responsibilities of the parent.

In this manner the position of a schoolmaster becomes that of a substitute. He requires, therefore, other recommendations besides the mere book-learning which commonly fits a man to officiate, simply, as an instructor. He stands in need of those qualities by means of which he can obtain from children the respect and esteem which they usually accord to their parents. But to succeed in this, he must first acquire the respect of the parents themselves, for children will form their opinions and shape their conduct, in this particular, according as they are influenced by the conversations of the family circle. If a teacher is a man of ordinary scholastic attainments, is upright in his general intercourse with the world, and has a religious faith which governs his conduct and moulds his character, he will command the esteem of his neighbours; children will hear him talked of respectfully at the family hearth; and in the school-room he will, consequently, occupy that position which fits him to impress, by example and precept and with the happiest and most satisfactory results, the minds of those committed to his charge. No other qualification, however extraordinary, will compensate for the absence of this feeling on the part of the parents and children towards the teacher. It is, therefore, of the first importance that he should be an upright, conscientious, and religious man, possessing a sufficient amount of scholastic learning and secular knowledge to enable him to discharge his duties in a creditable way.

In a social point of view such a teacher is a moral centre; that is, he radiates, in a surrounding neighbourhood, a moral influence which cannot be too highly prized, and which cannot fail, wherever it is exerted, to produce the most wholesome effects on the general tone of society. But as an educator, as a trainer, as a discipliner of the faculties of the young, the religious teaching forms a considerable portion of his duties; and the performance of these, with becoming dignity, cannot be assumed except by one who feels their importance.

Now, it is a distinct feature of the school systems of Europe, whether Parochial or Common, whether in England or Germany, that not only religious exercises but religious teaching forms an essential part of the daily routine; and that the teacher must be a person of religious character, competent to carry on religious training. The general school law of Prussia is conclusive on this head. It ordains as follows:—

“The chief mission of every school is to train the youth in such a manner as to produce in them, with the knowledge of man’s relations to God, the strength and desire to regulate his life according to the principles and spirit of Christianity. Early shall the School form the children to piety, and for that purpose will it seek to second and perfect the instructions of the family. Thus in all cases shall the labours of the day be commenced, and concluded by a short prayer and pious reflections, which the Master must be able so to conduct, that this moral exercise shall never degenerate into an affair of habit. Furthermore the Master shall see (in the case of Boarding-schools) that the children attend punctually at the services of the Church on Sabbaths and Holydays. There shall be intermingled with the solemnities of the School, songs of a religious character. Finally, the period of the communion should be as well for Pupils as for Masters, an occasion of strengthening the bonds which ought to unite them, and to open their souls to the most generous and elevated sentiments of religion.”

Let it should be supposed that the Prussian notions of the spirit of Christianity, and the moral exercises referred to, resemble the notions attached to these terms by American Common School authorities, the following from the Report for 1846, by the Canadian Chief Superintendent, will be satisfactory.

“In Prussia, while provision is made, and Teachers are thoroughly trained, to give an extended course, or rather several courses of Biblical instruction, covering a period of eight years, (from six to fourteen) in regard to even primary Schools, and children of the poorest classes, and embracing in succession an elementary view of the *biography, history, cardinal doctrines, and morals*, and in some instances *evidences of the authenticity of the Bible*: provision is also made for teaching the Catechisms of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. The Catechism, however, is not generally, if ever taught until after the pupil has received Biblical instruction for five or six years. It is usually taught the year, or the year before, the pupil completes his elementary education; and during the few months which are allotted to the teaching and learning of the Catechism, the pupils receive separate religious instruction from the Pastor or Clergyman of the Church to which they belong.”

In Prussia, and the same remark holds true throughout Europe, doctrinal or denominational teaching is the rule. When the law provides, as is the case, that no child shall be obliged to take part in any religious lessons to which the parents object, this is done in order to

subordinate the law to the rights of the parent. The law of Prussia, in this respect, and it is the law of Europe, is diametrically opposed to the Spartan doctrines of Mr. Mann, and, consequently, to the various forms of the common school system of America, which are all avowedly and constructively derived from Mr. Mann's original model.

In Prussia, the law requires denominational teaching where practicable; separate teaching where it is not. The law of Massachusetts, on the other hand, disallows Christian instruction altogether; while, in Canada, it is tolerated only where the majority, in a school section, is of one religious persuasion; in which latter case, the law permits the majority to tyrannise over the minority, on the principle that might constitutes right. Now as, in Prussia, the rights of denominations exist by virtue of the subordination of the rights of the State to those of the parent, in the work of education; so, in Massachusetts, the communism of the schools rests on the predominance of the rights of the State over all other rights.

Herein consists the fundamental distinction between the educational systems of the new and the old world; a point which cannot be too vividly presented to the heads of Canadian families, inasmuch as it is a key to the solution of many obscure and intricate details connected with the working of our Common Schools. In Prussia the law acknowledges the parent as the natural and responsible educator of his child. The parent selects the teacher, selects the school, selects the doctrinal or denominational lessons. With the exercise of these natural rights the law does not interfere. It undertakes one important duty, however. It ordains that the child shall receive an education; it prescribes means by which suitable substitutes are provided, to perform, in the school room, the delegated duties of the parent; and requires the parent as the natural educator, to pay, by rate bill, a reasonable share of the expenses, unless incapacitated by poverty to do so. Throughout all the practical ramifications of the Prussian school law, the principle that the parent is the natural educator is never lost sight of, and conformably with this principle the parent's natural rights are fully recognised.

On the subject of the denominational rights of parents or, what is the same thing, the right that the children shall be disciplined agreeably to the peculiar religious faith which the parents profess, Mr. Joseph Kay says:

"One of the educational councillors of Berlin informed me, that the Government did not *encourage* the establishment of mixed schools; as they think that, in such cases, the religious education of both parties, or at least one of them, often suffers\* \* \* \* \* The children of Jews, however, are not often to be found, even in the towns, in the schools of the other sects; but, owing to the *entire and uncontrolled liberty of decision that the people themselves possess on this point, there seems to be little difficulty in arranging matters, and no jealousy whatever exists between the different parties.*"—Vol. 1, page 57.

The present agitation going on in the United Kingdom, on the proposed government measure for the establishment of national schools, is marked by a unanimous determination on the part of the establish-

ments and the dissenters to have denominational teaching. According to the *Westminster Review* for July, 1853, the Unitarians are the only exception. Now the position assumed, in England, by the Unitarian body, taken in connection with the fact that Mr. Mann, the originator of the Boston school system is also a Unitarian, and that the influential class and the major part of the people of Boston belong to that persuasion, reveals a great deal with reference to the true character of our Canadian Common Schools.

Among the dissenters, Mr. Edward Bains, a most influential leader, a staunch nonconformist, and one who has made himself very prominent in the prevailing controversy, takes his ground on the voluntary principle, and, with great force denies the right of government to assume the duties that, he maintains, belong properly to the denominations. But this gentleman goes farther; he denies the right of government interference also on political grounds. He says:

"Government education is, in my judgment, a mighty error in principle. It can only be defended by reasons which would equally call for the superintendence of the government over our literature, our journals, and our pulpits, if not over the food, the clothing, and the habitations at least, of all the humbler classes. If, on any ground of public policy, government is to support and regulate our schools, the same ground would require that it should support and regulate the press, which supplies the bulk of the people with their reading, and should furnish every house with its intellectual food." — *Westminster Review*, July, 1853, Page 65.

Mr. Bains, it will be seen, opposes government education on two grounds. Those who agree with him, that education is a disciplinary and training process, resting on a religious foundation, though they may not coincide with his political reasons, make no hesitation in awarding him credit for the sincerity of his religious scruples; and this is the chief point. It is on this the Nonconformists are strongest, and their position is invulnerable. If in carrying on the work of education, which they say is in great part a religious doctrinal work, scruples of conscience are to be respected, the government is thereby placed on the same footing with respect to schools that it ought to be with respect to Churches. The Nonconformists in England are at least consistent, which is more than can be said of the same class in Canada. Why is it so?

The Government measure brought forward by Lord John Russell in April, 1853, but not yet perfected, recognizes the claims of the denominations and is intended to assist voluntary efforts. It declares open war against all forms of exclusively secular education.

Turning now to Scotland, the best authority which can be produced to illustrate the popular sentiment is unquestionably the *North British Review*, the organ of the Free Church. The last number of that periodical, for November 1854, contains an able essay, headed "Popular Education in Scotland," well deserving the attentive perusal of Free Church congregations in Canada; if for no other purpose than to show the consistency of fatherland on the two questions of state churchism and state schoolism. From the statistics of *The Home and Foreign*

*Record*, the Free Church in Scotland has two Normal schools, and besides the Students attending in these, it has 661 trained teachers employed, who are all acting in co-operation and under the surveillance of the ministers; the school houses standing along side of the churches. The following excellent remarks are from the essay here noticed.

"It will not be supposed that, in making these remarks, we advocate any scheme of such latitudinarian comprehensiveness as may tend to indifference in matters of religion. We only express our earnest hope that Scottish common sense will not allow differences, which unhappily do exist, to interfere with a great Christian and patriotic interest, and that all parties will remember the very pressing necessity for some united effort amongst Christians to check the threatening progress of a barbarous heathenism which is fast growing about our very doors. It is, happily, we have said, the almost unanimous verdict of the Scottish people, that education, to be good, must be religious—and, of course, religious teaching would cease to be really religious, if it were refined away by the omission of all doctrines to which persons calling themselves Christians have at any time objected. We advocate an earnest united system, where men can unite; separate systems, where they cannot.

"If there can be no really good education which is not religious, there certainly can be no really religious education without a religiously disposed teacher. We hear a great deal now-a-days about Christian schools and Christian training, but there is no patent method for training boys as Christians without Christian example.

"It never has been the theory of Scottish education for the poor, that the schoolmaster is a mere secular instructor. How can the parent, in this class, do thoroughly the work imposed on him? Thank God, there are still in Scotland many specimens of the old God-fearing Scotch peasantry. They may be fit thus to rule and train their boys; but we are sure they would be the very last to wish that the schoolmaster should forget the religious responsibilities of his office. Unfortunately the number of such peasants by no means bears the same proportion to the population as it did in the old days. The swarming thousands of the abject poor in our large towns, how can they gain a religious training from their degraded homes? Indeed, we must say of very many thousands of this class, that, if they are to have a religious training at all, it must be given them in connexion with their school."

These extracts and illustrations might be extended indefinitely to prove the one thing, that in the United Kingdom and throughout Europe, on whatever side we turn our attention, be it Sweden or France, Denmark or Italy, one unmistakeable fact, in education, is present to our view, namely, that denominational Christianity is the Christianity of the Common Schools. However, as the European Common Schools are constructed on the Prussian model, it is sufficient for our purpose to know what that model is, in so far as religious doctrinal teaching is comprised. And the evidence of our Chief Superintendent has been preferred, because, in the first place, it covers effectually the whole ground, with respect to the religious doctrinal foundation of the Prussian system; and, in the second, it is less likely to be objected to, in any discussion that may proceed from the publication of these pages. It may sometimes happen that, in rural districts and from the necessity of circumstances, the schools are, to a large extent, mixed, and the religious instruction has to be given separately; or, as in France, where, long after the enactment of the Common School law, in 1838, the teachers, in most of the

communes, being unable to give religious instruction, it had to be limited simply to the reading of the Bible. Still, such cases are only exceptions to the rule. The intention of Cousin and Guizot was to give the greatest prominence to religious training in the Common Schools of France; for, in this, they copied, to the letter, the Prussian system, which they followed as a pattern. The evidence of our Chief Superintendent is, therefore, the most unexceptionable, as it describes the general religious character of the Prussian schools, and is less likely to be questioned by the disciples of Mr. Mann. As the best exponent of the educational views of English voluntaries, Mr. Edward Bains of Leeds has been selected. This gentleman has spoken so forcibly on the government scheme, and occupies such a prominent position among the Nonconformists, as their mouth-piece, that his testimony cannot possibly be refused. For the same reason, the *North British Review* is taken to illustrate the opinion of the voluntaries in Scotland, on the subject of Common Schools. Upon the whole then, as it would have been superfluous to furnish evidence from the Establishments whose denominational school predilections admit of no compromise, what has been done is the selection of authorities against whose testimony no objection can be brought, on the ground either of political or religious prejudices.

The Irish National Schools are not noticed in these remarks, on account of their peculiar nature; being, in fact, an exception to the Common Schools of Europe, which are expressly intended for the poorer classes. The Irish schools, on the contrary, were established, according to the Act, "for the education of the poor of Ireland," and consequently are more pauper schools than any thing else. The state of religious feeling, besides, required special provisions, and an organization different from that of any other class of schools. On this head there has been a great deal of misapprehension.\*

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\* Since the above was put in type, the following has appeared in the *Journal of Education* for last month; a proof that the experiment of schools without doctrinal teaching, in Ireland, has become a complete failure:—

"His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin has favoured us with a communication in regard to the notice of the Irish National Schools, which appeared in the *Journal of Education* for November last. He says, The Commissioners have omitted [from their report] some most important particulars. The District Model School at Clonmel, was built at a great expense, on a very grand scale, wholly at the cost of the government. And it had for several years from 300 to 400 pupils, of all religious denominations, and would have had more had there been room: and it flourished much. The pupils, are now reduced to *four*, owing to grants having been made by the Board to other schools near wholly under sectarian patronage. And the like is going on, I understand, in most of the other District Model Schools."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SECULAR BASIS OF THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF AMERICA.

As the various forms of the Common School system, existing in the United States and Canada, are modelled on the plan established in Massachusetts, an examination of the features of the original type will enable us the better to recognise the similitude between the several branches of the same family. In doing this it is necessary to make large quotations from the writings of Mr. Mann, the architect and authorized expositor of the Massachusetts Common School system; the more so because what he has written on the subject was approved of and sanctioned by the legislature of the State, and, therefore, constitutes the best source from which to draw our information.

In the conception and execution of his design Mr. Mann appears to have been governed by two ideas. Being himself a Unitarian, he decided on uniformity; and as a republican he, of course, favored equality. The circumstances of a preponderating Unitarian population in Boston and a republican form of government, favored his undertaking. Accordingly, in constructing his school system, on the score of religion there was to be no sectarianism, while on that of citizenship there should be no distinction of ranks. He had resolved, in order to establish uniformity in religion and equality in citizenship, that the children of the State should be educated by the State. That they should sit on the same forms, join in the same religious exercises, and that the expense of supporting the schools should be paid by a general tax. So far as the object aimed at was to establish Unitarianism as the school religion of the state, and equality as the political basis of a republican school constitution, Mr. Mann and the Unitarians of Boston, undoubtedly, conceived that they were adapting the system to suit the circumstances of a Unitarian and Republican community; and it signifies not to us whether these ends were answered or not, so long as we are satisfied, from the evidence before us, that these were the real objects contemplated by the authors of the system. On this point, as Canadians, we are particularly interested; for if, as it will appear in the sequel, the conditions for a school system in Massachusetts, are diametrically opposed to the conditions for a school system in Canada, where the form of government and the religious communities are altogether dissimilar, the conclusion will be unavoidable, that what took place in 1846, namely, the adoption in Canada of the Massachusetts school system, was a palpable mistake.

The means employed by Mr. Mann to carry out the principles of republican equality in the schools, were the making them free, and providing for their support by a general tax on the inhabitants of the State. As, however, the right to tax the property of all for the education of all was disputed then, as it is still, by a respectable minority, and difficulties in the working of the free schools had arisen therefrom, it became necessary to show the ground on which the right was assumed; and Mr. Mann who had been Secretary of the Board of Education during ten years, undertook the duty in his Tenth Annual Report, which was so well received by the Legislature of Massachusetts, that ten thousand copies of a revised edition were ordered for distribution, and a suitable compensation was voted to the author. The following selections taken from that official document go to show the strange grounds on which it is assumed the property of all should be taxed for the support of free schools.

In later times, and since the achievement of American independence, the universal and ever-repeated argument in favor of Free Schools has been, that the general intelligence which they are capable of diffusing, and which can be imparted by no other human instrumentality, is indispensable to the continuance of a republican government. This argument, it is obvious, assumes, as a *postulatum*, the superiority of a republican over all other forms of government; and, as a people, we religiously believe in the soundness, both of the assumption and of the argument founded upon it. \* \* \*

Admitting, nay, claiming for ourselves, the substantial justness and soundness of the general grounds on which our system was originally established and has since been maintained, yet it is most obvious that, unless some broader and more comprehensive principle can be found, the system of Free Schools will be repudiated by whole nations as impolitic and dangerous; and, even among ourselves, all who deny our premises will, of course, set at naught the conclusions to which they lead. \* \* \* Even in the State of New York, with all its noble endowments, the Schools are not Free. I believe that this amazing dereliction from duty, especially in our own country, originates more in the false notions which men entertain *respecting the nature of their right to property*, than in any thing else. \* \* \*

It seems not irrelevant, therefore, in this connection, and for the purpose of strengthening the foundation on which our Free School system reposes, to inquire into the nature of a man's right to the property he possesses; and to satisfy ourselves respecting the question, whether any man has such an indefeasible title to his estates, or such an absolute ownership of them, as renders it unjust in the government to assess upon him his share of the expenses of educating the children of the community, up to such a point as the nature of the institutions under which he lives, and the well-being of society, require. \* \* \* In the majority of cases, all that we call *property*, all that makes up the valuation or inventory of a nation's capital, was prepared at the creation, and was laid up of old in the capacious store-houses of nature. For every unit that a man earns by his own toil or skill, he receives hundreds and thousands, without cost and without recompense, from the All-bountiful Giver. A proud mortal, standing in the midst of his luxuriant wheat-fields or cotton-plantations, may arrogantly call them his own; yet what barren wastes would they be, did not Heaven send down upon them its dews and its rains, its warmth and its light; and sustain, for their growth and ripening, the grateful vicissitudes of the seasons! It is said that from eighty to ninety per cent. of the very substance of some of the great staples of agriculture are not taken from the earth, but are absorbed from the air; so that these productions may more properly be called fruits of the atmosphere than of the soil. Who prepares this elemental wealth? Who scatters it, like a sower, through all the regions of the atmosphere, and sends

the richly-freighted winds, as His messengers, to bear to each leaf in the forest, and to each blade in the cultivated field, the nourishment which their infinitely-varied needs demand? Aided by machinery, a single manufacturer performs the labor of hundreds of men. Yet what could he accomplish without the weight of the waters which God causes ceaselessly to flow? or without those gigantic forces which He has given to steam? And how would the commerce of the world be carried on, were it not for those great laws of nature,—of electricity, of condensation, and of rarefaction,—that give birth to the winds, which, in conformity to the will of Heaven, and not in obedience to any power of man, forever traverse the earth, and offer themselves as an unchartered medium for interchanging the products of all the zones? These few references show how vast a proportion of all the wealth which men presumptuously call their own, because they claim to have earned it, is poured into their lap, unasked and unthanked for, by the Being so infinitely gracious in his physical as well as in his moral bestowments. But for whose subsistence and benefit were these exhaustless treasures of wealth created? Surely not for any one man, nor for any one generation; but for the subsistence and benefit of the whole race, from the beginning to the end of time. \* \* \*

Another consideration, bearing upon this arrogant doctrine of absolute ownership or sovereignty, has hardly less force than the one just expounded. We have seen how insignificant a portion of any man's possessions he can claim, in any proper and just sense, *to have earned*; and that, in regard to all the residue, he is only taking his turn in the use of a bounty bestowed, in common, by the Giver of all, upon his ancestors, upon himself, and upon his posterity,—a line of indefinite length, in which he is but a point. But this is not the only deduction to be made from his assumed rights. The *present* wealth of the world has an additional element in it. Much of all that is capable of being earned by man, has been earned by our predecessors, and has come down to us in a solid and enduring form. We have not erected all the houses in which we live; nor constructed all the roads on which we travel; nor built all the ships in which we carry on our commerce with the world. We have not reclaimed from the wilderness all the fields whose harvests we now reap; and if we had no precious metals, or stones, or pearls, but such as we ourselves had dug from the mines, or brought up from the bottom of the ocean, our coffers and our caskets would be empty indeed. But even if this were not so, whence came all the arts and sciences, the discoveries and the inventions, without which, and without a common right to which, the valuation of the property of a whole nation would scarcely equal the inventory of a single man,—without which, indeed, we should now be in a state of barbarism? Whence came a knowledge of agriculture, without which we should have so little to reap; or a knowledge of astronomy, without which we could not traverse the oceans; or a knowledge of chemistry and mechanical philosophy, without which the arts and trades could not exist? Most of all this was found out by those who have gone before us, and some of it has come down to us from a remote antiquity. Surely all these boons and blessings belong as much to posterity as to ourselves."

"Surely these considerations limit still more extensively that absolute ownership which is so often claimed by the possessors of wealth."

"To draw conclusions without considering these facts is to leave out the most important part of the premises. A powerful corroborating fact remains untouched. Though the earth and the beneficent capabilities with which it is endued belong in common to the race, yet we find that previous and *present* possessors have laid their hands upon the whole of it;—have left no part of it unclaimed and unappropriated. They have circumnavigated the globe; they have drawn lines across every habitable portion of it, and have partitioned amongst themselves, not only its whole area, or superficial contents, but have claimed it down to the centre, and up to the concave,—a great inverted pyramid for each proprietor,—so that not an unclaimed rood is left, either in the caverns below or in the aerial spaces above, where a new adventurer upon existence can take unresisted possession. *They have entered into a solemn*

*compact with each other, for the mutual defence of their respective allotments. They have created legislators, and judges, and executive officers, who denounce and inflict penalties even to the taking of life; and they have organized armed bands to repel aggression upon their claims. Indeed, so grasping and rapacious have mankind been, in this particular, that they have taken more than they could use, more than they could perambulate and survey, more than they could see from the top of the mast-head, or from the highest peak of the mountain. There was some limit to their physical power of taking possession, but none to the exorbitancy of their desires. Like robbers, who divide their spoils before they know whether they shall find a victim, men have claimed a continent while still doubtful of its existence, and spread out their title from ocean to ocean, before their most adventurous pioneers had ever seen a shore of the realms they coveted. The whole planet, then, having been appropriated,—there being no waste or open lands, from which the new generations may be supplied as they come into existence,—have not those generations the strongest conceivable claim upon the present occupants for that which is indispensable to their well-being? They have more than a preemptive, they have a possessory right to some portion of the issues and profits of that general domain, all of which has been thus taken up and appropriated.*

Four years after the publication of this Report and its peculiar assumptions had been extensively circulated, the obstacles to the progress of Free Schools appear to have increased. It was found that in Massachusetts, as every where else, the children of the rich would not sit on the same school forms with the children of the poor; that republican theories and the practicalities of common life were at variance; and that the doctrine of equality could not be realized. This is shown in the Fourteenth Annual Report by Barnas Sears, the Secretary of the Board, as follows,

“In many parts of the State the Common Schools languish in consequence of the patronage given to academies and private schools. The former are supported by a moderate tax, for the sole benefit of the common and laboring classes. While the importance of the means of education for the children of these classes is acknowledged, there is no inducement for the tax-payers, whose children are educated elsewhere, to provide any but the most ordinary accommodations for the Common Schools. In those places where such practice prevails, the schoolhouse is commonly old and dilapidated, the seats and desks inconvenient and disfigured, the teacher poorly qualified for his task, the manners of the pupils rude, and the whole condition of the school such that the children of a refined family would be more injured than benefited by being sent to it. Here the following dilemma presents itself. The schools cannot be improved till the better families, so called, shall consent to patronize them as their own. These families will not consent to send their children to the Common Schools in their present condition. No other obstacle to the cause of popular education is so great, in the places referred to, as this. Men, who have striven for a long course of years to excite an interest in behalf of the Public Schools, have met with this difficulty wherever they have gone, and as yet no means of overcoming it have been found. There the evil is, unabated by all the efforts that have been made, and those who have been most zealous in the work are beginning to despond. What, then, remains to be done? The system itself must be changed; it is the interest of all classes in the community to unite in changing it. Let those who now educate their children at private schools, and those who are obliged to educate theirs in Common School, if they educate them at all, confer together, and unite their influence in the annual town meeting, to bring about, for their mutual benefit, a new state of things.”

“Teachers of elevated character and refined manners could be employed, and a state of morals produced in the schools which would render them as attractive as they have hitherto been repulsive to persons of pure taste and virtuous sentiment.

\* \* \* It would seem superfluous to show how much better it would be for the community, if all would unite in the support of Public Schools of a high order, than to attempt to sustain a two-fold system of education,—Common Schools for the children of the poor, and academies and private schools for the children of the rich. The children of the affluent ought, for their own sakes, to learn early, before their minds are vitiated with ideas of factitious distinctions, to take their position according to personal merit alone. As this is the standard by which every one must stand or fall, the sooner he takes his proper place upon the true platform of American society, the better will it be for him and his country."

Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be instructive to give, here, the argument of the present Chief Superintendent of Schools for Upper Canada, to the same purport. Dr. Ryerson's address on Free Schools, published in the Annual Report for 1849, and again in the Report for 1852, states as follows:—

"The method which, I believe, you will find most efficient, has been thus defined:—'A tax upon the property of all, by the majority, for the education of all.' \* \* \* The unnatural and unpatriotic separation of the wealthier classes from the common school, has caused its inefficiency and alleged degradation. Had the wealthy classes been identified with the common schools equally with their poorer neighbors,—as is the case in free school countries—the common school would have been fit for the education of their children, and proportionally better than it now is for the education of the children of the more numerous common classes of society."

Mr. Mann, true to the original idea of free schools, namely, the preservation of a republican constitution, in selecting the branches of study limited them to the specific object which he intended they should serve. That object as we have seen was exclusively secular. Free education was to make good citizens, and good citizens would preserve the republican constitution. This was the argument promulgated by the free school authorities. We have now to see how the education in the schools was confined, specially, to this secular object. Mr. Mann's Report is again the best testimony. At page 17 is the following:—

"In regard to the application of this principle of natural law, that is in regard to the extent of the education to be provided for at the public expense, —some differences of opinion may fairly exist, under different political organizations; but for our republican government, it seems clear that the minimum of this education can never be less than such as is sufficient to qualify each citizen for the civil and social duties he will be called to discharge; such an education as teaches the individual the great laws of bodily health; as qualifies for the fulfilment of parental duties; as is indispensable for the civil functions of a witness or a juror; as is necessary for the voter in municipal and in national affairs; and finally, as is requisite for the faithful and conscientious discharge of all those duties which devolved on the inheritor of a portion of the sovereignty of this great republic."

The School Law is of the same tenor, strictly limiting the studies and the duties of teachers to secular instruction. The 7th Sect., Chap. 23, of the Revised Statutes, enacts as follows:—

"It shall be the duty of the President, Professors, and Tutors of the University at Cambridge, and of the several Colleges, and of all Preceptors and Teachers of Academies and all other Instructors of youth, to exert their best endeavors, to impress on the minds of children and youth, committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard

to truth, love to their country, humanity and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry, and frugality, chastity, moderation, and temperance, and those other virtues, which are the ornament of human society, *and the basis upon which a republican constitution is founded*; and it shall be the duty of such Instructors to endeavor to lead their pupils, as their ages and capacities will admit, into a clear understanding of the tendency of the above-mentioned virtues, to preserve and perfect a republican constitution, and secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness, and also to point out to them the evil tendency of the opposite vices."

This law, with two or three modifications, has been copied into the regulations on religious and moral instruction for Upper Canada, again exhibiting the predilection for the secular republican system. Here is the copy from the Upper Canada School regulations:—

"In each School the Teacher should exert his best endeavors, both by example and precept, to impress upon the minds of all children and youth committed to his care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth; love to their country; humanity and universal benevolence; sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, moderation, temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of society, and on which a free constitution of government is founded; and it is the duty of each Teacher to endeavour to lead his pupils, as their ages and capacities will admit, into a clear understanding of the tendency of the above-mentioned virtues, in order to preserve and perfect the blessings of law and liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness, and also to point out to them the evil tendency of the opposite vices."

Notwithstanding the vague expressions on the teaching of Christian morals, in a practical point of view the completely secular character of American Schools is fully established. This becomes manifest, again, in what is called the religious study prescribed for the Normal Schools, which is all comprised in the following words, "the principles of piety and morality common to all sects of Christians." This is all the provision made for religious instruction in the Normal Schools of Massachusetts. Small, however, as it is, it will baffle the most patient enquirer to discover what the principles are which are common to all sects. For example, in reading Scripture or expounding the writings of the Apostles, how is it possible to avoid the questions of adult or infant baptism, the humanity or divinity of Christ, predestination or grace and good works, the corporeal or spiritual resurrection of the dead, the immaculate conception, the millenium, transubstantiation, universal redemption, eternal punishment, the sacraments, the trinity, and so many questions of a similar kind on which the different sects disagree? And if the Scriptures cannot be read nor the text expounded, without falling foul of these repudiated tenets, how is it possible that the Scriptures can be read to satisfy the school requirements? Here is a dilemma.

As the School Law of Upper Canada limits what is called religious instruction to the same secular purpose, it consequently gives the same character of indefiniteness to the mode in which the instruction is to be communicated. Every thing is left to depend on the example and precept of the teacher. Except "the principles of piety," all the other virtues enumerated, come purely within the scope of human manners,

called, by American educationists, morals; but which are, in the strictest sense, subservient to merely secular ends. Here, we have now to do with the religious character of the teacher and the principles of piety; for it is evident that the principles of piety, whatever they are, will govern and in a great measure form the character of the teacher, and that the character so formed is the exemplary character on which the religious instruction in the schools is made altogether to depend. Whatever element of religion there is in the school system is, therefore, comprised in the word piety. Now what is piety? Is it a sentiment emanating from the religion of nature or the religion of Christ? Is it that vague idea of the incomprehensible attributes of a mysterious superhuman power, peculiar to a savage and unchristianized state of society; or does it comprehend the scheme of redemption, which marks the radical distinction between the two religions? That there may be no dispute about the character of the authority cited to decide this point, preference is here given to Webster's Dictionary, because it is the dictionary authorised to be used in the Massachusetts Schools. Here are the two definitions from Webster's Quarto Edition:

"1. Piety in principle is a compound of veneration or reverence of the Supreme Being and love of his character, or veneration accompanied with love; and piety in practice, is the exercise of these affections in obedience to his will and devotion to his service.

"2. Reverence of parents or friends accompanied with affection and devotion to their honor and happiness."

According to this, the religion required of the teacher is, as before stated, pure deism or the religion of nature. To give it the designation that it embodies the principles of piety and morals common to all sects of Christians, is a delusion; for this reason that, if the doctrines be expunged on which are founded the distinctions of sects, nothing will remain of the fundamental essence and ground-work of Christianity, namely, redemption from original sin through the divine mediation. Those who maintain the contrary of what is here stated, are bound to show the process of sublimating a Christian Creed out of the concrete elements of what is known, at the present day, as the Christian Church. If they cannot do this, they must renounce the assumption that the Common Schools are Christian, and that Christianity is the basis of education.

The care with which every thing having reference to the Christian doctrines is excluded from the schools, appears in the regulations. What is called religious instruction is there limited to "the principles of piety," "morals," "good behavior," and "manners." Such is the burden of the laws having reference to what is termed religion. They extend no farther. On the other hand, the religious exercises do not prescribe the reading of the Scriptures, but only portions of them. This limitation is worthy of notice. The sublimated moral teacher would have his convictions shocked, and the piety and good behavior of his pupils contaminated by those portions which refer to the Trinity, to the divinity of Christ, and other points whereon the different sects

are divided. The exercises are, therefore, prescribed and restricted so as to avoid this. The law ordains that, "a portion of the Scriptures shall be read daily in every State Normal School." This is all the religious exercise prescribed for this class of schools. The law for the Primary Schools is as follows:—

*"Opening Exercises of the Schools.*—In order to impress on the minds of the pupils the importance of religious duties, and their entire dependence on their MAKER, the Teachers are required to open their Schools, in the morning, by the reading of a portion of Scripture, with singing and prayer."—(See Rules 135, 136.)

"The audible repetition of the Lord's Prayer, by every Scholar, shall form a part of the opening exercise; and the Ten Commandments shall be audibly repeated, in the same manner, at least once a week."—(See Rule 135.)

If the ten commandments or the Lord's Prayer had contained the least reference to the essential elements of Christianity they would have been also discarded. The reason why they form part of the exercises and have obtained admission is, because of their having no expression which directly or indirectly can be construed to pertain to these essentials.

In Canada the Common School law, which is equally scrupulous to preserve uniformity in both the general features and details of the system, and studiously conforms to the original Boston type, makes no specific provision for religious instruction or even religious exercises. This is left to the discretion of the Trustees, and the way in which they generally act can best be illustrated by what they have done in Toronto, where the Boston free school system has been fully adopted and in full operation for five years. Previous to December of last year the Trustees had, consistently with free school principles, declined to have other than good behaviour, manners, morals and piety inculcated by means, simply, of example on the part of the teachers. The schools, in the mean time, notwithstanding large assessments and an extraordinary expenditure for spacious and commodious buildings, were in a most unpromising condition. The average number of children attending was much the same as in 1847, the year previous to the introduction of the free system, while the assessment for school purposes had risen from £496, in 1847, to £4,225, in 1854, and the number of children between 5 and 16 years of age had increased within the same period, from 5,000 to 9,000. Disappointed with this result of a six years experience of free schools, the Trustees seemed to entertain an impression that the godless character ascribed to the schools was the cause of their want of success, and imagined that if religious exercises could be introduced the experiment might be prevented from becoming a total failure. Accordingly, in December of last year, as stated, they passed the following regulation:—

"That a portion of the Holy Scriptures and the Lord's Prayer be read morning and evening by the teachers of each department in all the city schools. The portion of the Scriptures to be selected by the Local Superintendent, subject to the approval of the Board."

This production of the Toronto Board of School Trustees, it will be

seen, is in precise conformity with the Boston regulations. Faithful to the original type, *a portion of Scripture* is to be read. And even that portion must be selected by the Local Superintendent. But not even satisfied with this, the selections made by the Local Superintendent must be approved of by the Board of Trustees. Why all these precautions? Why subject the teachers to the Local Superintendent, and in addition require the supervision of the Board! What do the Scriptures contain, that the Board is afraid should be read; or wherein is any member of the Board or the Local Superintendent, or are even the board and superintendent, collectively, more competent than the teachers to make selections unless it be that the selections may contain nothing which is essential to the character of the Christian religion, or which may conflict with the sublimated piety prescribed by the Boston educationists, as the authorised basis of what is called religious instruction in the free schools? The principle of the Protestant reformation must be bad and Luther and his associates must have made a great mistake, when it becomes necessary to establish a complicated censorship on the reading of the Scriptures.

From what has been said, and the testimony adduced from official sources and established regulations, it is manifest that the basis of the Canadian school system is exclusively secular; and that what it assumes as a religious foundation, namely, "piety," "love for religion" and "morals" are nothing else than genuine deism with the human manners of "the man Jesus" superadded. This is a lamentable conclusion and a melancholy fact; but there is no way of escaping from deductions honestly arrived at, through a chain of testimony admitting of no dispute.

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## CHAPTER III.

### PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN SYSTEMS OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

Fortunately, the practical results of the European Common School system are easily stated; for they have formed the subject of almost every official report proceeding from American authorities who have personally examined that system; and in no case, it is believed, are they represented otherwise, than in terms of the most unqualified approval. It would be an easy matter to produce a mass of testimony, from the writings of eye witnesses, to prove the excellence of the eighteen public schools of Heidelberg; the 6,508 primary schools of Bavaria, besides its thirty-two mechanics' schools, its seventy Latin schools, its three Polytechnic Schools, its eight Normal Schools, its seventy-four Gymnasiums, its nine Lyceums and its three Universities, all public such as our common schools; the two thousand two hundred common schools of Wurtemberg; the Wiesbaden poor school; the schools of Frankfort on the Maine; those of Berlin, including its thirteen free schools for the poor, with a school attendance of 12,000 poor children. Such witnesses could be made available if necessity required, to satisfy us of the efficiency of the teachers, and the general success attending the work of education. It is much preferable, however, to take the evidence of one who has been considered by American educationists, an unexceptionable authority. Mr. Mann has recorded his testimony with reference both to particular school visits and to the general character of the Prussian schools. He is, therefore, the most suitable authority on this occasion; the more so on account of the unreserved manner in which he discourses on the subject. Here is his testimony:—

“ With us it too often happens that if a higher branch,—Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Zoology, Botany,—is to be taught, both Teacher and Class must have text books. At the beginning of these text-books, all the technical names, and definitions are set down. These, before the pupil has any practical idea of their meaning, must be committed to memory. The book is then studied chapter by chapter. At the bottom of each page or at the end of the sections, are questions printed at full length. At the recitations the Teacher holds on to these leading strings. He introduces no collateral knowledge. He exhibits no relation between what is contained in the book, and other kindred subjects, or the actual business of men and the affairs of life. At length the day of examination comes. The pupils rehearse from memory with a suspicious fluency: on being asked for some useful application of their knowledge—some practical connexion between that knowledge and the concerns of life,—they are silent or give some ridiculous answer, which at once disparages science, and gratifies the ill-humour of some ignorant satirist. But the Prussian Teacher has no book; he needs none, he

teaches from a full mind. He cumbers and darkens the subject with no technical phraseology. He observes what proficiency the child has made, and then adapts his instructions both in quality and amount to the necessity of the case. He answers all questions; he solves all doubts. It is one of his objects at every recitation so to present ideas, that they shall start doubts and provoke questions. He connects the subjects of each lesson with all kindred and collateral ones, and shows its relations to the every-day duties and business of life; and should the most ignorant man ask him of what use such knowledge can be, he will prove to him in a word, that some of his own pleasures or means of subsistence are dependent upon it; or have been created or improved by it. In the mean time the children are delighted. Their perceptive powers are exercised; their reflective faculties are developed; their moral sentiments are cultivated."

Such is a specimen of a Prussian Schoolmaster; a man who not only knows a great deal more than he is required to teach, but knows also how to apply his acquirements to their right purpose. What more is wanted to make a good school? Is not this sufficient? The Teacher commands the respect of the parents, and consequently that of the children. Why? Because he is competent; because he knows his duty; because, in addition to his scholarship, he has a religious faith; and because he is, therefore, fit to assume the place which the parent ought to fill. But suppose he had been a person such as Mr. Mann says the American Teachers are. One who had attended two terms in an American Normal School, and there picked up, superficially, some crude notions about the materials and routine of a school, and, in addition, the necessary elements of "piety and morals;" would it not be necessary in such case to employ out-door means, such as are used in Boston, to force the children into attendance? And why would this be necessary in the American case, where the schools are free, and not in the Prussian, where the school-rate has to be paid? The answer is plain; that not only is the school system wrong, but the work of teaching, in the American Normal Schools, is misunderstood. This is no vague assertion. The United States' School Reports prove it to be correct.

In Toronto, the Board of School Trustees makes it a rule not to employ an applicant, with even a first-class Certificate, from the Normal School, provided any other teacher can be had. The reason assigned is, that the teachers trained in that institution are not competent, being considered remarkably superficial in their knowledge of the simple branches required to be taught in the Common Schools. The following remarks of one of the Trustees, reported in the *Globe* of 26th June last, corroborates what is here stated:—

"Mr. Riddel said he did not attach the slightest value to these first-class certificates. He had known first-class teachers turned out from the Normal School, who could not even spell common English words of one syllable correctly. There were undue facilities afforded for obtaining such certificates from the Normal School. He intended at some future day to move that all City Teachers be examined by the Superintendent, and a Committee of the Board."

The opinion of the Trustees is, unquestionably, not entertained with

out substantial reasons. It is not to be supposed that with their well-known prejudices in favor of the present school machinery they would willingly say one word to disparage the most vital of its compartments. If then the teachers prepared in the Normal School are deficient, and the country is to suffer the consequences of that deficiency, a very natural question arises: Where does the blame lie? Who is responsible? The Normal School is supported at a considerable expense, and to serve a specific purpose; to supply the Common School wants of the Province. Of what use is it then, if it cannot do the work for which it is intended? On this head, the opinion entertained of the teachers in the various School Sections of the Province, is too well known to require illustration here. One instance may be given, however, as a specimen. It is from the *Huron Signal* of 11th January last, a staunch free school paper:—

“Viewing the subject from these premises, it is matter of deep regret to be forced to the conclusion that the Town of Goderich occupies a less favorable position in the march of progress than it did four years ago. The interest taken in the cause of Common School Education, and the means of popular instruction have retrograded very seriously since that time, and unless a new impulse can be communicated to our Townsmen on this all-important matter, our excellent system of Provincial education will speedily become worse than a dead letter, in so far as Goderich is concerned. \* \* \* The complaint, in the present instance, is against the male department of the Common School, and regard for the best interests of the community cannot afford to spare it either through fear or favor. Of the qualifications of the gentleman who for about three years has held the place of Teacher in the Common School, it is not necessary to say one word. He came here with a recommendation from the Provincial Normal School, and that was all that was necessary in so far as “*recommendation*” was concerned. \* \* \* Whether owing to the extra energy, success and popularity of the teacher who immediately preceded him or to his own superior method, or to want of proper accommodation, we pretend not to determine, but certain it is, that the present teacher had not been six months in the place till it became quite evident that, either he was not qualified for the Common School or the Common School was not qualified for him, and that his longer continuance could not possibly be promotive of the interests of popular education.”

We must not shut out, from our sight, the fact that, in Toronto, the Board of School Trustees, with the best opportunities of ascertaining the qualifications of teachers, will not employ those who come from the Normal School with first-class certificates, provided any others are to be had. Clearly then, either the system itself is a wrong one, or the local machinery is defective and the heads of the institution have not been, themselves, properly trained in Normal School education in order to become fitted for the performance of their duties. Whichever of these causes it may be, certain it is that no other can be pointed to, as contributing to produce the abnormal condition of the Normal School. The government appropriation for the erection of the buildings, has been most munificent, and the stipulated annual grant for preparing a suitable number and proper class of teachers to fill the Common Schools of Upper Canada, has been arranged on a scale calculated to supply its utmost requirements. It cannot therefore be on the ground of the want of government liberality that the institution is incapable of doing its legitimate work.

Again, what guarantee is there that the teachers prepared, such as they are, will continue to follow the profession of teaching? What has become of the 1,264 Students attending the Normal School up to the close of the year 1853? Has the majority of them turned Clerks, or Store-keepers, or gone back to farming? The advertisements that appear daily in the newspapers for teachers, indicate one or other of two things; either that these 1,264 have, most of them, abandoned the profession, or they are not considered eligible by the Trustees of the various school sections. This is a material consideration. These teachers are prepared at the public expense; the instruction they receive at the Normal School is gratuitous, and the price of their board and lodging, while in attendance, is paid for partly from the public revenue. Yet if it is the case, that they abandon afterwards the profession, the public money becomes then wastefully expended, to the extent of that abandonment. Or if the estimate in which they are held by the School Trustees is such that they cannot get employment in the schools, the evil becomes then, not one of expenditure alone, but a total destitution of those educational facilities and instrumentalities which the government is supposed to have provided.

A farther point equally requiring consideration is the extent to which a defective means of normal school discipline operates to engender a conviction in the minds of the teachers that they have mistaken their calling, and how far this conviction induces them to abandon in disgust their original intention. We are told that in Germany there is no profession that ranks higher than that of a schoolmaster. The reason why this is the case, is sufficiently explained in the preceeding remarks. But imagine a young man, after the expiry of a period of two terms attendance at the Toronto normal school, with a certificate, which every one he meets regards with indifference if not with contempt. He applies for a school; is examined or, what is more likely, escapes this ordeal; and he obtains admission either from necessity, charity or sufferance. He commences his duties. The school is not so well attended as he anticipated it would be. The children are irregular, the parents are disrespectful and, at the close of his school term, his mortification is complete, when he comes to be paid for his services, to learn that the miserable allowance is considered more than he has earned. Is it likely that a young man so placed will continue, any longer than his immediate necessities require, in, what he now considers a thankless and disreputable profession? But does he perceive where the error lies? No,—like most others, he ascribes the fault to the miserly disposition of the Trustees or the ignorance of the people. The true cause he never discovers. His normal school education does not even qualify him to perceive that, in a Dutch or Prussian Normal Seminary, he could have been trained to equal at least the average of the Dutch or Prussian teachers; and thence to draw the logical inference, that the reason why he is not equal to them, and why he is not respected as they are, is because the Normal School system in Toronto is not constructed so as to be able to produce such a commodity.

In Europe, "the teacher makes the school." The teacher is the first

requisite; the school houses are a secondary consideration. The reverse is the rule in America; where school houses and large assessments are looked upon as the main indications of progress. It is not intended, here, to undervalue the necessity for proper buildings and suitable accommodation. What is objected to is, that the Superintendents and Trustees confine their attention to these wants, and, wholly, neglect that which is more essential, and without which, school houses, in an educational point of view, are valueless. We need go no farther than Toronto for proof of this. With a juvenile population, in 1854, of 9000 between the ages of five and sixteen, the average free Common School attendance was only 1445, while the Superintendents and Trustees had been straining every conceivable means to erect six capacious School Houses; declaring, in the most dogmatic terms, to those who pointed out the folly of their course, that it only wanted good school houses and large salaries to make good schools. The quality of the teachers was a subject not then considered worthy of much attention, as the price to be paid, it was stated, would soon secure a sufficient supply. Now three of these new buildings were occupied during most part of 1854, and high salaries were offered for teachers; yet, how have the calculations of the Superintendents and Trustees been realized? As stated, the attendance for the year averaged only 1445; a smaller attendance than in 1853, when the average was 1,502. Not only this, but the teachers are not graduates of the Normal School; so that the Normal School, may be said by some, to have contributed, directly, nothing to the credit or disgrace of the condition in which the Common Schools of Toronto are now placed.

With regard to the expense, which would be a matter of little moment if the schools were efficient, the assessment in 1847, the year previous to the adoption of free schools, and with an average attendance of 1,256, was £496; whereas, in 1854, after a five years experiment of free schools and, with an average attendance of 1,445, the assessment amounted to £4,225. What makes the disparity still greater is the increase in the population of school age from 5,000, in 1847, to 9,000 in 1854. But it may be objected, that these remarks should apply only to Toronto, and that they cannot be taken as a criterion of the results, generally, throughout the Province. Such an objection cannot, however, be sustained, for a very good reason; namely, that the present common school system aims at the general adoption of free schools, school houses, and profuse assessments, on the Boston plan; and, as in Toronto, the free schools with all their requisite machinery have been in full blast during a period of six years, it is consequently the field for observation, and the spot to which public attention should be directed, for a specimen of what the results would be in other places if the present system should be generally carried out. In no part of the Province is the system so complete as in Toronto. The system is not considered perfect without the general adoption of free schools, and as these schools cannot be said to have got a proper trial in any other part of Canada it would not, therefore, be fair to try and escape from the

necessity of assuming the experiment in Toronto to be the test of the merits of the entire system.\*

But Toronto is not the only place in America where the system has been fully tested. Notwithstanding the manifold assertions and the brilliant pictures which have appeared in the Annual Reports and the Journal of Education, concerning the Massachusetts schools, an examination of the official returns will be the best means to ascertain the exact truth. Before proceeding to the evidence of the official reports, it may be well to state that two normal schools were opened in Massachusetts in 1839, and another in 1840. It is proper to keep this in view, in order to be able to appreciate, in the following extracts, the complaints on the score of bad teachers, and thence to draw a parallel with the case of Canada. The result cannot fail to produce a conviction that the teachers and the mode of preparing them are no better in Massachusetts than with us, and that the statements which have been circulated, at the public expense, throughout every municipality in the Province, are not born out by the tenor of the official reports; and, therefore, have had a tendency to mislead the public opinion.

The first witness is Mr. Mann, who says, in his Revised Report already described,

"The public schools of many towns and the large number of highly respectable academies and private schools, carry forward a numerous body of young men and women to such a degree of literary attainments as enrolls them in the list of candidates for school-keeping. Students in our Colleges; ambitious young men, who are looking forward to some other employment, actually more lucrative, and, in public estimation, more honourable, and who must obtain a little money, as a means of securing their ultimate object; many mechanics and farmers, possessed of more than ordinary intelligence and attainment, and who were renowned, when they went to school, for doing all the "hard sums" in the arithmetical text books;—all these have been candidates for public school keeping. Added to this, the average rate of

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TORONTO COMMON SCHOOL STATISTICS.

| Year. |      | Children of School Age. |      | Average Attendance. | Government Grant. |     |    | City Assessment. |     |       | Rate Bill. |    |     |       |    |    |
|-------|------|-------------------------|------|---------------------|-------------------|-----|----|------------------|-----|-------|------------|----|-----|-------|----|----|
|       |      |                         |      |                     | £                 | s.  | d. | £                | s.  | d.    | £          | s. | d.  |       |    |    |
| 1844  | .... | —                       | .... | 1,194               | ...               | 467 | 9  | 4                | ... | 672   | 8          | 4  | ... | 237   | 17 | 6  |
| 1845  | .... | —                       | .... | 1,108               | ...               | 479 | 14 | 0                | ... | 694   | 5          | 3  | ... | 747   | 18 | 0  |
| 1846  | .... | 4,450                   | .... | 1,221               | ...               | 473 | 17 | 0                | ... | 727   | 17         | 0  | ... | 809   | 11 | 6  |
| 1847  | .... | —                       | .... | 1,256               | ...               | 467 | 12 | 5                | ... | 496   | 0          | 0  | ... | 908   | 0  | 0  |
| 1848  | .... | —                       | .... | 1,431               | ...               | 474 | 7  | 6                | ... | 497   | 5          | 0  | ... | Free. |    |    |
| 1849  | .... | 6,149                   | .... | 1,325               | ...               | 423 | 19 | 2                | ... | 493   | 7          | 6  | ... | Free. |    |    |
| 1850  | .... | 6,750                   | .... | 1,059               | ...               | 369 | 13 | 6                | ... | 799   | 0          | 0  | ... | 731   | 14 | 10 |
| 1851  | .... | 7,773                   | .... | 1,366               | ...               | 497 | 5  | 0                | ... | 1,909 | 0          | 0  | ... | Free. |    |    |
| 1852  | .... | 7,805                   | .... | 1,545               | ...               | 608 | 17 | 0                | ... | 1,950 | 0          | 0  | ... | Free. |    |    |
| 1853  | .... | 9,000                   | .... | 1,502               | ...               | 737 | 6  | 4                | ... | 3,057 | 0          | 0  | ... | Free. |    |    |
| 1854  | .... | —                       | .... | 1,445               | ...               | 737 | 6  | 4                | ... | 4,225 | 0          | 0  | ... | Free. |    |    |

The average attendance at the Roman Catholic Separate Schools is not included in this statement. The number of Roman Catholic children attending the Common Schools was comparatively small, and the number receiving education would have been few had not the Separate Schools been established. The great increase of pupils in the Separate Schools is, therefore, to be attributed to their denominational character. In 1852, the attendance was 220; in 1853, 666; and in 1854, 687.

compensation given to teachers in Massachusetts has far exceeded that which has been given in any of the neighboring states. Hence, in the autumn of the year, hosts of adventurers flock hither, from Maine, from New Hampshire, from Vermont, and from Connecticut, in quest of employment as teachers in our schools. Some of these are full, not only of enterprise, but of talent; but, under such circumstances, it would be strange indeed, if among the fine gold there should not be found something of dross. All these are competitors for our Public Schools. They often exhibit recommendations of a highly imaginative character,—recommendations which prove the good will of their signers, far more than their good sense or their trustworthiness; for it is well known that the facility with which such recommendations can be obtained is the scandal of our people. What barrier, then, but the vigilance and intelligence of our school committees, shall prevent our schools from being invaded by practical immorality, by literary imposture, and by an inaptitude for all government except the government of fear and force? What but the fidelity of school committees shall prevent sound knowledge and high talent from being thrust aside by ignorance and pretension? The interests of all good teachers, emphatically the interests of the rising generation, demand, by every consideration that can appeal to patriotism, to philanthropy, or to the sense of religious obligation, that the legal duty of examining teachers should be performed without fear, or favor, or exception. It has happened, a thousand times, that prosperity or adversity has shone or frowned upon the schools of a town,—like sunshine or frost upon the early flowers of spring, as it has been blest or cursed with a faithful or a neglectful school committee.

“Yet it cannot be denied that, for every public consideration demanding a thorough examination of teachers, there is a selfish one which resists it. Individuals in a district or a town, who in their own minds, have appropriated to themselves the ensuing term of the schools, may, by management or collusion, secure the choice of a committee, who, either through inability or favoritism, will make the examination only a polite and facile ceremony of introduction into the school; or,—what has not unfrequently happened,—the expectants will secure the choice of a prudential committee, who will open to them the door of the school-house without any examination at all. Sometimes it is not difficult for a person, through his relatives and friends, to create an apparent public opinion in a district, which shall seem to demand, that the individual shall be selected to keep the school who has himself been the fraudulent author of the factitious opinion that points to him. All persons, too, who are intending to obtain a school, but who are fearful of the results of an examination, will, of course, be opposed to the principle of the law which requires an examination, and will therefore be ready to aid those who strive to evade it.”

The second witness is the Reverend Barnas Sears, Secretary to the Board of Education for the year 1850. The following is from his Report for that year,

“On the paucity of well-trained teachers,—the laxity and irregularity which prevail in regard to the selection of them,—the low rate of compensation, and frequent removals, much has already been said, but not enough to produce the proper effect. With respect to the evil first named, the remedy must be the work of time. A new class of teachers cannot be created in a day. The other evils admit of a speedier cure. If intelligent and practical men, in all our towns and villages, would stand up in public and reason the matter out before the people, it would not be long before these vital parts of the Common School system would be brought into a much more healthy and vigorous condition.

“The irregular attendance of those who belong to the schools is still a subject of complaint in very many of the reports of the school committees. It is to be hoped that the people will listen to the remonstrances which are repeated on this subject, from year to year, and take into earnest consideration the counsels and recommendations contained in the reports above-mentioned.

Some degree of irregularity will, of course, always exist. The absences, here complained of, however, are those which are wholly unnecessary and inexcusable.

"The faults committed by parents in neglecting to visit and encourage the schools, and to awaken in their own children a love of knowledge, in allowing them to grow up without the restraints of proper discipline, and in officiously interfering, at times, with the regular discipline of the schools, would, of themselves, furnish ample scope for an instructive volume. Here, indeed, is the root of many of the worst evils with which committees and teachers have to contend."—p. 29, 30. •

To the Report of Mr. Sears is appended an abstract of the "School Committees Reports," from which the following selections are taken, as a specimen of their general tenor.

"The town is nominally divided into four districts. For each district a prudential committee is appointed, as a general thing, in rotation; one man taking his turn in the office, and then another. The one chosen then looks around to engage a teacher. But public sentiment does not require in a prudential committee a practical knowledge of the business of school teaching, nor does it hold him responsible for selecting a well qualified teacher. One man perhaps feels bound to engage the first that applies for the school; a custom that will do very well in a corn-mill, but is quite too absurd in a matter like this, in which the choice should be made with sole regard to qualifications."

"Another man offers the school to a relative, or friend, or neighbor, who may be desirous of teaching. The result of this *may* be the selection of a very good teacher, and often has been so. But the practice opens the way for one to be chosen from a regard to convenience, or private interests, more than to the public good."—*Lincoln*, p. 93.

"The prudential committee contracts with a person (frequently a stranger) to keep his school, provided he can get approbated. The candidate delays an application for an examination until just before the time to begin the school; or perhaps he is only contracted with on the Saturday preceding the Monday on which he is to commence his labors of love. At this late hour he comes before the committee for his approbation. They wrestle with him almost as long as Jacob did with the angel at Pennel. He halts in his answers to easy and common-place questions as bad as the committee do, whether they shall proceed further with the examination or cut it short where it is. He finally gets through with an examination after some sort of fashion, and the question is, whether he shall be set at work, and thus go halting all the days of his life, or whether, in the spirit of love and kindness, he shall be told to stay at Jericho, until his beard is grown? On the one hand, the school is expected to begin on Monday, and scholars and parents will both be grievously disappointed if it does not begin—the applicant, besides, is young; it is his maiden effort; he is endowed with an exalted sensibility, and he is exceedingly diffident. A rejection may therefore operate to discourage him from further exertion, and thus the raw material for a decent schoolmaster be spoiled in the making up. On the other hand, his qualifications do not entitle him to the approbation of the committee, although a term or two at a normal school might convert him into a decent schoolmaster. If we set him at work, the money of the district will be thrown away, if no further damage be done; and if we do not, a great outcry is set up at once; a huge injustice has been perpetrated; a base conspiracy has been entered into to break down a young man, whom the committee, peradventure, have never seen, until the evening of his examination; one and all, they are charged with gross favoritism, and their doom is summarily sealed up against the great day of account at the next annual meeting."—*Mendon*, p. 99.

\*Committees cannot be too cautious about engaging itinerant applicants, of

whose merits they are entirely ignorant, merely upon the strength of a written recommendation from some person also unknown, as the most stupid imbecile would hardly fail of procuring such a certificate, should he desire it. Some further requirement than this is necessary to protect our schools from imposition.

"We know it is said that the school committee have the power,—they can reject a teacher if they think him unqualified. This is true; still their power is only negative. If they refuse to approbate a teacher, what evidence have they that the next one presented will be any better qualified? Besides, a teacher may be able to answer satisfactorily all the questions proposed, and yet the committee feel confident that his capacity for government is not sufficient to enable him to conduct a school successfully. Should they, however, in such a case refuse to grant a certificate, the almost inevitable consequence would be to create a storm in the district, such as would, in all probability, prove the overthrow of the succeeding teacher. In view of this fact, school committees are often obliged to choose the least of two evils,—either to employ an incompetent teacher, or run the risk of creating a war in the district that may prove disastrous to succeeding schools.—*Phillipston*, p. 100.

"But to pass on to the difficulties, which at present seem to impede the progress of education among us, they would mention first, that as we are now situated, there is no responsibility felt and acknowledged by any as to the capacity of teachers to perform their task in governing and instructing the schools. If a teacher is hired, and passes examination before the committee, (which a person of no capability to govern a school, and of no capacity to impart instruction may do) he goes to his school and continues there until the money is exhausted, though all concerned may be perfectly satisfied that it would be far better for the children if he had taken the money at the beginning and never opened the school. What your committee wish to be understood, is, that as things now stand, no person or persons feel any responsibility for the waste of the children's time, and of the district's money."—*Sutton*, p. 102.

"Among the multitude of those who offer themselves in the market for teachers, like merchantable commodities, posted up with numberless recommendations from teachers of high schools, too often bought with tuition bills already paid, or with the prospect of others unpaid, it is not unfrequently a matter of difficulty to decide who will make the best teacher."—*Upton*, p. 103.

"Though the qualification of some of the candidates for the summer schools were not what they should be, yet we rejected but one.

"The question readily suggests itself why we approbated those that had not satisfactory qualifications. In reply, the only justification we can offer, is, that better material was not offered."—*Uxbridge*, p. 103.

"If a candidate is presented for examination, and the committee think he is not qualified to teach, and very properly withhold a certificate, then the censure falls on *them*;—it generally excites feelings of prejudice on the part of individuals in the district where the person rejected was a candidate, and they are accused of acting with selfish motives, or more to show their authority, or something else which is very far from the real cause. In such cases, the committee feel sometimes almost compelled to waive their objections and grant a license, fearing worse consequences if another should be employed, with all this disaffection on the part of the parents. \* \*

"Your committee have not seen fit to reject but one candidate for teaching, during the year; although in two or three instances they were not satisfied with the qualifications of the applicants, and should have refused their certificates, if they had not reason to suppose that, by so doing, they should make a bad matter still worse."—*Brimfield*, p. 107.

"But those that presume to teach, are, by no means, all of them capable of making a good school, if they have all the co-operation that parents ought to afford. Many incompetent persons seek employment in the school room, and obtain it, and will obtain it, till there is a different system brought into use, in regard to employing teachers."—*Northfield*, p. 108.

"Much is said by some persons, that the money raised is not well expended. We admit that it is not expended as well as it might be; but we are confident that it will never be better expended while the present arrangement continues."—*Shutesbury*, p. 110.

"The practice, however, is subject to some very grave objections. \* \* \* Your Committee are fully aware, that no very great progress can be made in our schools from their present position, until a radical change is effected, by some means, in the estimate you place upon teachers."—*Monterey*, page 111.

"In the opinion of your committee, there is one course of practice among us that deserves correction. It is a matter of fact, that not unfrequently there are several applicants for the same school; applicants who perhaps are of every shade and hue, from the well-matured and thoroughly qualified to the infantile and grossly incompetent. Yet the prudential committee, moved by undue haste or prompted by the importunity of some relative or friend, engages unqualifiedly the services of a particular one, and rejects peremptorily the others. The committee then fixes the day for the school to begin, and at a late hour presents to the examining committee the proposed instructor, one or two days perhaps before the school is to commence. The examination takes place, the proposed instructor is found quite deficient, but the prudential committee knows of no other person he can employ at so late a day, and thus the examining committee must grant a certificate to the candidate, or incur the danger of having no school for the season."—*Otis*, page 111.

"Teachers are frequently selected merely with reference to family connections or personal acquaintance; or perhaps more frequently with reference to the smallness of the sum that must be paid for their services, and this, too, in districts which have funds accumulating in the treasury, contrary to the spirit, if not the letter of the law. One instance, at least, has come to the knowledge of the committee, of a teacher who had been tried and proved to be well qualified, on being proposed, rejected in favor of another entirely inexperienced, but who of course could be obtained for less wages, and in a district where there is no want of funds sufficient to pay as good a teacher as they choose to have. In another instance, the prudential committee avowed as his reason for his selection of a teacher, that his denominational preferences would render him especially obnoxious to a particular individual in the district! The school terminated, as might be expected, in disaster. \* \* \* In another instance, a teacher was presented for a particular district, the contract having already been made, subject to the condition of obtaining a certificate. She was examined, approved, and commenced her school. A short time afterwards, the prudential committee who contracted with her, inquired of one of us in reference to the character of her examination. Our inference was that he doubted her qualifications to teach; and yet he engaged her as a teacher! \* \* \* Candidates are sometimes brought to us, and approved for the reasons which have been stated, but who would be among the last persons we should select as teachers."—*Sandisfield*, page 112.

"One great source of evil to the schools is, the constant change of teachers. About every term the prudential committees from several districts send strangers to the town committee for examination. These new teachers have the literary qualifications, and bring testimonials of good moral character, and according to law we must approbate them. But, after all, who knows whether they have any tact for teaching? The town and prudential committee, ignorant of this most essential prerequisite to a teacher's success, set these strangers to work; and in a month or so, the committee find that this teacher is too choleric and too severe,—that teacher too easy and careless,—

another too stupid or clownish,—and one or all, not fit to be in the particular schools where they have commenced operations.”

“The committee see and feel all this, and yet there is not enough of deficiency in these teachers to authorize stopping the school, lest you offend somebody, and divide the district.”—*Braintree*, page 113.

“The truth is, and it might as well be told, the committee are every year obliged to give certificates to persons, respecting whom they anticipate nothing else but a failure to keep a good school. The candidates answer most of the questions asked in arithmetic, geography, and grammar; they read and write respectably well, and have a good theory of school government and instruction; and yet there are some indescribable marks about them, which lead us to feel that the school room is not their place. We cannot reject them; the community would not sustain us in doing it. We should mortify the individuals, irritate their friends, incur the censure of good men, and probably transcend our legal powers also. For the law does not account of us *prophets*. It bids us not to *guess* upon teachers, but to *examine* them. And though, in some instances, a shrewd guess were worth more than a catechetical examination, still we are shut up to the latter. We sign the certificate with a hesitating hand, from dire necessity, and sorely against our judgment. The teacher goes into his school, and, perhaps, by much bolstering of the committee, he keeps it through. *But it was time and money wasted.*—*Wrentham*, page 114.

The above extracts are taken from a collection, mostly all containing complaints to the same purport.

In New York, the condition of the schools is much the same, and the teachers also. Mr. Joseph McKeen, Superintendent of Common Schools for the City and County of New York, in his report for 1850, says:—

“I have examined and granted certificates of qualification to 24 male and to 92 females during the past year. A large part of these were for subordinate places as assistant teachers; and their certificates, by reason of their inexperience or limited acquirements, were so graded. Only 31 of the highest grade have been granted; of these, 15 were male and 16 female teachers. Many of our best teachers are females, and they follow the business of teaching, professionally, for a series of years; but this is rather the exception than the rule. *A larger proportion of them go into teaching as a matter of temporary expediency; and the average time of continuance in this employment is not probably more than three years.*”—Page 125.

The most important testimony, however, is that of Mr. McKeen, on the boasted schools and teachers in Mr. Maun’s famous free school State. It is from the same report as the above extract; and is valuable, chiefly on account of the very pointed manner in which it derides the Boston free school fanaticism. Mr. McKeen says he knows as much about the New England free schools as any of their famous eulogists, and he tells candidly what they are. His evidence furnishes a sad commentary on the ignorance, stupidity and fanaticism of American educationists, and exposure of the gross falsehoods which they have been, systematically, in the habit of keeping in circulation. Here are Mr. McKeen’s words:

“It is commonly expected of a New-England superintendent of schools, when the subject of free schools is under consideration, that he will run off into an eulogy upon the pilgrims, Massachusetts, and the fathers who settled these Eastern States. I have often thought that these eulogiums were more faithful to the filial reverence which is due to the good men who were our ancestors, than to the veritable history of the early days of the common schools.

As a son of New-England, I claim to know something of their educational institutions. Their colleges and higher seminaries of learning have always been among the best in this country, and they have contributed in a great degree to make and sustain a respect among the people for learning. Common schools have been taught from time immemorial in the district school houses, for about three months in the winter, by students, and by other young men of various callings, who were but partially educated, and that partial education having but little if any reference to teaching. A long vacation ensued, and the school passed into the hands of some young woman, who tried her skill for the first time in the line of instruction. In this way a school was *kept* for half the year, without much of professional skill or system about it. But it was so much better than no school; so much better than was done in some other parts of the country, that sons, "to the manor born," have written and published laudatory chronicles of the teachers, until they are now almost fulsome. *The truth is, there is to this day no perfected system of common school education in this country. That of the State of New York is probably the best, and that is very far from being what it ought to be.*"—Page 1:6.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CONCLUSION.

In the foregoing pages the disciplinary religious character of education in Europe is contrasted with the secular system of instruction in America; and the results are shown to be the necessary fruits, in the one case, of the religious, and, in the other, of the secular principle, on which each is respectively based.

The most remarkable contraries are furnished by a comparison of the two systems. In Europe, common schools are intended for the poorer classes, and free schools for absolute paupers; while in America they are intended for *all*, notwithstanding that only the poorer classes frequent them. In Europe the teacher is a religious moral centre; in America he is a secular machine. In Europe, competent teachers are the chief consideration; whereas, in America, the main objects are ornamental school houses and large assessments. In Europe, the teacher requires to know a great deal more than the simple branches which form the studies of a common school; in America, he is not expected to know nor is it considered necessary that he should be acquainted with any thing beyond the routine prescribed in the school regulations. In Europe, appropriations from the revenue or direct assessments by the municipalities bear a proportion to the number of poor children receiving education at the Common Schools; in America, the government grants and the municipal assessments are calculated on the assumption that *all the children, both rich and poor*, are educated at the Common Schools. In Europe, the teachers educated at the Normal Seminaries, chiefly at the public expense, follow the profession of teaching in after life; in America, they mostly abandon it, causing a wasteful expenditure of the public funds appropriated to the main-

tenance of these institutions. In Europe, parental rights are respected by the governments; in America, these rights are superseded. The rule, in Europe, is religious nonconformity; in America, it is uniformity. In Europe, the denominational voluntary principle is preserved; in America, the unsectarian principle is compulsory. And, finally, in Europe, the school house stands along side of the church; the pastor and the teacher are mutually co-operating powers, working with a united purpose; while, in America, the law enacts that there shall be no connection between the two, because the religion of the church is sectarianism, and that of the school-room and the teacher is, or ought to be Unitarian "piety and morals."

Such are the characteristic features which distinguish the Common School system of Europe from that of America. They exhibit an extreme repugnance to each other; so much so that, by the most severe scrutiny, we fail to discover one particular in which they can be said to coincide. So, also, with the operation of the school machinery, the practical details and results of the work of education and the experiences thence derived, which altogether exhibit a contrariness and opposition that would be difficult to explain, had we not cognizance of the radical difference, in the bases, of the two systems.

It is not intended, here, to make any recommendation, as to which system would be best for Canada; or even to pass an opinion on the separate merits of different organizations which might be made to give our schools a distinct and truly Canadian character. While some might favor rate-bill schools, aided by government grants, with government inspection only so far as to secure the efficiency of the schools and the proper application of the money, leaving the business of teaching in all other respects open to competition and to the voluntary arrangements of school sections; others might approve of leaving the management in the hands of the religious persuasions, retaining still the right of government inspection as to the efficiency of the schools and the proper application of the government aid. Questions of this nature will be decided best, by a wholesome public opinion, after the results of the present experiment shall have become sufficiently known and shall have received a due share of attention. The object of these pages, as has been stated, is, simply, to furnish a body of facts, and to place the subject of Common School education, in such light and in such summary form, as will assist public opinion, in determining on some school plan that will be both permanent and definite.

