

THE CARLETON SENTINEL.

WOODSTOCK, OCTOBER 29, 1850.

We readily give place to the following Lecture on Education, delivered in the Hall of the Mechanics' Institute on the evening of the 11th inst., by Mr. D'Avery, as we consider it a subject of the greatest importance to the people of this Province. Our hope is, that something will yet be done by this gentleman to put our Parish Schools on an equality with those of other countries. We consider him well qualified for the undertaking, and have no doubt that if our Government would entrust the matter to his hands, that a proper system would speedily be established:—

LECTURE ON EDUCATION BY MR. D'AVERY, GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

At the request of the President and Vice President of this Institute, I have this evening undertaken the somewhat arduous task of delivering a Lecture on Education, and I feel that I owe it to you as well as to myself, in the first place to explain how it is that I have at so short a notice consented to venture on a track so often trodden by men in every way much better qualified for the task,—and to hope that I could say anything either new or entertaining on so hacknied a subject as Education.

The time which I have passed in this Province and especially that which I have lately spent in visiting the schools in this and the neighbouring County, has enabled me to become thoroughly acquainted with the real educational wants of the people,—and I trust also with the best means of supplying those wants,—of affording that amount of instruction which is most essential to the well-being of the majority, and which, rejecting as impossible, (and as useless, if possible,) every attempt at making the rising generation learned Philosophers or profound Mathematicians, shall provide for one and all such a well laid foundation of really useful information as will fit them for the ordinary business of life, and enable any aspiring member to raise thereon whatever superstructure of scientific knowledge his time and his means may hereafter permit him to erect.

The Common, or Parish Schools, are the means through which this vast amount of good is to be effected, and on their proper management depends the success of every measure which may be adopted by the Government for the attainment of the object in view, but it cannot be concealed that almost the whole of the management, good or bad, rests with the people themselves, and that without their ardent concurrence and strenuous support, no Government measure—no Legislative enactment—can by any possibility accomplish the desired good,—the people must be their own best friends in this matter—they must become thoroughly convinced of the blessings of education—they must ever bear in mind that the welfare and happiness of their children is a sacred charge which they may not without great sin neglect, and that the best and surest mode of making them happy and prosperous men and women, is to bestow upon them as large an amount of precious knowledge as is consistent with their station, and thus secure to them a lasting benefit of which no future adverse circumstances can deprive them. In order to effect this, the first step is to consider knowledge as a thing entirely apart from all party, and as beyond the influence of those feelings which actuate men in much of the ordinary business of life. Elementary information is excellent in itself and excellent for all. It will confer its blessings equally and impartially on the Roman Catholic, or Protestant,—the Whig or the Tory—and the only justifiable contest in these matters is, as to who shall secure for himself the largest portion of its blessings. This strife, and this only, is praise-worthy,—and it ought to exist in every District so as to make each one anxious to obtain the best Teacher,—the best school house, and consequently the best conducted School in the Parish; such a contest as this would speedily raise the character of the Common Schools of the Province, it would effectually improve them in every respect, and at once secure a respectable position, and an adequate salary for the good teacher, while the bad ones would look in vain for employment.

Such is the view I have adopted as the result of my enquiries on the subject, and I thought that I could not better show the sense I entertain of the kindness with which I have every where been treated, nor more effectually discharge my duty to the Government which employs me, than by endeavouring to impress upon the minds of all parents a conviction of the great responsibility which rests upon them, and of the power which they possess of advancing or retarding the education of their children.

It is this feeling which has induced me to address you this evening, and as I trust what I have said will serve to free me from the charge of presumption, so do I hope that the

harrassing nature of my present avocations, and the very short time I have had to prepare, will induce you to judge leniently of the result of my hurried labours.

As I have already remarked the subject of this evening's Lecture is so thoroughly hacknied, and has been so very frequently discussed, well or ill, by men of all grades, and by writers of every party, that it may at first seem as though I had catered but poorly for your entertainment, and that any other topic than this of Education would have proved more interesting.

But I fervently hope that this impression will be removed as I proceed in this evening's discourse, and that I shall be so fortunate as to convince my hearers as thoroughly as I am myself convinced, that there is no worldly consideration—no earthly subject so deeply interesting to all—so entirely deserving of profound study and reflection, as the one upon which we are now engaged—none which is so universally entitled to the attention of every man who is anxious for the prosperity and happiness of his native land—of every parent who fondly hopes for the temporal and eternal welfare of his children. I do believe that the enlightened friends of humanity may at length congratulate themselves on the arrival of the time when the subject of education has acquired that strong interest in the public mind which will ensure a full enquiry into its merits, and consequently a speedy adoption of measures for bringing into full operation its mighty powers for good. The sneers of the ignorant, the supercilious and the time-serving, and the fierce opposition of the interested, are now alike unavailing to prevent a rapid onward course in the path of improvement; nor will our progress be henceforth much deterred by the nervous fear of the timid or feeble-minded, who are at length finding out that like other cowards they have mistaken the object of their alarm, and that the imagined monster on which they had not dared steadily to fix their eyes, is in fact a most friendly and benign power; in a word, that popular knowledge instead of being really a source of danger and insecurity, is the best guarantee for public tranquility and the rights of property.

Education is to inspire the love of truth as the supremest good, and to clarify the vision of the intellect to discern it. It is the art of preparing youth for the business of after life—of qualifying him for intercourse with his fellow-men and for the efficient discharge of the duties which will devolve upon him in the several relations of citizen, husband and parent.—it is the art of cultivating his mental faculties—of inscribing in fair and ineffable characters on the pure tablet of his mind, all that is manly and good—of preserving it from spot or blemish—of surrounding him as if were with an impenetrable barrier of moral and religious principles which shall effectually preserve him from the evil designs of the wicked, and enable him to pass through the busy and stormy scenes of life with a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards his fellow-man.

This is my interpretation of the word—this is what I conceive to be meant by Education,—and if I am right, who shall dare to say that the subject is one lacking interest, who shall presume to dispute the claims which it so loudly asserts to our consideration?

If then we agree that Education signifies the preparation of youth for the business of after-life, we shall readily understand that in all ages and in all nations there must have been some sort of education necessary—some powers by which the young were taught the practices and usages of their parents, and qualified for their future life.

In the earliest ages of the world this education was probably united to the skilful management of flocks and herds—to the rude but sufficient cultivation of the soil—the practice of the chase or of predatory warfare, and the preparation of their simple food,—to which as civilization advanced, was added the rude manufactures which supplied them with weapons and clothing. This education was commensurate with their wants, and no improvement could take place in it except as the condition of the people improved. But we must here remark that the improvement in their mental, bore no proportion to that made in their physical condition,—during many centuries but little advance was made beyond what I have stated; the whole knowledge of the world was confined to the few, and the grossest ignorance characterized the mass. In Europe we find that the Clergy were the sole depositaries of learning, that the nobility and the laity learnt absolutely nothing beyond the exercises which qualified them for the field and the chase, and that the noblest and wealthiest Baron could rarely write his name, or read it when written for him; and it was not till the Reformation that anything was done for popular instruction,—the first impulse was given by the struggle in favour of the great Protestant principle, of the right of private judgement in matters of religion. At the time of the Reformation there was no popular Literature. Latin was the universal medium of the learned. All works of science, history or philosophy whether ancient or modern, were published only in Latin or Greek. A knowledge of the dead languages was then indispensable to every student. Education therefore meant at that time, as some people think it does now, instruction only in Latin or Greek, and as this could not be afforded by the poor, popular instruction in any form could not be said to exist. But the Bible began to be translated into the vulgar tongue,—the Reformers appealed from the authority of the fathers to the Scriptures. An intense interest was excited by the controversy—the Bible was a book which to the public at large had not been known to exist, its appearance was like a new revelation. All classes were anxious to peruse its contents and make them known,—the art of Printing just then discovered, gave wings to its circulation,—multitudes learned to read that

they might read the Bible, and Schools began to be established for the benefit of those who required to be taught. Popular instruction was therefore necessarily in the first instance exclusively of a religious character.—Instruction in the sciences or in the useful arts, or the diffusion of knowledge, in the common acceptation of the term, was not thought of,—the object was simply to spread a knowledge of the Scriptures—to make Bible readers and Protestants,—for secular instruction the materials did not exist, nor was its use and importance understood.

This then was the first step made towards the education of the people—that knowledge which had hitherto been confined to the students of our Universities, (I mean that acquired by an acquaintance with the dead languages) still indeed lay beyond the reach of the majority, but reading and writing were generally learnt, and the word of God was no longer a sealed book to all but the priests. Ever since the progress has been gradual but sure, and in the present day, blessed as we are with so many facilities for the acquirement of knowledge, and surrounded as we are by so many incentives to learning, we look back with wonder and with pity, upon the ignorance and apathy of our forefathers.

But great as has been the change in this respect,—wonderful as has been the amount of good effected, much still remains to be done, and we are still far from that point at which it is so desirable to arrive, when Education will be all that I have before described it.

In order to render the discussion of this matter more intelligible to such of my hearers as may not be well acquainted with the usual routine of education in England, I shall briefly state what are the facilities afforded there for the intellectual training of youth, more particularly as regards the wealthier classes, as exhibiting the means and appliances for securing what is termed a first rate education.

Boarding Schools of various classes and of various merits, some good, some bad, but all having the same object in view—or at all events all professing to effect the same object,—I mean to teach a certain amount of Latin and Greek, prepare the pupil for one of the Public Schools.

The principal of these are Westminster, Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Charter House and Rugby. These are essentially Grammar Schools, that is to say Schools for teaching the learned languages, or Latin and Greek, and for no other purpose, and this legal meaning of the term "Grammar School," has been fixed by various legal decisions.

The next step is to one or other of the Universities—to Oxford or to Cambridge, and we shall as we proceed, discover how well calculated these ancient seats of learning are, to complete the work that has been so happily begun.

As it is my wish in these Lectures thoroughly to investigate the question of good or bad methods of instruction, to explain to my hearers all that I have myself ascertained on the subject of education in various parts of the world, I think I cannot do better than devote a few pages to the consideration of what has been done for the cause in our parent country.

Thus then in England, the education given to the sons of the Aristocracy and of the wealthy, so as to fit them for the business of after life, has ever been what is termed a Classical education, that is to say a study of the Greek and Latin Languages, and of the matter contained in Greek and Latin books, and I shall now proceed to investigate the matter, and endeavour to ascertain whether this Classical education be in reality the very best that can possibly be given. The opinion is daily gaining strength that the objects and means of Education in England are to a great extent alike erroneous; and the importance of effecting a speedy change in that which is bad, cannot be denied when we recollect the great powers with which, by the institutions of the country, our youths are intrusted so soon as they have reached the age of manhood. It is then an enquiry worthy the grave attention, not only of parents in the upper ranks, but of all who have at heart the progress of just and wise Legislation, and the administration of good Government. It is I say an inquiry worthy of grave and general attention whether a portion of the time now spent in attempting (and for the most part vainly attempting) to familiarize the young with the nice distinction of languages now fallen into disuse, or at best to make them acquainted through the medium of those languages with the laws, habits and modes of thinking of nations long since passed away, with whom we have comparatively little in common and who, however bright they may appear amidst the contemporary gloom, were nevertheless in all that affects the great interests of mankind, in the whole range of the sciences, and in almost all the arts of life, above all in an acquaintance with the great principles of morality and religious truth, immeasurably our inferiors; whether a portion of the time so employed would not be more advantageously occupied in endeavouring by instruction conveyed in their native tongue, to make them acquainted with the men, manners, and institutions of their own times? to lay open to them the principles of sound morality illustrated by examples drawn from passing events; to give them an insight into those truths of science, which ages of unwearied research have at last brought to light, and which are leading on perhaps to truths of yet greater moment.

(To be Continued.)

FRESHET.—The water in the St. John is at this moment as high as a common Spring freshet, and much higher than we have ever before seen it at this season of the year.—We expect to hear of great loss of property on the lowlands below Fredericton. The greater part of the hay and fences must in our opinion be carried off, and large quantities of potatoes and other things be destroyed. Some little damage has been done to the dams at the mouth of the Maduxnakik, but not of sufficient importance to delay operations at the Mills over a few days.

On our fifth page will be found some excellent remarks copied from the *Church Witness* of the 16th inst., on the forms and ceremonies observed at the opening of the Shevock Church, in the diocese of Exeter. In our next we will endeavour to give a few extracts from the article alluded to.