

APPENDIX.

[B.]

First Report of the Visiter appointed to inspect the District Schools throughout the Island.

To the Members of the Board of Education, Charlottetown.

GENTLEMEN,

In laying this my first Report before your Board, I deem it altogether unnecessary for me to offer any remarks upon the value and importance of Education in all countries, and among all classes of the community. Without education man is altogether unable, not only to fill any respectable station in society, but even to discharge aright the most ordinary duties of life. This is, indeed, now, so universally felt and acknowledged, that it becomes an object of every parent's first care and ambition, to have this blessing imparted to his children.

Though various laws have been enacted from time to time by the Legislature of this Island, for the regulation of Schools, and considerable sums of money have been appropriated for their encouragement, I regret to have it to state, from recent personal observation, that the system of instruction pursued in many of the country schools throughout the Island is extremely defective, and consequently but little really useful and substantial knowledge is acquired by the children attending them.

This appears to me to arise from several causes; some of these perhaps unavoidable in a new country like this. In many of the settlements, the inhabitants are poor—and having to struggle with numerous difficulties in procuring the means of subsistence for their families, the education of their children is with them an object of mere secondary consideration. And even when they do turn their attention to this important object, they are not (generally speaking) very scrupulous in the selection of their teachers, satisfying themselves with the common idea, that it is better to have any teacher than none at all.

The little encouragement which is in most cases held out to teachers of character and qualification, and the precarious manner in which their salaries are paid, operate most powerfully as a bar in the way of the advancement of education. Hence it too frequently happens that it is only persons of shipwrecked character, and blasted prospects in life, after every other resource has failed them, who take up the important office of Schoolmaster; and hence also the frequent changing of the teacher; the long lapse of time that takes place after the expiration of the engagement of the old, before a new one is appointed; in consequence of which the children nearly forget what they had previously acquired.

The migratory character of the schools, or the shifting of them from place to place, has, in my opinion, another injurious effect upon the progress of education. From this cause it happens, that after the children have made considerable proficiency, their career is stopped all at once by the removal of the school to another part of the district, where the population has recently become more dense; and then the former locality is completely deserted; the settlers immediately around it being unable, without the co-operation of their more distant neighbours, to secure the continuance of the school.

The irregular attendance of the children at school, in many instances, where their parents keep them at home to work, during the busy season of the year, tends seriously to retard their own improvement, and acts as a drawback upon the diligence and efficiency of the teacher.

I must also mention another practice which is too prevalent in the country, and which, I conceive, to be exceedingly injurious to the respectability of the teacher in the eyes of his pupils, and consequently hurtful to his usefulness—that is, receiving his board by going about from house to house; in which case, he is regarded, both by parents and children, as little better than a common menial; and from the familiarity which must necessarily subsist between himself and the family, he cannot exercise that authority over his pupils, which is indispensably necessary for a teacher to maintain.