

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

BOOK NOTICES, &c.—We have received the January number of *Scribner's Monthly*: It contains, as usual, a large amount of reading matter, both instructive and entertaining.

The *Canadian Illustrated News* is also received. The increasing circulation of this paper, and its favorable reception, are sufficiently indicative of its merits.

The *Rhode Island Schoolmaster*, published in Providence, R. I., the *University Monthly*, the *Educational Monthly*, the *Schoolmaster*, the *New York Teacher*, *Good Health*, *Home and Hearth*, all published in New York; also, the *Journals of Education* for Ontario and Quebec are received. These works contain valuable contributions to the cause of Education, and present the views and experience of those who have devoted time and thought to that cause, for the interest of which these works are circulated.

The *Manufacturer and Builder* also comes to hand—a work that cannot fail to be very useful to a large part of our population.

SCHOOL TRUSTEES.

THE relations of School Trustees to their electors, on the one hand, and to the Teachers with whom they are brought into contact, on the other, is a subject to which we may not unprofitably give a little editorial consideration. In former times, before the present School Law came into operation, School Trustees partook of a shadowy, almost mythical character. Upon going into a school section—as we now call them—and making the necessary enquiries, it is true that certain men would be pointed out who were called the Trustees, but further enquiries would probably show that they had been irregularly chosen, even under the not very stringent law of that time. When properly elected in the first instance, they frequently continued to be recognized as Trustees, year after year, without ever having been formally re-elected. In some instances indeed, one, or two, men, who felt an exceptional degree of interest in keeping up the school, would, without more ado, constitute themselves Trustees, and act accordingly. There was usually some advantage derivable from this last mode of doing business, for these self-appointed Trustees were apt to exhibit a certain activity in keeping up a school. When Trustees were elected, that act was little more than an empty formality. The men chosen were often very incompetent; and their election was regarded more as a personal compliment than as an act imposing important duties and responsibilities. As a rule, the Trustees so chosen gave themselves no special concern about the school. They did not bargain with the teacher, or see him paid after his part of the bargain was completed. The teacher dealt directly with the people, and where there was dissatisfaction he was directly censured, or deposed, by the people generally. The only duty which the Trustees seemed, in most instances, to consider incumbent upon them, was that of signing the half-yearly Return to lay before the Board of Commissioners.

In speaking of what should be the practice, at the present time, in the choosing of School Trustees and in their mode of discharging their duties, we might say in brief, that it should be the very opposite of that of former times, as above described. It ought not to be necessary to say, that, in every school section, a very onerous responsibility rests upon the Trustees. Knowing this, as the rate-payers all should know, they cannot exercise too much care in choosing the best men to be had for that position. In making their selection, they should, of course, regard the natural intelligence and educational attainments of those from whom they make choice; but it is no less important that the men elected should be such as will take a deep interest in the

school and will be prepared to give their unwearied attention to the promotion of its efficiency.

The Trustee, occupying a position midway between the great body of the rate-payers, on the one hand, and the Teacher, on the other, has delicate and yet important duties to discharge relative to both. He cannot duly acquit himself of these except by constant attention—not necessarily by a great expenditure of his time, but still by keeping his powers of observation employed and never losing sight of the duties he has undertaken to fulfil. It may be that the example of the former time of which we have spoken, has, in some instances, exercised more, or less, of a deleterious effect upon the men of to-day. All such influences should be shaken off.

We should be sorry to advise what might eventuate in vexatious officiousness on the part of the Trustee; but it cannot be difficult to keep the mean of actual duty. He should always be accessible—and agreeably so—to those supporting and interested in the school; to listen to complaints, should such unfortunately be made; and also to listen to suggestions of improvements in the school, or its surroundings. Due consideration should be given to both, and pains taken to correct errors and to add improvements where possible. The representations made to him may be crude and ill-judged; yet it is desirable, for the harmony of the school section, that they be listened to with patience and their errors pointed out with temper.

On the other hand, the School Trustee is the natural protector and support, as well as the censor of the teacher. To perform his duties in this respect, it is incumbent upon him that he frequently visit the school. The teacher may be possessed of great book attainments—may, on examination, have obtained a high class certificate, and yet have some defect which materially detracts from his usefulness as a teacher. Doubtless, most persons can be educated into the knowledge how to teach. It is nevertheless true that the talent for that work varies much in different individuals. Some appear to be almost naturally born teachers, whilst others possess scarcely any talent for it at all. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Trustee can detect deficiencies in the teacher, unless through frequently visiting the school and closely observing the way in which it is managed.

But, again, the comfort and support which such visits, if frequently and kindly made, must be to the industrious and conscientious teacher, are beyond calculation. To such a teacher, the consciousness that his, or her, labors are being attentively observed, and sympathized with, and appreciated, especially by those from whom that attention is due, lightens the toil and furnishes a stimulus to renewed effort, which it is not in human nature to resist. If, on the contrary, the Trustee seldom, or never, enters the school, the teacher, however naturally well-disposed, is almost certain to drift into habits of inattention and lethargy, and, at length, chronic inefficiency. The people do not care about their children's tuition; their representatives, the Trustees, take no interest in it; why need I toil when my work is not appreciated, when the idle teacher is paid as well as the diligent one? Such is, very naturally, the self-communing question of the teacher thus left to toil unobserved. Such school visits as these we are urging should not be formal affairs made at stated times when all is expressly prepared for the visitor's reception. They should be whenever, and as often as, the Trustees can afford to make them. Thus only can he become acquainted with the true inner working and habitual management of the school.

We should be glad to know that the School Trustees throughout Nova Scotia will give their serious attention to the foregoing