

COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

Nova Scotia now stands prominently in advance of every other American state or province in her compulsory school laws. By an act of the recent legislative session the compulsory age is from six to sixteen, and the minimum days' attendance is 120.

At the age of twelve a pupil may pass an examination in Grade VII and be exempt. At thirteen he may work the rest of the year if he attends for sixty consecutive days. From fourteen to sixteen he must attend school, unless he is at work with the approval of his parents. This law is compulsory in Halifax, and becomes compulsory in incorporated towns by a vote of the town councils. It has been adopted in Dartmouth and has worked to the satisfaction of every one. In some cases even those who were prosecuted wrote letters to the council, thanking them for the interest taken in making education universal.

ENLARGED SCHOOL SECTIONS.

In a former number of the REVIEW, we referred to the advantage of the Township system of managing schools, as it is now being introduced into the United States. A change in this direction in the Maritime provinces would do much to improve the schools in rural sections and raise the status of the teachers there to an equality with that of the city teachers. We are therefore glad to see that this subject has been introduced into the Nova Scotia Legislature by the Hon. W. H. Owen of Bridgewater, from whose speech we quote the following judicious remarks:—

“There are some two thousand school sections within the province. Many of the residents therein are in very poor circumstances, and their property of little value, and they find it almost impossible to realize the amount necessary for their schools. Under the existing law there are three trustees in each district, or about six thousand for the province. Many of these trustees are illiterate, especially in the outlying sections, and are incapable of performing the duties devolving upon them. Frequently, they have very inefficient teachers, and in other respects the requirements of the sections are not properly looked after. In the state of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts of late years they have been combining many of their sections, and forming them into school districts, and placing those districts under the control of what they call “town boards” who exercise supervision over such districts in place of the trustees. The system there has been found most satisfactory, and it seems to me that some such system as that might be adopted in this province, and might prove to be much more effective than that now existing. It occurs to me for instance, it might be advisable to combine a number of existing school sections in each county

and form them into school districts, and appoint a school board which could be elected at the same time as the municipal councillors are in the different districts, so that no great additional cost would be entailed. This school board having the whole control and management of the district would be in a position to administer the system more efficiently than it could be under the present arrangement. They could find out the amount required in the various school sections and apportion the money raised in the district in accordance with the scale to be prepared by them, so that the proper districts might get the benefit of a portion of the taxes paid by the wealthier classes. If this were done, the education in many outlying districts would be more efficient than it is at present; the affairs of the proposed districts would be conducted in a more business-like way under the control of a more competent school board. It would cause equalization of school taxes; the inferior schools would become part of an efficient system; and under more efficient management, the taxes could be more equitably adjusted.”

We expect that next session, Mr. Owen will introduce a bill to carry out his ideas. In the meantime we will be glad to hear from our correspondents regarding the system.

SECURING HABITS OF INDUSTRY.

In the effort to make school life pleasant we are apt to overlook one of the most important functions of the school—the overcoming of the pupil's dislike for hard work. On the plea that the attention of young children can be held but a few minutes continuously on one subject there is a constant change of exercises. Much time is devoted to amusing them by story telling, by games and so-called kindergarten plays, in all of which the teacher is working while the pupils are more or less passive. Gradually, but not too slowly, young pupils should be trained to face hard work bravely. If at the first they acquire the idea that school life is largely play, it will be difficult afterwards to secure those industrious habits which are necessary both in their advanced studies and in the struggle of life in which nearly all must engage. When one has read light literature for some time, it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to settle down to anything more solid. It is not wise to accustom children to a butterfly life in school. Let them be as happy as possible ere the period of real toil and labor begins; but let it be a happiness mixed with the necessary modicum of effort to prepare them for the duties of life.

It has been conclusively demonstrated that crime is disappearing with the advance of education, and that the increased expenditure on the schools is more than met by the decreased expenditure on criminals.