

## SUPERIOR SCHOOLS.

Experience has amply demonstrated that it was wise to constitute these schools, for a time at least, "Common Schools of much excellence." Life must be transfused into every branch of the common school system, before we can expect to see manifested anything like a general desire for higher education. The plan of offering a premium to four of the best common schools which reach a prescribed standard, has already wrought wonders in elevating both the character of the teaching and the style of school accommodation. Up to November last, no part of this premium, or special grant, became the property of the section, unless by special agreement between trustees and teachers. As the conditions imposed by the Council of Public Instruction required much effort, not only on the part of the teacher, but also on the part of the section, it has come to pass that many excellent teachers have failed to secure the grant through the neglect of the people to provide the necessary accommodations and equipments. In some cases, the Council has waived, for a Term or more, the strict application of some of the conditions attached to the receipt of the grant. Difficulties, which could not be wholly controlled by the people, and which were due to temporary causes, or inseparable from the new order of things, were allowed to have some weight in the decisions given. But the time has now come when strict justice to the numerous competitors demands a close adherence to the published requirements. Notice was therefore given in September last, in the *Journal*, and has since been continued, that a careful compliance with all the regulations of the Council will in future be required.

One half of each Superior School grant is, hereafter, to become the property of the section, in order that both people and teacher may feel a common interest in the result of each competition. If the people of any section fail to provide a complete school equipment, they cannot expect to receive any portion of the superior school fund, however skilful the teacher may be. But any section that makes a liberal and thorough provision of the means of education, and secures a well skilled and scholarly teacher, will place itself in the best position to receive the largest benefits which the law so generously proffers.

The following are some of the defects which debarred certain competitors, at the close of last Term, from receiving grants:—

Failure of the teacher with respect to the quality or quantity of the special "Oral Lessons" required.

Too small an average attendance.

Insufficient supply of prescribed text-books and apparatus.

Failure to provide desks and sittings for all the pupils of the section, in the manner required by law.

Insufficient amount of air for each pupil, 150 cubic feet, at the least, being required.

Inadequate ventilation.

Unsuitable outhouses for the pupils.

The remedies for most of the above defects are under the immediate control of the trustees and people, and should be studiously applied. It is a superior school in all respects, that will confer the great good upon the children and people of any section, not a superior school grant. The latter is a good thing when worthily received, but the former is the object for which the grant exists.

We would here record the satisfaction with which we have witnessed, from term to term, the steady progress made by many of the teachers who have so persistently wrestled for the distinction which the superior school grant confers. Many of them have most richly deserved their honours. Such teachers are not only conferring a great good upon the

people for whom they labour, but are, at the same time, elevating greatly the whole standard of common school education in Nova Scotia. They are the interpreters to the people of what the Legislature, under the influence of the truest and highest patriotism, has done, in making education as free as the air of heaven. A thousand workers of kindred spirit and equal skill, would soon make our province the educational, as it is the geographical, frontage of America.

A few teachers, however, are attempting to do too much. They are teaching too many branches, and are forcing their pupils too rapidly into the more advanced studies. Let it be distinctly understood, that the Superior schools are "Common schools of much excellence," and that the excellence of any school will not be measured by the number of branches taught in it. Reading, spelling, arithmetic, writing, geography, grammar and history, are staples upon which solid and continuous work must be expended. Singing and drawing should slip as oil between the machinery of the school, while object lessons, and "oral lessons" on common things, on phenomena, and on the elements of natural science, should be used by the teacher as fuel for generating that subtle motive power—that intelligence and thirst for knowledge, which is wont to transform every material upon which it is caused to operate, into 'a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever.' The intelligent mastery of subjects, rather than of text books, should specially characterize all schools competing for the superior grant.

The views and statements contained in the following extract from the report of William Eaton, Esq., inspector for Kings, are those re-echoed by almost all the Inspectors, in reporting upon the superior schools, subject to their inspection:—

"In submitting the accompanying report upon the schools which competed for the superior school grant during the term ending on the 31st October, I may be allowed to state that, to my mind, no wiser provision is contained in the School Act, than that which offers special inducements to sections to engage thoroughly trained and well qualified teachers, to provide ample school accommodation, furniture of the most approved description, and all other necessary equipments for imparting, with facility to the teacher, and pleasure and advantage to pupils, that instruction which is the life of the soul, and without which, all naturally tend to a condition the opposite to one of refinement and social elevation.

"I have long felt the necessity of some impelling motive to force into the rank of teachers, men of the right stamp,—men well qualified both by nature and education to draw out the minds of our youth, and supply them with that aliment, by a reception and assimilation of which, they may become men in knowledge. That the present arrangement with respect to the Superior School grant tends strongly in this direction, there is evidence too palpable to be overlooked.

"No inducement can be held out to enlist in the great work of imparting instruction those who will do honour to their profession, which will be so effective, as suitable remuneration; and when, with an eye to the grant, sections have provided the necessary accommodation, furniture and apparatus, which are wisely taken into account in the award of the Council, there is little hesitation in offering an advance in salary, for the purpose of securing the teacher who, in the competition, will be most likely to ensure success. These circumstances have, doubtless, contributed to the rise in salaries of first class teachers, which is observable in all parts of the province. A very effective stimulus is also presented to trustees, and others interested, for providing school accommodation of a generous and liberal nature, and other surroundings of a character in keeping with a higher condition of education. This is particularly noticeable in the sections in this district that are now in competition. In their arrangement for building on a respectable scale, the trustees of Piedmont had in view the honour and profit, both pecuniary and otherwise, likely to be derived from this source, and