

me to remark that the number of female teachers engaged, from motives of cheapness, is sufficient to establish, at least morally, that primary instruction cannot work with success in our District. As every system of instruction owes its efficacy to experience, to capacity, to practice in teaching, the knowledge of bad and good inclinations, and of the defects of childhood, to the firmness, the prudence and the judgment of the teachers, is it possible, is it usual that young girls, like the majority of the female teachers, having just left the forms of a school to take charge of a task so difficult and so troublesome as the instruction and the education of youth, can possess all these indispensable qualities, still more indispensable when boys are to be taught? But what is more: a great number of boys' schools are kept by young girls; boys of 12, of 14 and even 15 years of age, and more, attend these schools. Now, I ask, is it probable that such a state of things can produce advantageous results? For my part, I think that instruction gains but little, and morality perhaps still less.

The principal causes which have retarded and still retard the cause of elementary education are, 1. the ambiguous and incorrect manner in which the elementary school laws are drawn up; their complication, and the absence of order and method in their provisions; they contain important omissions which paralyze their effect if they do not destroy it altogether. In proof of my allegations on this point, it is only necessary to refer to the contradictory decisions of the tribunals, the various opinions of lawyers, the difficulties and the numberless law suits to which they have given rise.

And, as if to assist chicanery, these laws shew a superfluity of ambiguous ill-defined formalities, which throw the persons acting under them, into doubts, difficulties and embarrassments of all kinds, which even paralyze and nullify the zeal of the warmest friends of the cause. It is true that the law of 1849 has done away with the appeal and the *certiorari*; but if the right of pleading from tribunal to tribunal is diminished, the obscurity of the law is still the same.

2. Another cause, is the omission of every provision for the formation of teachers, to regulate and fix on a suitable scale the allowance which ought to be made to them. "The means," says Mr. Ryerson, "of obtaining good teachers, is to establish Normal Schools." If ever a country was in want of efficient teachers it is, without contradiction, Lower Canada. Up to the present day, a position so noble, so important, so indispensable as that of the teacher, has been so underrated, so much looked upon as the lowest of all the numerous professions which are practised in our country, that few persons worthy of fulfilling the duties have been found to embrace it. There are nevertheless, educated young persons, who, notwithstanding the contempt to which the teacher seems doomed, have had the generous courage to enter a career so ungrateful, so painful and so badly remunerated as that of teaching. They have made a noble sacrifice; I even say that they have performed an act of philanthropic heroism. To their elevated minds the sweetest recompense of their labours, of their life of privations, is the consciousness of discharging the most noble and the most useful of duties, (after that of the priest,) towards their fellow citizens; that of consecrating their best days to the formation of the mind and heart of the rising generations. But the number of these worthy teachers is infinitely small; and rationally speaking, it would be requiring too much from human nature to expect that a great many others will adopt them as their models. Except these men devoted to the common good, let us go through our country parts and see how many competent teachers we can find. If we wish to form an idea of the capacity of the teachers of the District of Quebec, let us look at the tables of admissions to teach made by the Board of Examiners; out of 122 certificates granted by this Board, there are only 12 for superior schools and 6 for academies, and this District possesses 524 schools, scattered over more than 100 parishes! In the Dis-