

For the REVIEW.]

TEXT-BOOKS.

Wherever there is a public school there is a demand for text-books. They are all desired for the same purpose—as aids in teaching any given subject; for example, arithmetic.

Is there any reason, then, why the public school arithmetic of New Brunswick should be different from that of Nova Scotia, or either different from those of the other provinces? In Nova Scotia we use two books on the subject, both published in Ontario. If they be the best of their kind, why not have them prescribed for the whole Dominion, or for as many provinces as possible?

What we need in a text-book is fitness for the purpose intended, durability and cheapness. The first are necessary to obtain the greatest good from their use and monetary value for the outlay. Cheapness will, of course, be relative to excellence of plan and material.

Now we know that the greater market there is for an article the cheaper it can be sold, because larger quantities can be manufactured at less cost than smaller. We also know that part of the amount so saved in manufacture can be used to make a better article without increasing the cost or lessening the profits. Does it not follow that if, instead of two or three divisions of the whole Dominion using one text-book and one or two others another, and without any united action on the part of the several councils of public instruction or teachers of those provinces, that it would be better, in every way, for them to unite, agree upon some text-book and say to the publishers, "What can you let us have that book for, if we prescribe it in all our schools?"

It will be said that you cannot get educationists of so vast a country as ours to so agree. This may be true to some extent; but the objection is not so great as it might have been years ago. Those who now live five hundred miles apart are nearer to one another than those who were separated by only fifty miles thirty years since.

We have associations of teachers assembling annually in which are representatives from nearly all parts of the continent. In a few days representatives from all the leading educational centres of the Dominion will meet in Montreal. Will any one say that at that convention a committee could not be appointed capable of recommending a text-book on arithmetic suitable to the wants of any section of the country?

It may be that there is no book published that meets the views of our teachers or that could be fully approved by any such committee. If this is the case,

then it would be their office to select the best in their estimation, and also to suggest the changes and improvements in the work or works selected.

It seems to me if each province were fully represented on such committee, that every province would have text-books better adapted for use in its schools at a greatly reduced price to the purchaser. There is no doubt that the different councils of public instruction would authorize the use of a work so recommended. There would, of course, be some difficulties in the way. Publishers and authors of text-books now in use who could not hope to compete in the manufacture and compiling of the improved work, would no doubt oppose a change. Yet, if the scheme is a good one, their opposition ought not to count for much. I have only mentioned the one subject in the foregoing remarks, but they would apply equally to nearly every subject taught in the common schools.

Let us take the vexed question of English Grammar. I find in the civil service examination papers questions that cannot be answered by pupils having a pretty thorough knowledge of the grammar used in Nova Scotia. And questions can be readily framed from the latter that pupils using a different text-book could not easily grapple with. It may be said that it is a poor teacher who confines himself to the text. This is possibly true, but one would have to do some extensive skirmishing to give his pupils even a slight knowledge of the various views held by writers on etymology and syntax. Is it not possible to arrive at a much greater degree of uniformity in the treatment of this subject? I think it is; but it can only be dealt with by large associations such as that of the Dominion.

In fact the whole question is of the greatest importance. It does not require elaboration in this paper. There is no need to go into details. We continually hear complaints from teachers as to the texts themselves and from parents and teachers alike as to their cost and make-up. It seems to me a subject peculiarly proper for the Dominion association to discuss. While on the subject, I may say that I hope the same association will consider the questions of the introduction of the metric system of weights and measures and spelling reform. If it will deal with such questions—ones of widespread interest and affecting all sections of the country—I think it will be entitled to financial support from the provincial governments or from that of the Dominion. O.

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Mr. J. D. Robertson of Moore's Mills' Superior School, and Mr. Wm. Veasey of Grand Harbor, intend entering the University in the autumn.