

The School Bill of Last Session.

(Continued.)

Having given in full the provisions relating to a Normal School & Assessment, which are the most prominent new features in the bill, we shall in noticing the remaining Sections, refer only to those clauses which differ materially from the existing law.

Superintendent of Education.—The duties of this officer as principal of the Normal School have been already referred to. (No. 1.) As Superintendent he is requested to collect and diffuse information on all subjects connected with the improvement and prosperity of the Schools; to supply teachers to vacant districts; to prepare and circulate forms and instructions; to establish Associations and Institutes of teachers; to expend the grants for school books, apparatus and horaries; to report annually on the state of the schools.

In addition to these duties, he is required to prepare and publish instructions for the proper carrying out of all the provisions of the act, to print the act and its accompanying instructions in sufficient quantity to supply every teacher and Board of Trustees with a copy, and to publish an Educational Journal for gratuitous distribution to Commissioners and teachers. The proper performance of these last mentioned duties alone, will be of inestimable importance to the cause of education.

Objections have been made to the union of the offices of Superintendent and Principal of the Normal School. These have been already answered under the head "Normal School," and we need only state here that the arrangement is believed to be quite practicable, and recommends itself on grounds of economy, and on account of the unity of management which it secures. If, however, the Legislature should prefer, and be willing to remunerate a separate Superintendent—there can be no doubt that even in our small Province he would have scope for exertion in the improvement of education.

Commissioners and their Clerks.—The appointment and duties of Commissioners are in the main the same as in the existing law. In dividing the school sections they are required to attach to each a permanent number, which is necessary to enable the trustees to perform their duties aright, but this has been neglected in many districts—the districts not having been numbered at all, or the numbers frequently changed without notice to the trustees.

In examining for license the commissioners are required to proceed under a prescribed form for each class of teachers. This is intended to obviate the injustice at present inflicted by the variable character of the examinations before different Boards, and before the same Board at different meetings, as well as to give a

more certain position to each class of teachers. They are also authorised to cancel the license of every teacher found to be guilty of grossly immoral conduct.

In the distribution of the public grant an important improvement is contemplated. At present the only tangible criteria are the sums contributed by the people and the time the school has been kept; but it is evident that these grounds of distribution often have but a small connection with the relative merit and usefulness of the schools, and it is only by referring to the character of the instruction—number of free pupils and other considerations of a somewhat vague and uncertain character, that an approach to justice can be made.

In the new Bill it is provided that the Commissioners shall distribute the Provincial grant and also the county assessment as follows:

1. To every school taught by a first class teacher at the rate of four shillings per pupil for all pupils in regular attendance over 12 weeks.

2. To every school taught by a second class teacher at the rate of three shillings for every pupil in attendance over 12 weeks.

3. The remainder in accordance with the efficiency of the schools, and the sums raised by the people for their support; provided that the Commissioners may reserve one sixth of the funds at their disposal, to aid poor districts on such terms as they may think reasonable.

In other words, about one half the public money is to be distributed in accordance with the number of scholars and class of teacher, second class teachers receiving three fourths of the sum per scholar allowed to first class teachers:—the remainder to be distributed on the same grounds now employed for the distribution of the whole. On this plan it is evident that a greater inducement will be held out than at present to hire the best teachers, and to send as many children as possible to school.

Since last winter a new provision in reference to this subject has come into operation in Upper Canada, and perhaps would be found to be a farther improvement. It is the distribution of the Public money according to the *average attendance* at the schools. This is the most equitable method possible, and if the returns of this year show it pretty general attention is being paid to the keeping of school registers, it may be well to introduce this further improvement into our new law.

High Schools, or Grammar Schools, are to have teachers who, "in addition to first class common school qualifications," must be "competent to teach Algebra and Mathematics, with their practical applications, and if required by the Commissioners, Classics and Agricultural Chemistry, or one of the modern languages." Such schools are to receive from the county assessment a sum equal to the Provincial

grant, and the people of the district are required to raise an equal sum. This will give as the lowest salary of grammar school teachers, £75, and as the ordinary salary, £100. To obviate the difficulties arising from the excessive variety of labor at present required of grammar school teachers, it is provided that when both classics and mathematics are taught, or where children under 8 are admitted, there shall be an assistant entitled to a share of common school money for all pupils over 30; perhaps it might not be too much to give the allowance for one half of the pupils, whatever their number.

High schools are to be established for a half year only, if necessary, as some districts are quite unable to furnish the necessary number of pupils in summer; and the number of pupils necessary to draw the grant is to be reduced from 10 to 8. It is hoped that both these arrangements will better ensure the efficiency of these schools and render their support easier. This will be more especially the case if assessment be introduced. Particular directions are also given in the new Act for settling in an equitable manner the difficulties which may arise where two or more sections compete for the grammar school allowance.

A very important addition to the powers of Commissioners is made in section 40, which empowers the boards to engage itinerant teachers for the poor and scattered districts, many of which are now entirely excluded from the benefits of the school Act. The commissioners are also authorised to apply the High school grants to this purpose, in cases where it proves impossible to establish High schools. It has been objected that this may tend to injure the High schools.—This, however, cannot be, as the commissioners have no power to divert the money from its original destination, unless after it has been found that no grammar school exists to receive it. Further, the very counties which cannot sustain grammar schools are those which have the greatest proportion of destitute districts, and by the appropriation of the money to those schools which they can sustain, they are only placed on an equality with the older and wealthier districts; whereas under the present system these counties altogether lose the High school grants.

The duties and powers of clerks of commissioners are somewhat extended, and more exactly defined; and in event of county assessment, and more especially when they hold the additional office of school inspector, their emoluments will also be larger. From the nature of the case, many important duties fall on these officers, and it is desirable that the office should be made more worthy of the acceptance of men of education and ability. Under the present law, the whole management of the schools is vastly improved in the districts, (and