

to the time of leaving school, for all intelligent reading must be according to certain well known and accepted principles. Reading when thus acquired and practised becomes a most valuable mental culture, it develops the power of the mind by bringing its exercise up to a high standard, it cultivates the voice and so lends an additional incentive to continued culture by the increased pleasure afforded, it refines the taste by reproducing in the mind of the reader the sentiments of distinguished men, whose works are in this way studied.

By practice the reader learns to discriminate between the different styles of reading, adapted to prose or poetry, to history or biography, to philosophic subjects or the light reading which aims mainly to amuse or direct the mind from the cares of the day. In this connection we want to remind our teachers and pupils that to become good readers is not the work of a day or of a year, but requires long and unwearied application and careful training. The work however can be done, and in the hands of a skillful teacher, even with the means furnished in our common schools, will be accomplished if taken hold of with intelligence and decision. As we have already stated it must begin when the child begins to read the most simple sentences, and at no stage of the pupils progress should the drill be omitted.

Remarks made by our visitors in some of our best public and private schools have called for these observations we may however, observe, but not in a begging-to-be-excused tone, that the evil referred to in the above lines is not confined to any one English speaking people, but is by far too wide spread. Recently we saw in an English Educational paper some exceedingly severe remarks on the reading in the best schools of England, and if we are to judge from the article in question Nova Scotia is not behind the parent country in good reading. Poor reading is also an old complaint with the Americans, but all this is no excuse for us—and hence we most earnestly press the subject upon the teachers of our public schools. We have very often wished that some large hearted, wealthy, public-spirited citizen would offer a suitable prize for the best reader in the Public Schools of Halifax.

## Communications.

### READING BOOKS.

(For the Journal of Education.)

I welcome with much pleasure the introduction of the new series of Readers into our list of prescribed school-books. The Nova Scotia Readers, for the most part excellent in the matter which they contained, had, however, no other good quality. In rather indifferent type and binding they presented little else than the bare text with almost nothing to make it attractive or comprehensible to the pupil.

It was, therefore, not too soon that our Council of Public Instruction decided upon adopting some other Readers. Other countries had almost stolen the march upon us in this particular, but now we know of none so well supplied either in the number of series or in the excellence of some of them.

It may be perplexing sometimes to teachers and to trustees to conclude us to what selection to make. Having made careful examination of them all, I would respectfully submit my opinions on the merits of the respective books to those who may perhaps have had less time to devote to the subject.

With respect to the printing, binding, and valuable assistance and explanations given to both teacher and pupils, the Academic series are far superior to the Nova Scotia Readers. But the reading matter in the Academic Series is for the most part very inferior. The leading idea of the compiler seems to have been to present to pupils a great deal of common information on common subjects; a very good idea when not carried to an absurd excess. His selections, but particularly his original pieces, are prosaic, dull and uninteresting to children.

A reading book should not be little else than a book on the Science of Common Things. A Class book for reading and elocutionary purposes should consist mainly of the best selections

from the best authors. It is quite as important to a country that its youth should be brought into contact with the noble sentiments, the poetic ideas, and the cultivated imaginations of its best authors in their finest literary style, as that a few tame facts should be monotonously drilled into their minds.

The Rev. James Ridgway, the compiler, seems to sacrifice the cultivation of sentiment, imagination, and language to direct practical utility.

As the series named will not be much used it remains to compare the "Royal Readers" with Collins' Illustrated Readers; while the former are very excellent, equal in some particulars and perhaps superior in its selections yet I regard the latter as the best and most complete school-books I have ever seen and as excelling all others in the following particulars:

- (1) The print is large, plain and pleasing to the eye—a matter of great importance to children.
- (2) More care is bestowed upon the selection of those words, for explanation, which are most characteristic of the lesson.
- (3) The definitions of the words are simple and more to the point.
- (4) The questions at the end of each chapter are more copious and more carefully framed.
- (5) Each lesson is furnished with superior dictation exercises.
- (6) The composition exercises are better provided for.
- (7) In the words of one of the Prefaces: "In order to render the work as complete as possible a copious list of Prefaces and Affixes with a comprehensive vocabulary of Latin, Greek, and French roots, has been added. Advanced pupils will find these lists an indispensable requisite in acquiring a correct knowledge of the English language."

SCHOOLMASTER.

## EDUCATION AS IT IS AND AS IT OUGHT TO BE.

(For the Journal of Education.)

MR. EDITOR:

Dear Sir,—While I am not at all disposed to deny that a great improvement in Public Education has been effected during the past ten or fifteen years, yet I do most emphatically deny that it is as prosperous and satisfactory as it ought to be. Nay, I affirm that, whatever its state may be, as compared to that in which it was many years ago, it is absolutely low and languishing at the present day. What are the facts? All through the country we have poor school-houses, with insufficient and inferior school furniture and apparatus; while teachers of the lower grades, and with little experience, form a large majority of those who are engaged in the very important work of educating the young.

Most readily and gladly do I admit that there are some superior school-houses—amply furnished; and that there are some excellent teachers; but, it is to be regretted that these are too much "like angels' visits." Even in the poorest sections, in the midst of the most discouraging surroundings, we occasionally find noble specimens of the *genus praeceptor*—teachers, aye, and educators in the true sense of the word. But, if we examine our public schools in detail, we shall find that, though local trustees may paint them "*coleur de rose*," they, with few exceptions, are really of the most sober gray. Not unfrequently do we find fifty or sixty pupils under one teacher, and that one probably an inexperienced girl; these pupils, moreover, stretch all the way from toddling infancy to stalwart manhood, and are found in all stages of learning, from a, b, c, to "*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, &c.*, if not "far ayt that," as a happy Scotch mother proudly said of her boy, whose destination was the pulpit. Similar remarks might be made in reference to a formidable array of other branches, in which pupils are found from the first rung of the ladder, away up to the giddy height of the teacher's own acquirements. Here it may be remarked, incidentally, that there are sections in Nova Scotia where the fortunate teacher, with the munificent salary of \$400 or \$500, is expected to be equal to a whole college faculty; or, at least, to half a dozen professors rolled into one. In addition to the common branches he is expected to be able to teach a number of Languages, living and dead, the higher Equations, and Inequations, and all branches