

UNIFORMITY OF TEXT-BOOKS.

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assembled as we are for the purpose of discussing subjects for the advancement of the educational interests of the Province, one of the most important that can engage our attention is the subject of "Uniformity of Text-books" in our public schools. The pupil, the parent, the teacher, the inspector—all have a vital interest in it. As soon as the pupil enters the school, a text-book of some kind is regarded as a necessity. Ignorant of the contents of it, and ignorant of the use to be made of it, his first experience should be of the most pleasant kind, because he is beginning to lay the foundation for all subsequent acquirements. If a dislike to the routine of the school be caused by means of the unsuitability of text-books, the evil done will be great. The parent has a direct interest in knowing that his child is placed in the most favourable circumstances for acquiring the rudiments of learning, and that the expenses incurred in the purchase of the necessary school books yield the best returns. The teacher's success in the school depends, to a limited extent, upon the ease with which the pupils can be classified for the prosecution of the specified subjects of the school programme. The inspector can, with greater facility, compare the teaching in the various schools in his inspectorate where the same series of books is used.

In advocating uniformity of text-books, it is necessary to know what part of the population of the Province is directly affected by it. Referring to the last Annual Report of the Minister of Education (1879), it is seen that the total number of pupils was 487,012, of whom $\frac{29}{100}$ of 1 per cent. were under 5 years of age, $96\frac{2}{100}$ per cent. from 5 to 16 years, $3\frac{59}{100}$ per cent. from 17 to 21 years, and $\frac{15}{100}$ of 1 per cent. over 21 years. With reference to their classification, it is seen that 155,861, or 32 per cent., were in the first class; 110,098, or $22\frac{60}{100}$ per cent., in the second class; 180,013, or $26\frac{70}{100}$ per cent., in the third class; 74,368, or $15\frac{27}{100}$ per cent., in the fourth class; 15,622, or $3\frac{21}{100}$ per cent., in the fifth class; and 1,055, or $\frac{22}{100}$ of 1 per cent., in the sixth class. It is thus observed that 97 per cent. of all the pupils were from 5 to 16 years of age, and about 81 per cent. in the first, second and third classes. The Report also shows that the sum of \$2,072,822 was paid for teachers' salaries alone, or an average rate of \$4.25 per pupil. When this sum is carefully considered, it must be admitted that the people of this Province are making noble efforts in behalf of