

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PROVINCIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION ON THE TEXT-BOOK QUESTION.

It is just two years since the Provincial Board of Education was established, and recommended a uniform series of Text-Books for the Schools. The Board provided and suggested measures which led not only to the introduction of School Books of an improved quality, but to a reduction of nearly twenty per cent. in their prices,—thus preparing the way for securing to the whole Country the double boon of good and cheap Text-Books. The proceedings of the Provincial Board, which have borne these early fruits, I have detailed in my Special Report, prepared in June, 1847. I stated in that Report that I had procured from the Irish National Board of Education in Dublin the very liberal donation of sets of their Books, Forms and Reports, to enable me to present a set to each District and City Municipal Council in Upper Canada. I have since visited the several Municipal Districts, and personally presented the Books in question, at the same time explaining their character and soliciting a careful examination of them, as to both their contents and prices, on the part of the local Representatives, and of every friend of Common School Education. Submitting these Books to such a test, and providing such facilities for an acquaintance with them in every District of Upper Canada, has entirely removed the suspicion "that the Chief Superintendent was endeavouring to saddle foreign and expensive School Books upon the Country." These excellent School Books have been formally enjoined, or recommended, by several District Councils; the use of them in the Schools is rapidly increasing; whenever they are used, they are highly approved; and the question of their general use in the Common Schools may now be considered as fully and harmoniously settled by the unanimous voice of the Country.

THE IRISH NATIONAL SCHOOL READERS.—SPELLING BOOKS,—ARITHMETICS, ETCETERA.

The Board of Education for Upper Canada has attached the greatest importance to the use of the Irish National School Readers, as essential to the classification of the pupils of different ages, and different degrees of advancement. The "English Reader," which has long been used in the Schools, has already fallen below the Irish National Readers, being used in 1,067 Common Schools out of 2,772 reported as in operation; various other Readers, being used in 358 of these Schools.

(a). Various Kinds of Spelling-Books used in our Common Schools.

The principal Books of this class used are Mavor's, Carpenter's, Cobb's, and Davidson's. Mavor's is used in 294 Schools, and various kinds in 427 Schools. A more ingenious device for relieving the Teacher from labour, by imposing it needlessly and perniciously upon the pupil, can scarcely be conceived. What is more obvious than that the meaning of words can be most easily and appropriately learned by children, as they require to use them, or as they find them in the course of reading, where their practical application is witnessed at the same time that their meaning is acquired? What more natural than that children should learn to spell words in the way that they will necessarily employ this knowledge when required?

(b) The Senseless Drudgery of using the Ordinary Spelling Book in Schools.

In no other language, than the English, are the pupils doomed to the drudgery of poring over the columns of a Spelling-Book, to learn how to spell the words of their native tongue; nor are English pupils themselves condemned to this repulsive labour, and injurious waste of time, in the acquisition of any foreign language, and yet they are, perhaps, more accurate in the orthography of such foreign language than they are in that of their own, with all the appliances of the Spelling Book; with the aid of some fifty rules, can most of the sentences in the English language be accurately constructed; and with the assistance of one-fourth of that number of rules, can nine-tenths of the words in our language be spelt? Why should not rules be employed in the latter, as well