

SUPERIOR SCHOOLS AUTHORIZED IN EVERY PARISH.

The Section of the Law authorizing the establishment in every Parish of a Superior School, which is entitled to receive an additional grant from the Provincial funds, offers to each Parish educational facilities not heretofore enjoyed. To guard the Province against imposition—against an expenditure of money for what might prove only a nominal advantage, and to secure to the people superior education, the regulations for such Schools were necessarily made very stringent. The policy of these regulations is, that every parish shall have one School where the different branches of a sound and thorough English education must be taught, and also, if desired, the elementary classics; it being left to the opinion of the Trustees to require the latter, if necessary. Another object to be attained by the establishment of these Schools, is to improve the condition of the School-master—a most important object, as the elevation of the School-master is absolutely necessary to the elevation of the system. The regulations therefore require that his local compensation shall be paid in cash, and shall be so certified by the Trustees and Inspectors before the Provincial allowance can be drawn. It is probable that these Schools will ultimately supersede, in most instances, the County Grammar Schools; and, if judiciously established, may be made to form a connecting link between the ordinary Parish Schools and the University. Experience may suggest the importance of some change in the Law, both with respect to the style of the building in which the School should be kept, and the standard of qualification necessary for the Teacher.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

The section authorizing the establishment of a library in every School District is also very valuable and important. I have at every meeting urged the necessity of such institutions. Throughout the whole of the rural districts their introduction would be most beneficial. In several places preliminary arrangements have been made to establish Libraries, although as yet but one formal application for the Provincial grant has been forwarded to the Department. The regulations of the Board, with respect to these Libraries, were cautiously made, in order that difficulties which would probably occur might be provided against at the outset. These regulations prohibited "works of a licentious, vicious or immoral tendency, and works hostile to the Christian religion, and works involving religious controversy;" and it was made the duty of the Chief Superintendent "to prepare a Catalogue of Books, subject to these exceptions and guards." The Catalogue, containing a list of about eight hundred volumes, embracing works in the various departments of human knowledge, was duly prepared, and has been made available to School Committees, and other parties engaged in providing Libraries.

I trust that, during the present year, Libraries will be established in various parts of the Province, as they are not only desirable but necessary. One of our most distinguished writers has closed a very eloquent address on the subject, with the following language:—"To instruct men, to indoctrinate them in the principles of science, to edify them, to impart a knowledge of the theory, and persuade to the practice of virtue, to stir the imagination profoundly, and to achieve the highest triumph of Art, men must read books, children must read books, and Schools must furnish free Libraries.

PRINCIPLE OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT.

The provision of the Law by which "any County, Parish, District, or Municipality can determine to provide for the support of the Schools therein by assessment," next requires attention. The principle involved is one which has been on our Statute Book since 1852, and has been frequently discussed in these reports, but has not yet been extensively adopted throughout the Province. Undoubtedly great efforts have been made to misrepresent it, and to excite prejudice against it, especially amongst the ignorant.

As I regard this principle as ultimately necessary to such a system of education as we should have, I have made it a prominent topic of discussion at every meeting which I have held. I have found, however, as I became better acquainted with the state of public feeling respecting it in different places, that the subject was one which required to be dealt with very carefully. There are unquestionably many who intelligently approve of the principle, and who are prepared to accept it at once; but, on the other hand, observation has convinced me that there is a far larger number of persons who, from various causes, are directly opposed to it, and who will resist any effort which may be made to introduce it. I have become, therefore, thoroughly satisfied of the wisdom of the policy pursued by the Legislature, both in 1852 and 1858, in leaving the principle to the voluntary action of the people. I am persuaded that any other course would be ruinous to the principle itself, in the public mind, and would excite an antagonism to it, which would render its introduction impossible for a long time to come. A few School Districts have adopted it, and are already reaping its advantages.

CONDITION OF THE SCHOOL HOUSES.

In remarking on the condition of the School Houses, it will be admitted that there is no branch of the service which has been more neglected than this. Many of the buildings now used for this purpose are utterly unfit. Besides their outward disreputable appearance they are inconveniently small; the ceilings are low; they are badly lighted and ventilated; "too cold in winter—too hot in summer;" without proper desks and benches; while external conveniences are seldom thought of. It is not to be expected that every School House should be complete in point of beauty and attractiveness, but it should at least be decent. If constructed of logs, (as may be necessary in some of the back settlements, where the people are poor,) it should nevertheless be made large enough to adapt it for the usual School exercises. I may add that proper out buildings, and a play ground, ought to be provided wherever practicable. Independently of the disgraceful appearance of such erections in a community, they are connected with certain positive disadvantages, both as to the influence which an educational establishment—the very smallest and least pretending—should have upon the minds of the pupils, and also as to their health and comfort. The evils which follow the habitual violation of the laws of health, in the construction of many of our School Houses, are not sufficiently considered. In my addresses to the people, I have urged these considerations, and have been pleased to find that my views and recommendations have been appreciated. During the last summer a number of new School Houses have been erected, most of them on improved models.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION—VOCAL MUSIC.

Connected with this is another subject of importance, to which I shall hereafter, as I have opportunity, call attention—Physical Education. This subject is one which is fully dealt with by some of the leading Educationists of the present day. It is admitted—that "if we wish to develop the mind of a pupil, we must develop the power which mind has to govern, exercise his body, make him healthy and strong, that we may make him prudent and reasonable." I merely refer to the subject as one which ought to be practically regarded in our system, and I hope hereafter to be able to mature a plan by which it may be introduced.

I have also made preliminary arrangements for the introduction of vocal music of an elementary branch of education. Without discussing the proposition of Professor Stowe, "that the ability to learn to sing is universal," there is no doubt that the use of this delightful means of instruction will be as advantageous in New Brunswick, as it has proved to be on the continent of Europe, in Great Britain, in the United States, and in some of the neighboring Provinces. For the present the pupil teachers in the Training School are to receive, at certain hours every week, instruction in this science; and I hope that in a few years vocal music will form a necessary branch of education in all our Parish Schools.

THE TRAINING AND MODEL SCHOOLS.

The state of the Training and Model Schools has occupied the serious consideration of the Board during the past year. This Institution has been in existence since 1848, and has done a large amount of good. Public expectation has not, I am aware, been fully met by the results thus far; but I am persuaded that the cause of education has been greatly promoted by the teachers who have left this establishment, and there is, in consequence, in different places, a decided preference now given to trained teachers. The importance of this Institution cannot be too highly estimated. It is universally admitted, in every country where education is properly cared for, that Schools for the training of teachers are indispensable. M. Guizot, a very enlightened Educationist, remarks:—"That that State has yet done nothing for popular education, that does not watch that those who devote themselves to teaching be well prepared." I need not discuss the advantages and necessity of such an Institution, as every one must feel that an efficient Training School, and efficient inspection, are inseparably connected with uniformity and success in teaching.

TEXT BOOKS, MAPS, AND APPARATUS.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Department to procure and furnish to the Schools proper reading and text books, maps, and other apparatus, considerable difficulty is yet experienced on this account. The new regulations provided, "that the existing selections and arrangements, as regards the books, maps, and apparatus, were to be continued until revised after due enquiry." A new Geography, one which will be adapted to the course of instruction carried out in the Schools, and which will furnish correct information both in the political and physical department of this science, is a desideratum which I am striving to supply. This new Map of the Province, now in course of publication, under the sanction of the Government, will, if it can be attained for the Schools at a reasonable rate, supply what is now felt to be a very serious deficiency. To meet the wants