

# COMPANION AND TEACHER

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## Editorial.

### The Education Depository.

For several years, by a portion of the public press and by pamphlet, has the Depository Branch of the Education Department been violently assailed. The Depository had been instituted through the efforts of Dr. Ryerson, the late Chief Superintendent, and, perhaps, no part of the system was held dearer in his estimation than the one in question. In order to meet the oft-repeated assaults on the "People's Depository," the Chief Superintendent requested the Legislative Assembly in 1869 to enquire into its management and working. The request was granted, and accordingly a large select committee was appointed to examine into the working of the school system of Ontario, together with the Department of Public Instruction; with power to send for persons and papers, and to report thereon. A sub-committee reported having made a thorough investigation of the Depository Department, finding existing arrangements for purchasing and disposing of the books most satisfactory. The statistical statement showed that there was no financial loss to the Government in carrying on the Depository, as the stock in hand covered the amount of expenditure that had not been realized. Notwithstanding the favorable nature of this report, the opponents of the Depository still suspected and stated that its existence was detrimental to the book trade, its operations conducted at a loss to the country, and, consequently, demanded its discontinuation.

To lessen the detriment to the book-trade, provision was made in the School Act of 1874 to allow Trustees to purchase prize and library books elsewhere than at the Depository, on similar terms.

A Committee of the Council of Public Instruction enquired into its management and operations in May, 1875. It came out in the course of this enquiry that the Depository, in the preceding twenty-four years, had netted the total profit of \$50,934, after paying all expenses, except insurance; or an annual profit, even making allowance for insurance, which the Government had paid, of \$300.

Still there was dissatisfaction, particularly among the booksellers. Shortly after the appointment of a Minister of Education a deputation of As-

sociation of Booksellers, then in convention assembled, waited on the Hon. Mr. Crooks. Mr. W. C. Campbell, the chief speaker of the deputation, enumerated the grievances. He complained that as soon as they had entered into competition with the Depository, the rates of the latter were reduced ten per cent; that by this action and several adverse restrictions, the booksellers were practically excluded from the privileges granted by the Act of 1874; further, that the expenses of carrying on the Depository had been twenty-four per cent. of the amount of business done, resulting, on the 18 cents per shilling, stg., basis, in a loss of \$8,800 per year to the country. Mr. Crooks, in answer, stated that any decision the Government would arrive at would be upon the fullest consideration. He agreed with the Convention that there had been much to justify the existence of such a Depository in the past. The question now is, whether it is in the public interest that the Depository should continue to supply the people with books.

The Minister carried out his promise and instituted a thorough enquiry into the accounts and business operations of the Depository Branch of the Department, extending over twenty-six years, from 1850 to 1875 inclusive. Mr. James Brown, an experienced accountant, was employed to investigate and audit the accounts and statements and to report fully thereon to the Minister. A complete detailed report of the operations of the Depository, as thus reliably obtained, was presented to the Legislative Assembly at the session just closed. The correctness of the accounts and the accuracy of the system upon which they have been kept have been attested. But we were less prepared to expect that the operations of the Depository, as exhibited in the annual statements, would, after paying all expenses, show a total net profit, from 1850 to 1867, of \$28,124.22, and from 1868 to 1875, of \$42,929.33.

It is hoped that the agitation of this hitherto much vexed question will be discontinued. We wish the booksellers by all means to have a fair field, and hope that hampering and restrictions may be removed. All the reasons for the establishment of the Depository are not at present in full force but the fact that its abolition would result either in monopoly, or in an indiscriminate introduction of all kinds and sorts of literature, is sufficient reason for its continuation.