

THE

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

FOR THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

ABOUT SCHOOL BOOKS.

WE have received a communication from "A Trustee since 1864," in which he desires that the following queries be answered through the columns of the *Journal*:—

"1st.—Is the provision of a sum for the purchase of school books by assessment, obligatory or permissive? As I read the law I view it as permissive; but in the Regulations of Council I observe a threat is held out that failure to provide such sum will subject a Section to the loss of the public grants."

"2nd.—In the event of the refusal of the ratepayers to vote any sum for the purchase of books, is it legal to collect from the parents of the children attending school the money required to purchase books; that is, on the certificate of the Trustees that such books are wanted for the school, can they be obtained at half-cost, in the same way as if the money had been raised by assessment?"

In reply to the first of the above queries we would observe that it is entirely optional, with any section, whether any and how much money shall be voted for any school purpose whatsoever. Unless the ratepayers choose to provide and equip their schools, there is nothing in the law by which they can be compelled to do so. The "threat" of which our correspondent speaks refers not to the voting of money, but to the supply of books. The Regulation reads:

"Any Section neglecting to provide a sufficient supply of books, maps, and apparatus, may be deprived of the public grants."

The law has but one aim, to provide good schools. Any school unsupplied with books and other requisites is likely to be very far from being a good one; at all events, it must be very far from attaining that degree of efficiency which, with plenty of books, and apparatus, might be obtained. There can be no doubt as to the attitude the law assumes towards such a school. It has no tolerance for a poor school where there might as well be a good one.

In reply to the second question of "A Trustee since 1864" we would say that when Trustees forward money for the purchase of books no questions are asked as to the source whence the money was derived. The business of the department is to see that the books &c, sent in return, are used for the purposes and in the way contemplated by the law. Free Education for every child in the land, is the mottoe of our school system. And this is held to apply not only to the teaching, but to all the helps and appliances used in teaching. A child needs the use of books, maps &c., quite as much as he does the aid of a teacher. If he has a right to the one free of cost, he has an equal right to the other. When the Province offers to bear half the expense in providing books for the schools, it does so on the condition that the use of the books so provided shall be given, free of charge, to the pupils, so long as they may be needed. Before receiving books, the Trustees bind themselves to carry out strictly and in good faith the Regulations contained in No. VII. of the official notices published in this *Journal*. According to these Regulations school books as well as all other articles furnished at half-cost are to be regarded as the public property of the Section. Wherever the money has come from to purchase them, they belong to the whole school: one child has as much claim to them as another. If the Trustees, in distributing them, are guided by the amount a child's parent may have contributed towards purchasing them, they are guilty of violating a solemn obligation; and where any such breach of faith becomes known to the Department, the Section will forfeit the privilege of purchasing school materials at half-cost, until such time as it furnishes a guarantee that the written pledge of its Trustees will be honourably kept.

Reg. 5 permits (but does not compel) the Trustees to sell books to pupils desiring to purchase, "provided the same be done without prejudice to the claims of other pupils." No pupil can be compelled to purchase, but has the right to demand the use of such

books, as, in the opinion of the teacher he needs, free of charge. We doubt if the Trustees of any Section refusing to provide books for any pupils in such a case, could enforce the collection of any rate for school purposes. The rights belonging to the pupil of a public school not having been recognized, it would be difficult to defend its character as a public school, if challenged in law.

Our correspondent is anxious to throw the responsibility of procuring books for each pupil directly on the individual parent. We do not share his anxiety. If we are to have a free system, let us have it free throughout. Why should a distinction be made between the books and all the other things required by the child at school? It is not a gift of books to the pupil, but the free use of such books as he may require, and only so long as he may require them. He is responsible for the care of the books while in his possession, and when he needs them no longer, the teacher being the judge, they are to be restored to the Trustees. Our correspondent thinks this a dangerous course to pursue, fearing that parents may be encouraged to look too much for "outside help in the performance of a sacred duty, instead of exerting themselves as they ought." But this objection lies not alone against free books, but against the whole theory of free education. We have yet to learn that free schools in any country have made parents less devoted to their children or more inclined to look for outside help in providing for their wants. But even if it could be proved that there is this evil tendency in free schools, we must not forget that there is at least one greater misfortune for a child than that his parent should lean too much on outside help—to be left to grow up in ignorance. The principle of leaving to each parent to bear the full weight of his "sacred duty" in this matter has been well and faithfully tried in this Province. Our correspondent is aware of the result. A new system has been inaugurated, and though it has not been long enough in operation to speak very confidently as to its influence in causing parents to lean overmuch on outside help, yet we think "A Trustee since 1864" will agree in the opinion that it has already done enough unmistakable good for the Province to entitle it to a full and honest trial.

PRIZES FOR SCHOOLS.

IN accordance with a resolution of the House of Assembly, 300 sets (900 volumes) of MURDOCH'S *History of Nova Scotia* have been purchased by the Educational Department, to be offered as prizes to be competed for by the pupils of the Public Schools of the Province. The competition for these books will take place during the next School Term. They will be awarded to the pupils manifesting the greatest proficiency in such branches of a common school education as may hereafter be decided upon. Due notice will be given of the subjects and the mode of examination.

It has been decided to distribute the volumes among the different counties as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of pupils attending school in each during the past year. This mode gives the following quota to each:—

Pictou	28	sets	Annapolis	14	sets
Colchester	22	"	Antigonish	14	"
Halifax	22	"	Yarmouth	12	"
Cumberland	20	"	Digby	11	"
Cape Breton	16	"	Richmond	9	"
Halifax City	16	"	Shelburne	9	"
Hants	16	"	Victoria	9	"
Inverness	16	"	Guysboro'	8	"
King's	16	"	Queen's	6	"
Lunenburg	15	"			

As a considerable amount of labour will be entailed on the Inspectors in connexion with the competition, it is proposed to present each with a set of the volumes.

Each set of this *History* consists of three large volumes, and contains some 1800 pages. In it Mr. MURDOCH has embodied a