

the teacher to furnish examples *ad libitum*; and that a text-book on arithmetic, in the hands of a thoroughly trained teacher, is chiefly used to furnish the pupils with the rules, their explanations, the illustration of the principles on which they depend, and an illustration of the work. If the proper amount of black-board surface is provided by the trustees, if the teacher classifies his school as thoroughly in arithmetic as he does in reading or grammar, if he then addresses himself to the work of teaching arithmetic and furnishing examples, daily, to the different classes in his school, with the same diligence he applies to other branches, he will have little cause to complain of the Nova Scotia arithmetic as a text-book. If, however, the old plan of teaching everything, but arithmetic, in class be retained,—if pupils are left to teach themselves this branch in the odds and ends of their time,—if they are not classified, or if the teacher does not furnish each class, daily, on the black-board, with the examples suited to its stage of progress,—if instead of daily illustrating, to the different classes, the rules and operations in which they are respectively engaged, the teacher is content with an occasional general black-board exercise,—in fine, if the teacher allows himself to be interrupted in his ordinary class work by Thomas, William and Harry, respectively enquiring how to do this sum and how to state that one, instead of having the principles and operations of every rule thoroughly mastered before the class is left unaided to the solution of problems, I can well understand that the Nova Scotia arithmetic will not be highly appreciated. Let the work be done in the proper manner, and this objection to the book will vanish.

A very reprehensible mode of teaching reading, i. e., causing the pupils to name the individual words articulately without any attention to pauses, inflection or accentuation, was formerly almost universal, and is still too prevalent. Teachers who adopt this plan generally complain that the seventh or advanced reader does not contain a miniature work on elocution. They seem to think that, at this advanced stage, rules should be given to enable the pupils to correct the bad habits which vicious training had engendered and fostered. Here, as in the case of the arithmetic, the objection is entirely owing to their antiquated, exploded and incorrect mode of teaching the branch in question. Had they taught their pupils from the very start to read in a natural and correct way,—had they required them, when first they were able to read two words consecutively, to put the accent on the proper word,—had they given the rule for this and explained the reason of it,—had they proceeded in this way throughout the whole of the child's school course,—had they given, "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little";—long ere the seventh book was reached no such aid as a few rules on elocution would be needed. Such a mode of teaching reading, thoroughly carried out, would render the addition of a few rules on elocution, to the seventh book, a burlesque. A thorough work on elocution, for the use of those who pursued their studies to such a length as to warrant it, would indeed be a desideratum; but it could not be compressed within the limits of a few pages to be bound up with a common school reader. The teacher's own library should contain, on this as on all other branches of education, works for reference which could never be adopted as suitable for use in common schools, and there is no lack of good works on elocution to furnish out a teacher's library. I might adduce other examples of the same kind to shew the futile character of the objections urged by some to the Nova Scotia series of school text-books. In every case they are founded, more or less, on a misapprehension of the design of the books. If teachers will keep up with the improvements of the age, they will find that the school books are all that can be desired to aid them in their work. Of course the series is not yet complete, but for the time, much, very much has been done, and both care and judgment are needed to complete the list.

Trained Teachers.—It is, as a rule, the untrained teachers who make the foregoing and similar objections to the prescribed books; those who have been trained either in our own or similar Normal Colleges in other lands easily adapt themselves and their teaching to the modes for which the books are designed, and the results are in most cases highly satisfactory. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that a course of training in the Provincial Normal School will, in every case, make a good teacher; but I may, with confidence, assert that the highest scholarly attainments united to the best natural capabilities, will be benefited and improved by an efficient course of Normal training,—and further, that no man should consider himself thoroughly fitted for so important a work as the educating of youth, who has not, at some period of his literary course, availed himself of a thorough course in a Normal College. The principles there enunciated, and the corresponding practice there exemplified, are of themselves sufficient, although in matters of detail judgments might differ, to repay largely the time and expense to any one who designs to make teaching the business of his life; and the sooner those who only wish to make it a stepping-stone to something else quit it, the better for the profession of teaching.

Support.—The recent failure in the fisheries has been a sad drawback to our schools in the Shore and Western districts. It is hard to expect communities, that are unable to provide bread for their families, to contribute largely towards the support or equipment of schools. Still, with the Divine blessing, I trust we shall hold our own during the next season. I would respectfully suggest that, to aid poor sections not recognized as such by the Commissioners at their last May meeting, but rendered so by the circum-

stances of the times, provision be made to enable such of them as really deserve and need such aid, to be placed on the list of poor sections at the next May meeting of the Boards, and to participate for the present term in the benefits which the law gives to poor sections.

Vacations.—It often happens that teachers wish to attend the examinations of schools in their neighborhood; Inspectors often desire to have one or more teachers present at the visitation of a very efficient school, and other causes may require a suspension of ordinary business. I have much pleasure in informing you that, to meet these exigencies, the recent order of Council, concerning "substitute Saturdays," is not only generally satisfactory, but also calculated to be practically beneficial to the general cause of education. I do not think that the vacations are at all too long, and I have noticed that those parents disposed to complain of the length of vacations are, almost without exception, those who are least particular in sending their children regularly to school. Both teachers and pupils require frequent relaxation, but long vacations are injurious to both. The present arrangement is almost, if not altogether perfect.

Payment of Teachers.—There is one serious inconvenience in connection with the payment of the salaries of teachers under the present law. I refer especially to such counties as contain more than one Board of Commissioners, and more especially to the payment of the County fund. Teachers cannot, in most cases, obtain their pay from trustees until the latter have received the County grant. Now in this County, with its four Boards of School Commissioners, it is utterly impossible to pay the County grant, under the present arrangement, for at least a month after the termination of the terms ending with April and October respectively; as all the Boards must meet before the distribution can take place. In several other counties the inconvenience is almost as serious. I am glad to see that the Provincial Teachers' Association has taken action on this subject, and memorialized the Legislature to provide a remedy. I trust that something will be done during the present session to render the payment of the County grants more prompt. It is too bad that a teacher who wishes to remove to another locality, should be obliged to wait three or four weeks, in many counties, before he can receive his pay for past services. It is not, perhaps, my province to point out the remedy, but I may be pardoned for saying that the appointment of one Board of Commissioners for each Sectional District would at once put an end to this abnormal state of affairs. I trust that this important subject will receive serious consideration.

Registration.—A great improvement has been made during the past year in the mode of registration. Although in this respect we were last year, I believe, in advance of most countries, yet the provision of permanent covers and moveable sheets, with the simplification of the sheets themselves, has put us still further in the van. There is now no possibility of over-estimating the importance of a thorough registration, as upon it depends the whole payment of the County grants, and any deficiency in this department of our educational fabric will necessarily entail an incorrect distribution of the funds. I believe the present arrangement will be found entirely satisfactory.

Order in School.—In this County, outside the City, I have found the order generally good; in the City, it is equally, if not more so, except in schools which are yet, from want of sufficient accommodation, over-crowded. The new school buildings now in course of construction and nearly finished, will tend much to diminish the over-crowded state of some of the City schools.

Physical Exercises.—These are not so general as I could wish. In the country schools where trained teachers are engaged, they are all but universal; but in the city schools, especially in the higher departments, they are not so common. I do not think this right. The larger and more robust pupils are, the more need they have of physical exercises. True, they do not need to be so frequent as in a more primary stage, but in the same proportion they require to be more prolonged and more vigorous. There are exceptions, in which a judicious use of physical exercises is made, even in the highest departments; but I fear that in these it is generally believed by the teachers that such exercises are unnecessary, and, if they are given at all, it is in compliment to the wishes of the inspector and other officials.

Singing.—I am happy to inform you that this has become very general. In the country, among trained teachers, it has long been quite common. In the City, except in the schools taught by the Sisters of Charity, it was three years ago almost unknown. The Commissioners of the City have, with commendable liberality, provided a professor of music for the City schools, and the results are really almost marvellous. Good singing can now be heard in almost every school in Halifax, and but few country schools in this County are destitute of this necessary accomplishment. When we consider that singing is not only intrinsically a necessary portion of an education, but that it is also the very best means of promoting order in school, and a high moral instrument in the training of youth, I think we have reason for congratulation in the progress made, during the past year, in this department.

Punishments.—Quite a number of schools have discarded corporal punishment. Yet there seems to be no generally recognized principle upon which such action is based. So far as I can perceive, each teacher acts on his or her own convictions. I do not feel justified in expressing any definite views on this subject. I would only say that, so far as my observations have extended, I