

district Councils, is not approved of by every person in the Niagara District; yet the avowed opponents of the principle constitute decidedly the smallest portion of the rate-paying community, and are composed of individuals who, with a few exceptions, have no children to educate, or who do not choose to have their children attend the Public Schools, or who have not bestowed much thought upon the subject, and of the persons under their respective influences.

"On the other hand, the question being a new one in this country, the advocates of the system are not altogether agreed as to the extent to which the principle should be applied. One portion is in favor of compelling all those who have children, (and no others,) to pay towards the salary of the Teacher a sum proportioned to the number of their children, whether they send them to School or not; and another portion is willing to fix a moderate rate, say from 2s. 6d. to 5s. per quarter, to be paid by each pupil, the balance of the salary to be raised by tax upon the ratable property of the Section; and another portion, which is by far the largest portion of the whole, and comprises a considerable majority of the freeholders and householders of the District, believes that the principle is just, and that if applied at all, it should be applied to its fullest extent—that the property of the Section should educate the children of the Section, without respect to colour, country, or condition in life.

"I think that I give the views of at least five-sixths of those best informed upon the subject, and most competent to judge, when I state that they believe the Rate-bill system, both 'unsound in theory, and unprofitable in practice,'—that the natural effect of it is to keep children out, while the effect of the Free School system is to bring them into the Schools.

"The correctness of these views is amply proved by reference to the Trustees' Report for 1847 and 1848, for the five School Sections in this District, in which the Rate-bill system prevailed during the first named, and the Free School system during the last named year.

"The aggregate population of School age in the five Sections in 1847, was 953; the aggregate attendance during the same period was 527. In 1848 the population was 994, and the attendance 969; showing a gain in favor of the latter system of 442, or nearly 90 per cent!

"There are many parts of the District where the Schools have attained to a high degree of efficiency, and where a thirst for reading has been created in the minds of the youth of both sexes, that the small Libraries of private families in the country are not able to satisfy.

"To meet the wants of the community in this particular, some provisions for the establishment and support of School Section Libraries would be favorably regarded, and at once carried into effect.

"The fruitfulness of the Press of our enterprising neighbors in producing those corrupting works of fiction, and the extremely low price at which they are sold, make them easily available to all; while from the peculiar style in which they are written, the tendency to read them on the part of young persons, is fully proportioned to the facilities for obtaining them.

"These circumstances, if there were no other reasons, should, I humbly conceive, stimulate us to early action on the subject, and to place within the reach of the youth of our land, as soon as practicable, an ample supply of useful and instructive books.

"I am of opinion that Teachers' Institutes, formed under sanction of legislative authority and encouraged by legislative aid, would prove valuable auxiliaries to our School system. In those countries where they exist, much importance is attached to them.

"They afford excellent opportunities to Teachers for obtaining information as to improved methods of teaching; for becoming personally acquainted; and for conferring with each other upon the various matters relating to their vocation; for assimilating their views and practice, and for appearing before the public under favorable circumstances as a distinct profession.

"It may perhaps be thought out of place for me to make any remarks touching the District Grammar Schools.

"I would, nevertheless, beg leave to state, that I have long since been led to believe that those Institutions, absorbing as they do annually a considerable sum of public money, and as a general

rule benefiting those only who reside in their immediate neighborhoods, might with advantage be placed under more popular control, by associating them with the District Model Schools.

"Both, it appears to me, would be strengthened by a union of means and interests. The management being then brought more immediately into the hands of the people, and the Schools being open to Teachers, they would become more extensively known, their advantages would be more generally participated in, and their influence and usefulness would be more widely felt."

#### TALBOT DISTRICT.

Extract from the Report of the Reverend William Clarke, District Superintendent:—

"During the past year there have been ninety Schools in operation, which, with some few exceptions, I have personally visited and examined; and I am pleased to report, that there has been an advance on the previous year, both in the time during which they have been kept open, and also in the amount and diversity of instruction communicated; several branches of study having been introduced into many Schools, which were untaught before. Still, in some Sections the cause has rather retrograded than otherwise, which may be attributed to the following reasons:—

- "1. Local differences and prejudices.
- "2. The deficiency and variety of School Books.
- "3. The parsimony of the people; and
- "4. The scarcity of well qualified and accredited Teachers.

"The latter will at once be apparent, when I inform you that in this District there are not more than sixteen Teachers of the first class, and twenty-four of the second; while there are between fifty and sixty of the third, or least qualified class.

"In such a state of things it will at once be perceived that there must of necessity be some Sections suffering all the consequences arising from insufficient teaching. It is, however, important to observe, that there is an addition of six first class Teachers, as compared with the previous year; and in those Sections where there is cordial co-operation and a remunerating salary, Teachers of the first class are readily obtained; but where there is known antagonism and poor pay, such Teachers are of course unwilling to engage.

"This may show that unreasonable expectations or hasty animadversions should not be indulged. Some of the third class Teachers receive certificates from School Visitors, any two of whom are authorized to give them. In some cases the employment of an insufficient Teacher is to be attributed to the Trustees themselves, who are anxious to keep the School open the prescribed time at lowest price; while, not unfrequently, the Superintendent has to decide whether there shall be a modicum of instruction, or none at all; whether there shall be half a loaf or no bread. Only let correct principles be diffused,—let the importance of Education be pressed home upon the public mind, and then we may patiently but confidently hope that as first class Teachers are multiplied and settled among us, through the medium of that valuable Institution, the Provincial Normal School, the character of our Schools will be gradually improved, and the best modes of imparting instruction will generally, if not universally, prevail.

"Perhaps you will allow me to say, from personal observation and extensive intercourse, that there is a very general satisfaction with the leading provisions of the present law; while at the same time, there is an almost unanimous desire for some alterations and amendments.

"The most active and energetic promoters of Education, are very desirous that the present Rate-bill should be abolished, and that the additional amount of the Teachers' salary should be raised either by an uniform Rate-bill upon all the children, whether in attendance at School or not; or, that the whole amount for School purposes should be raised by the assessment of property, which should not only be taxed for the protection of all, but for the education of all. I have seldom met with an intelligent Trustee who has not uniformly condemned the present mode, and expressed a desire that it might be superseded by a more excellent one. Then it is also desirable that the power of Trustees should be somewhat enlarged. Great care, however, should be taken, that all moneys coming into their hands may be faithfully applied, and duly accounted for. I would further suggest the propriety of a more equitable distribution of the School money. The present system