

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

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## THE SCHOLAR'S EYE.

## II.

*Frequency of Defective Vision in Canadian Schools.**Evil Effects of the same.**Cases:—*

- (i). *Shortsightedness.*
- (ii). *Oversightedness.*

Having, in the foregoing article, shown how to measure defective vision, let us, in this, consider its frequency, as exhibited in the school-room. Next, let us consider what disadvantages, evils, and positive suffering are entailed on the scholar from defective vision.

Statistics are available to show that high percentages of scholars are below the average in sight. This percentage is commonly greater in proportion to the size of the town or city in which the children reside. In the cities of New York and Boston it is found that a surprisingly large number see badly. *Prima facie* this seems strange. It is, at least in part, accounted for by the fact that the children of cities are in unnatural conditions. Natural conditions pertain in a simple rustic life. Besides, lack of development in general, some faculties and powers are overtaxed and overstimulated. The eye of the city or town child is early accustomed to great use, and much overuse, of his eyes. The illiterate are, as a rule, blessed with keen sight—where no inflammatory diseases have diminished it. My own observation leads me to believe that some of the percentages given are too high. I do not discredit the source from which they come; the inference is only in-

correct. A child, whose vision is  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{2}{3}$ , or  $\frac{1}{2}$ , does not necessarily suffer from school work. With a vision of  $\frac{2}{3}$ , this rarely occurs unless there be prolonged application. Practically, when vision is about  $\frac{1}{2}$ , there comes serious complaint, and should it be diminished still further, complaint will be great. This applies more especially to vision for distance. I have examined the vision of two hundred pupils in Port Hope, about one-half in the High School; the other in the Central Public School (but not in the Primary departments). Of the two hundred, seventeen, or  $8\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., had vision less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  for distance. Port Hope has a population of 6,000. In cities I believe the percentage to be higher, in rural districts lower. Eight per cent. is, perhaps, about the average for Ontario. If grades of defective vision greater than  $\frac{1}{2}$  are taken into account the percentage is proportionally higher. Mr. Thornhill, of the West Primary School, Port Hope, had sufficient interest in the matter (which, by the way, every teacher has not,) to make an examination of his own pupils, 55 in number, as to their vision for distance. The result in percentage is about that stated. It had also the result of making him acquainted more accurately with the visual condition of several of his pupils. To a considerable extent he can distinguish those who are defective in vision, and manage them accordingly, as by placing them nearer blackboard, maps, &c. On the other hand, he can distinguish some as easily who put in a false plea of defective vision.