

cheese in the factory and the indifference that is shown in engaging a teacher to mould the brains of an immortal soul in the school. But I pass on at once to consider some of the *unnecessary evils* in our present system. The first one that I will mention is *the great variety of text books in use in our common schools*; this is a difficulty which meets a teacher on the first day of her school work and which annoys her all through the term. The number of arithmetics, geographies, grammars and reading books that are placed in her hands on the first day of school would form a very respectable reference library on these different subjects, and in this library the teacher would have the benefit not only of the combined wisdom of Canadian authors, but that of our American cousins would be fairly represented. This great variety of text books is but the natural result of the present system in which the choice of books lies wholly with the parents. The parent decides that his child shall study arithmetic, reading and geography, he furnishes the text books from the nearest store, or they are castoff books of an older pupil, and when the first day of school arrives the child is sent to the teacher thus equipped. The books may happen to be like those of some other child, oftener they are quite different, and the child is thus constituted a class by himself. If the teacher protests the parent declares that the books are good enough for his child, and that he is not going to throw away money for new books.

Think now of the herculean task that lies before the teacher placed in such a position, a task that must baffle the powers of the most experienced organizer. I think that it will be admitted by all that the greatest difficulty that the district school teacher meets with in conducting her work is the variety of attainments that exist among her pupils, that in her small school of twenty-five pupils, she has primary classes, intermediate classes, senior classes and advanced classes; that in almost every subject she is obliged to divide her twenty-five pupils into four or five classes. This is what I would call one of the *necessary evils* of your district schools. It is no doubt a great inconvenience and will always mar the efficiency of those schools as compared with the graded schools of thickly populated districts. But when we remember that the four or five classes into which it is necessary to divide a school in a particular subject on account of a variety of attainment are generally broken up into seven or eight on account of variety of text books, we can see how great this evil is and how seriously it interferes with the efficiency and success of the schools. It paralyzes the teacher's efforts, it ties her hands, it magnifies the greatest difficulty she has to contend with by increasing her already too numerous classes. Class teaching is in many instances turned into individual teaching, and the teacher not only finds it very difficult to overtake her work even during the long six hours, but she is unable to use the spirit of emulation and the sympathy of numbers which are very valuable in the instruction of the young. If parents saw that by placing a strange reading book in the hands of their child they were not only increasing the work of the teacher, but were also depriving their child of much of the teacher's attention that he would otherwise receive, I think there would be less trouble about variety in our text books. For it does seem to me that by the present arrangement children receive in many cases one half of the teacher's attention which they would receive if a uniform series was used in our schools. But again, this system brings into our schools inferior books, books that are quite behind the age, and as a rule these are more expensive than the improved text books which

can be furnished at a low rate on account of their large circulation. And this is a very important point in our ungraded schools, when the pupil has to spend more time with the book and less with the teacher. Again, it very often happens that the child comes to school bearing in his hand a text book which is entirely unsuited to his years and attainment, and yet the teacher is expected to keep up the interest of her children and to bring them on under all these difficulties—a task which I for one should be very sorry to undertake. It must be evident to all that his is not a necessary evil, that it would be easy to secure a uniform series if the proper machinery were set in order to direct the parent's choice. To whom then are we to look to remedy this evil? Can we expect that the parents themselves will bring this about? How are they going to agree? Each parent will naturally want to keep to the particular set that his children are using, and who among them is to decide upon the merits of the different books in actual use. And I do not think that the present attitude of parents towards educational matters gives us reason to hope that they are likely to meet together and decide in this matter. We cannot then look to parents for the reform needed; can we look to teachers? If they taught for any length of time in one place they might exert a powerful influence over the parents, and bring about a uniform use in their own schools. But when they change nearly every term, as at present, it is evident that they can do very little to settle the question. If they attempt to make any change they are at once accused of taking too much upon themselves and of putting the parents to needless expense, and the parents are confirmed in their opinion when the next teacher condemns the books recommended by her predecessor. It is to the Inspectors, I think, that we should look to take the lead in this reform. I am confident that if the Inspector of this District, for example, would enter heartily into this question, he could within two years secure a uniform series of text books for our schools and thus greatly enhance the efficiency of the school work.

The Inspector is looked upon by the people as a man of great experience, of good judgment, and of influence in educational matters, and any suggestion therefore that comes strongly recommended by him would have great influence. Let the Inspector choose from the authorized series a list of books which he considers best for the schools in his district. Let this be placed in the hands of school boards, teachers and pupils endorsed by the strong recommendation of the Inspector. Let the parents be called together at two or three points in each Township and there let the Inspector point out to the people the great advantages to be gained by having a uniform system, advantages to parent to pupil and teacher, and I am sure that when the matter is clearly laid before them by one in authority they will at once co-operate in bringing about a state of things that so materially benefits themselves. In passing I may state that I think these gatherings might prove useful in many ways. For I think we should consider it part of the Inspector's duty to cultivate a healthy public interest in school matters and thus lead the parents to do their duty. For it seems to me there are many duties which parents owe to their school and teacher which they do not recognize intuitively. They require plain and definite instruction upon many points in order that they may co-operate with the teacher in securing the efficiency of the school. This instruction they would gladly receive from the lips of our school Inspector. I appeal therefore to our Inspectors because they can carry out this reform better than any one else; I appeal to the