

sion by the benchers of the Law Society, so should teachers no longer be examined by persons who had no experience in teaching. With a view of meeting this objection, and the objection made by the county councils on the score of expense, it was proposed that in future the County Boards of examiners should consist of five persons appointed by the Governor-in-council, on the recommendation of the Department of Public Instruction from a list of twelve names remitted by the County Council; and that they should be selected with a view to special qualifications in respect to the examination of teachers and the granting of certificates of qualification. Further to facilitate the duties of the board, and at the same time to raise the standard of qualification of teachers generally, the questions for the examination would be prepared by practical instructors, because it was well known that however well educated a man might be, he could not prepare questions to test a teacher's qualification for his work, unless he had himself had experience in that work. It was proposed to do away with third class certificates altogether, and that the questions for the examination of teachers throughout Upper Canada should be prepared by a committee or central Provincial Board in Toronto, consisting of practical teachers. The questions would be all printed in confidence, and sent under the seal of the Department to the chairman or secretaries of the several county boards, which would meet all over the Province on the same day, and the seals not to be broken until the boards had assembled. The values would be given, and it would be the duty of the county boards to examine the certificates of character and the answers to the questions proposed. Thus there would be a uniform standard, fair to every teacher, from one end of the country to another. The holder of a first class certificate under this system would not be again required to go before the board to be re-examined probably for five or ten years to come, and the second class certificates would be permanent for a certain time, though the exact period during which they would remain in force was a matter for after consideration. At the same time, these certificates would be perfectly valid in counties other than those in which they were given.

VOLUNTARY CHARACTER OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

The Common School system of Upper Canada was entirely a voluntary one with respect to municipalities. They can tax as they please to support schools, and they can refuse to sustain them if they please. The system is thus the work of the people themselves. The Government does not levy a single penny of a school-rate. No country in Europe had such an efficient school establishment as Prussia; but there everything begins and ends with the Government—it was purely a Government institution; it was not founded by the people; it was not managed by them, and consequently it did not confer those advantages which would have followed had the system been managed by the people, as in Canada. Here the system begins and ends with the people. No school-house can be built, and no rate levied, except by the concurrence of the people. It was true that it was not voluntary as to the individual, but it was certainly voluntary in regard to the municipality. Any county, city, town, or village, if it did not approve of the school system, could abolish it to-morrow. The only thing to be done in such a case would be for the municipality to decline to receive the legislative grant and to cease to levy a local rate. As to the question, how far Government should interfere in the management of such a system, he would say, that Government should do nothing that the people could more effectually do for themselves.

IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE OF PRIZES AND MERIT CARDS IN SCHOOLS.

Another feature in the present system and one which had commanded a great deal of interest, destined as it was to exercise a most salutary influence upon the intelligence and future prosperity of the youth of Canada, was the system of presenting prizes to the meritorious pupils. He attached great importance to the distribution of prizes for the encouragement of pupils. These prizes he was in favour of giving, not only for learning, but for punctuality, diligence, general good conduct and success in recitation. All might not be able to learn with the same degree of speed, but every pupil could be punctual, diligent, and of good conduct. Objections had been made to this practice as formerly carried out, and it had been fairly objected that where the prizes had been presented by the teachers the latter might be actuated by motives of partiality. But this objection had arisen from an improper mode of proceeding. Teachers ought not to be the examiners of their own pupils, for (although it was not believed that many of them would do so) yet they might easily so frame questions as to be satisfactorily answered by some and not by others who were perhaps equally well informed. But the system as lately introduced by the Educational Department,*

and now generally carried out had been most successful, and the reason why it had been so was that, not only were prizes awarded to those who answered the questions at the examinations in the most satisfactory manner, but also for general good conduct, punctuality in attendance, diligence, and perfect recitation, and this encouragement was given to every pupil without making one pupil the rival of another alike. Under the Departmental System every pupil would obtain a prize according to his own merit and not in consequence of his having obtained a triumph over his less unfortunate fellow pupil. This spirit of emulation formed part of the social life of our people urging them to that industry and activity which constituted the greatness and grandeur of our nation. The competition for prizes gave rise to feelings of the most noble and generous character, not to feelings of a selfish kind in the mind of the scholar. We might imagine the feelings which filled the heart of a pupil when he attained a merit card. He would think of the pleasure with which the announcement of his success would be received at home, and we might easily see how highly noble and generous feelings might thus be created in the minds of parents and child alike. Since the inauguration of the prize system 211,655 volumes had been sent out for prizes. Every one of these volumes, containing as they did a variety of instructive matter, were valued and read not only by the pupil but by the whole family circle, and thus become the means of spreading abroad useful information and instruction throughout the whole community. The desire to excel is a noble quality implanted in our nature, for the best and wisest end. Every man wishes to rise not only for his own individual good, but for that of his country. A large amount of money had been generally provided for the procuring of prizes. Several gentlemen in the different localities had contributed towards it. One member of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Billa Flint, who represented a county which contained no less than twenty-three townships, had contributed \$10 for each township for this purpose, on condition that each Township Council should contribute as much more.* \$20 had been added to this sum by the Educational Department, so that \$40 was expended annually in each of these respective townships for the purchase of prizes. Thus when a competitive examination of those various schools takes place a spirit of emulation is created not only among the pupils but among the teachers also; all naturally anxious that the school with which they are connected should do the best. Wherever the new merit card system of giving prizes had been introduced great and good results had ensued.

NECESSITY FOR A UNIFORM SERIES OF TEXT BOOKS.

The selection of text books was, however, one of those things which could not be left to the municipalities themselves or to teachers, without much injury; as by this means we might soon find ourselves in the same position as in one of the United States, where the late Hon. Horace Mann stated they had three hundred text books; whereas no country needed more than twenty or thirty text books.†

REVISION OF THE NATIONAL READERS FOR CANADIAN SCHOOLS.

The first thing which the school authorities of this country did in 1846, was to select these twenty or thirty text books, and then to render them as accessible as possible to the public. The Irish National Series of School Books were adopted as the common school books for Upper Canada, being the most unobjectionable and at the same time the best that could have been introduced. These books were compiled with great care and by some of the most eminent educationists of Ireland, under the direction of the National Board. They were the works of practical school teachers and not of theoretical men. When these books were in type a proof copy was sent to each member of the National Board, consisting of Protestant and Catholic Bishops, and other gentlemen, selected from the different religious persuasions. It was understood that any objection that might be raised by any member relative to the contents of a book, should be settled before the book was published or allowed to be printed. Archbishop Whately told him (Dr. R.) that during the time these books were going through the press no question was raised that was not amicably and unanimously settled without there having been any necessity to expunge or alter any of the sentences of the different authors. These books, then, were unanimously prepared, and thus prepared they came before the public with a prestige above all private authority. They were adopted as text books by Provincial authority, and to render them accessible, two methods were proposed—first, to import them, and next to reproduce them. The importation of these books by Canadian publishers and booksellers had been rendered a matter of free trade by the

* A pamphlet containing full information on the new Departmental System of merit cards, has been published, and will be furnished to any one applying for it.

* It is gratifying to know that a township competitive System of prizes has lately been introduced in various counties. A list of these townships and other information on the subject will be found on page 40.

† For the further views of the Educational Department on this subject, see next page.