

TOWNSHIP BOARDS OF TRUSTEES.

As the School legislation of the Province is to be revised and consolidated during the present session of the Ontario Legislature, we think it a fitting opportunity to consider the advantages to be derived from substituting for Local Boards of Trustees the more comprehensive system of Township Boards.

Many of our readers are aware that the School Improvement Act of 1871, makes it optional now, by a vote of the majority of Sections in any Township, to abolish Section Boards and substitute Township Boards instead. Previous to 1871, to secure this change, the unanimous voice of all the Sections in the Township was required.

It might be argued that as no Township has yet taken advantage of this provision in the School Act, that there is no desire on the part of the people for any further legislation. Indeed, we might fairly conclude that the great majority of the people are opposed to Township Boards, were it not, that in matters of this kind experience teaches us that we always advance *slowly*. It took nearly twenty years experience of Free Schools before we felt safe to abolish the Rate Bill nuisance, and now there is no one who would wish to return to it. We have had a great many years experience of Section Boards, and although there is no *active* popular demand for a change, yet we feel convinced that the reasons which can be advanced for substituting Township Boards are so cogent that there need be no hesitation on the part of our Legislature to take the necessary steps at once.

If we look to the example of the Eastern States, to whom we are indebted for many valuable hints in school legislation, we find that they are fast abolishing the Local Boards. Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts,

and such other States as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Iowa have already adopted the Township system and pronounce it vastly superior to the old plan. In the State of New York the system prevails of uniting three or four Sections under one Board, thus reducing, very materially, the number of Boards in a Township. So rapid has been the growth of the Township system in Connecticut, that the Secretary of the State Board of Education says in his report, "Let the public sentiment advance as it has done for the past five years, and the Section system will be entirely abandoned."

In discussing the advantages of Township Boards we cannot do better than give a few extracts from the reports of those officials whose experience gives weight to any argument they might advance. We first quote the remarks of the State Superintendent of Kansas, who, in discussing the advantages of the Township system, says :

"1. *Boundaries*—It will end and for ever put to rest the interminable disputes about School section boundaries, personal heart-burnings and animosities, secret malice and revenge; neighborhood feuds and public broils engendered by this prolific source of strife and contention will cease to exist. The law having once permanently established each township a school division, the trouble will then be at an end. There being no more boundary disputes about which the people can make themselves miserable, they can unite in building up good schools.

"2. *School officers reduced*—It will dispense with a large number of school officers and elections, and simplify the control and management of our public schools. The present law provides three officers for each school section, the new one but six for each township, thus dispensing with a large number of superfluous officers, simplifying the management, and securing uniform work in all the schools. The petty annoyances and loss of time occasioned by so many school