

For the REVIEW.]

New Brunswick Schools of the Olden Time.

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THE OLD PARISH SCHOOL.

Before we proceed to consider the origin and growth of parish schools, a few general remarks about old schools and school-masters may be of interest to the readers of the EDUCATIONAL REVIEW.

The qualifications of the old school-master, as a rule, were not of a very high order, and he was generally equal to the duty expected of him, since outside the towns little was desired by scholar or parent beyond the rudiments of education. The teacher's salary was very small, and his position by no means a desirable one for a man of refined taste and feelings. To illustrate the point:—In the winter of 1778-9, David Burpee taught a school in that part of the township of Mangerville, now known as Sheffield. His scholars were to pay him three shillings, elevenpence half-penny per month. From his accounts it appears that only seven scholars paid tuition, although it is likely a good many more attended school. The tuition was paid in a variety of produce, work, grain, leather, musquash-skins, rum, hauling hay and making shoes. He handled but ten shillings cash for his entire winter's work.

After the lapse of three-quarters of a century, the state of things as regards the remuneration provided by the people, had not very materially improved.

J. M. d'Avray, Esq., Chief Superintendent of Education, in his third annual report presented to the legislature in 1855, says;—

"I have now before me a letter from a first-class teacher whom I know to be a most worthy and excellent man. He says that when he entered upon an engagement for twelve months, which has just terminated, the inhabitants of the district subscribed the sum of £35 towards his support: that is to say, they signed their names to a paper, each promising a certain sum in consideration of sending so many children to school. During the twelve months the teacher in question (like many others throughout the province) had upwards of twenty children to teach whose education was not paid for. But how did he receive his £35? During the twelve months he got 2s. 6d. in cash, the balance was paid in potatoes, buckwheat, socks, mittens, all charged at the very highest rates, and in orders upon the store where, as he says, 'I obtained very indifferent goods at very exorbitant prices.'"

Elsewhere in his report, Professor d'Avray gives so inimitable a description of the unfortunate victim of the "boarding around system," that we cannot do better than quote it:—

"What must be the condition of the teacher who gets board, washing and lodging in lieu of money, and who has

to be boarded, washed and lodged by all the inhabitants in turn? One week in a comfortable farm house, the next in a miserable log hut—the food, buckwheat—the washing, little, the lodging, the fourth bed in the fourth corner of the one room; he can know neither comfort, nor cleanliness, nor decency. He cannot study, he cannot have one moment to himself, and when the fatiguing labors of the day are over, when he requires rest and quiet to raise his flagging spirits, he finds that he is in the way, and unwelcome at the fireside; that he is looked upon as a lazy fellow if he does not chop wood and fetch water, or at all events nurse the baby. In the face of all this, it is extremely difficult to suggest plans for the improvement of the educational system of the province."

One more extract we take from the report of Professor d'Avray, showing the not uncommon experience of the teacher in the active duties of his calling;

"The school house is a very insufficient one: in summer too hot, in winter too cold: it leaks in rainy weather, admits the wind and the snow when it storms, the chimney smokes; all this is bad; he complains and obtains fair promises of improvement in due season. The children have no books, no slates, no pencils, no paper, no pens. He asks for a black-board and a map; all these things shall be procured in time, and meanwhile he must do the best he can. The attendance is very irregular, the children come and stay away in a manner that is very annoying to him and injurious to them. He remonstrates, and is told that they are wanted home, but that the attendance will be better and more regular when winter comes, and so it is: that is to say, he has now to admit a score of children whom he never saw before, and who come to make up for the summer absence of their brothers and sisters, etc."*

If the chief superintendent of education felt himself obliged to write in this strain as late as the year 1855, we can readily conceive that all that he says in his report at that time was true in a more intense degree in the early days of New Brunswick.

There was then no uniformity in the methods pursued by individual teachers, although school books were of necessity pretty much the same. To gain a very fair idea of these we may take the advertisement of Jacob S. Mott,* bookseller, in the *St. John Gazette* of July 10, 1802, announcing the receipt by the ship *Polly* from London, of a general assortment of books and stationery, including school Bibles, Testaments, and primers; Dilworth's spelling-books, Fenning's spelling books, Burn's grammar, Smith's geography, Guthrie's geography, Morse's American geography, Dilworth's arithmetic, Hamilton's arithmetic, Vyse's arithmetic, Jones' English

* Mr. d'Avray in his report proposes alterations in the school-law on the very lines since adopted in our present school system, and his statement of the effects which would follow have been fulfilled in a manner that is really remarkable.

* Jacob S. Mott's bookstore was in Prince William Street, opposite the Market Square, near the foot of King Street.