

ferring to the Committees of the latter, Protestant and Roman Catholic, the recommendatory functions previously exercised by the Superintendent alone as respects the distribution of the funds for promoting Superior Education. Also, to these Committees exclusively appertains the duty of regulating the Boards of Examiners throughout the Province, and the sanctioning of the text-books for use in all the Public Schools. By the same law, provision was made for two secretaries or deputies in the Department of Public Instruction, who perform their duties under the Superintendent's direction, and to whom, respectively, the departmental work is delegated according as it concerns Protestant or Roman Catholic education. In this behalf, the Superintendent's Deputies are the same as have been employed in the Department since Confederation—Dr. Louis Giard and Dr. Henry Miles.

The Hon. Mr. Ouimet's past career may be briefly summed up as follows: He was born at Ste. Rose, P. Q., in 1823, and is now, therefore, 55 years of age. He received his early education at the Colleges of St. Hyacinthe and Montreal, in which last named city he had the benefit of careful tuition by the noted *savant*, the Abbé Duchesne. He studied law and was called to the Bar in 1844, and during some years practised at Vaudreuil, of which place he was Mayor, and was appointed Q.C. in 1867. From 1858 to 1861 he sat for Beauharnois County in the Canadian House of Assembly. He has been President of the St. Jean Baptiste Society, Montreal, and of the Institut Canadien Français, and Batonnier of the Bar of the Province of Quebec. From Confederation to the year 1878 he was Attorney-General of the Province, and then became Premier and Minister of Public Instruction. He is a D.C.L. of the University of Bishop's College, Lennoxville, and the author of the Municipal Code of the Province of Quebec, and of the Law on District Magistrates, and has carried, in the Legislature, important amendments on the qualification of jurors in criminal cases, and also in the Code of Civil Procedure. His well-known urbanity, legal eminence, experience in public business, and impartial zeal in the cause of public education, not only qualify him, in a mixed community like that of Quebec, for the important public post which he occupies, but justify the hope of a bright future for education in the Province of Quebec.

## Gleanings.

### READING IN COMMON SCHOOLS.

BY J. M. GREGORY, LL.D.

Ought reading to be taught in our common schools? Certainly, my friend. But what reading? how much? and how? Let us consider the question without prejudice. In the common schools, as now managed, about one-half of the time is given to the reading lessons. A country superintendent of schools told the writer that in his county nearly two-thirds of the time in school is spent in reading-class. Is this necessary? Is it profitable? Is this not one of the thieves of our school system, which rob it of its fruitfulness, and bring upon it the too common reproach of poverty in results? Let us look at it carefully but fearlessly.

Children must be taught to read printed books; reading does not come by nature. But the vocabulary of little children is small, and to learn to read such books as they can understand can be done usually in a few weeks. A term or two at most will be sufficient, if the children are of sufficient age. It should be done at home; but as many parents have not the time, and fewer still the inclination, some of the children must evidently be taught to read in school. This is agreed.

But ought this teaching to go farther than the simple words and sentences which children easily understood? Need the reading lessons drag on through term after term, and year after year, consuming half the school-life of the majority of our children? Of what use those long series of reading books, filled with the mere fragments of literature; or of those time-wasting reading lessons, in which each pupil reads a single short paragraph, and then stands idle for the next quarter or half-hour, it may be? Occasionally a skilful teacher may make it a little better, and throw a little life into the tedious monotony; but the teachers get tired of the well-thumbed pages and paragraphs as well as the children, and they let things go. Listen to the dreary droning of the "choice extracts," out of which both teachers and pupils have long ago chowed the last drop of sweetness!

### A MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

The writer taught his own five children to read. The task was not a long or difficult one: it occupied a few of the odds and ends of time to be found in the busiest life. It was as good as play. Having read to the little one a few short stories to excite its curiosity, then, by the so-called word method, it was taught some of the more common words, and shown how to find out others. The story books were then put into the little hands, and the work went on of itself: no urging was needed—the charm of the story did the business. There was no foolish attempt to force the child to read what it did not understand. If the story was not interesting, it was remorselessly let alone, and a better one was found. Doubtless many a hard tussle was had with new words and big ones; but the story could not be given up, and so the hard word was mastered. Sometimes the children came of their own accord to read me some amusing passage, and corrections were made in their pronunciation; but nothing was forced. Their taste for books grew till they had to be restrained from reading too much, and thus injuring their health. Their knowledge of words steadily increased; their intelligence was fed; and before they went to school at all, they became better readers than any school-taught children of my acquaintance. They were not remarkable children. One of them learned with much difficulty, but once started in the story book, he became as fond of reading as the others. In the families of several of my acquaintances the same plan has been tried, and with the same result.

Let this method be tried in our common schools. Let a school be supplied with at least fifty dollars' worth of the brightest and best story books for children that can be found. Let two hours a day of the time now given to reading lessons be allowed to the children to read the story books, on condition that they first learn their lessons, if you will. Occasionally, let the child that has found something too interesting to be kept to itself, be permitted to read it aloud to the teacher or to the school. Lessons in articulation and in voice-culture may be given as such, at the proper time. They are not necessarily connected with reading lessons. The older pupils may also take lessons in elocution if the teacher knows how to teach it. Elocution belongs to speaking rather than to reading. Let it be studied in its own place, and for its own uses.

### THE ARGUMENT.

Our common-school studies miserably fail to make intelligent people. Arithmetic, grammar and geography may help to discipline the mind, but they do not feed the intelligence. Our literature—our books—these are our true storehouses of knowledge. Books are the cheapest and best of all teachers to those who love them and can use them. A reading people can never be an ignorant people. The children who read stories will learn to love books. They will pass from stories to history, poetry, philosophy, science, and the whole round of learning, and especially if the other parts of their school work be well done.

The cost of the story books will be less than the prices of the discarded reading books. Economy is on the side of reform. The schools will gain in interest and fruitfulness. Dull intellects will awaken. Thoughts will kindle. Talk will be heard, full of imagination, reasoning, conjecture and fruitful debate. The other lessons will be better learned, both because of the increased intelligence, and to win the time for more reading. Good readers will be multiplied. The terrible monotone will cease; and our children, no longer spoiled by pretended reading lessons, will read as naturally, easily and pleasantly as they talk.—*N. E. Journal of Education.*

### THE SCHOOLMASTER.

*He studieth his scholars' natures as carefully as they their books; and ranks their dispositions into several forms. And though it may seem difficult for him in a great school to descend to all particulars, yet experienced schoolmasters may quickly make a grammar of boys' nature, and reduce them all (saving some few exceptions) to their general rules.*

*Those that are ingenious and industrious.* The conjunction of two such planets in a youth presages much good unto him. To such a lad a frown may be a whipping, and a whipping a death; yea, when their master whips them once, shame whips them all the week after. Such natures he useth with all gentleness.

*Those that are ingenious and idle.* These think, with the hare in fable, that, running with snails—so they count the rest of their