

Schools. A lively interest is growing daily in favour of Common School instruction, though there is doubtless still too much apathy, and some slight opposition in certain quarters to the fair trial of the Act; but it will be seen that there is a considerable increase in the averages under all the principal headings of the Report, which will test satisfactorily the relative bearings of the operations of the Act with reference to past years."

#### SIMCOE DISTRICT.

Extract from the Report of H. A. Clifford, Esquire, District Superintendent:—

"The School-houses in this District, with only two exceptions, are log buildings, and only a few of them are provided with suitable seats and desks; some of the older ones are fast going to decay, and wherever they have been replaced by new ones, greater attention has been paid to furnishing them with proper conveniences: no ventilating apparatus has been introduced in any of them, neither do any of them contain more than one room.

"I am happy to say, that the National School Books have been very generally introduced into this District during the past year, as you will perceive by the Report. It is true that this remark refers only to the first, second, and third reading books, and in a few instances to the fourth; but I consider that by their introduction we have made one grand step towards general improvement, for I find that amongst the Teachers who use them but one opinion of their merit prevails, viz: that the progress and improvement now made are much more rapid and substantial than before their introduction. Until the last two years the English Reader and the Scriptures, very frequently only the latter, were the only reading books to be found in many of the Schools; and though I am glad to say that the Scriptures have in no instance been discarded, still the indiscriminate use of them has in a great measure ceased, and books designed for progressive School readers now assist them in storing the children's minds with useful information.

"With regard to the sentiments of the people on the subject of Education, I have to remark that of course they are very various, though I believe that upon the whole a better feeling exists, and more cordiality and unanimity begin to be exhibited towards the Schools. At first, almost all classes strongly objected to any direct tax upon them for promoting the objects of general education; but the novelty of such a tax has now worn off, and the improbability of its being abolished having become apparent to all, less dissatisfaction and less opposition are now offered to its collection."

#### GORE DISTRICT.

Extract from the Report of Patrick Thornton, Esquire, District Superintendent:—

"In forwarding this Annual Report for 1848, I am happy to have it in my power to state, that the Schools in this District generally have made considerable advances during the year. Perhaps the improvement in 1848 has equalled that of any former year since the appointment of District Superintendents. There is one thing deserves to be particularly noticed,—there is a much better spirit generally prevailing than in 1847."

#### NIAGARA DISTRICT.

Extract from the Report of Dexter E'Everardo, Esquire, District Superintendent:—

"In connexion with the accompanying Report, I have the honor to state, that during my visits among the Schools of this District the past year, I found a very marked improvement in the qualifications of the Teachers, a material increase in the numbers in attendance, and in apparatus and School requisites, and a higher and more healthy tone of feeling among the people generally with reference to Education, than I have found in any previous year.

"It is true that there are many localities where a surprising indifference with regard to their Schools still prevails, attended by a penny-wise policy and the usual accompaniments: a poor Teacher, very few and unsuitable books, an absence of almost every convenience and facility for communicating instructions with advantage, and a six months' School. But, on the other hand, a great number of Sections have shaken off the lethargy of former periods; have come to understand their real educational interests; have determined to employ Teachers of the highest order of attainments; to pay them suitable salaries; to supply the Pupils with

appropriate and uniform books; to furnish the School-house with all necessary School requisites; to keep their Schools permanently open; and to place their Teachers in that respectable position in society which their merits and the importance of their vocation demand. It gives me pleasure to add, that this latter class of neighborhoods is decidedly on the increase. In such neighborhoods the Schools are frequently visited by Trustees, Parents, and School Visitors; the quarterly examinations are looked forward to with much interest and with high expectations by all the parties concerned, are numerously attended, and are productive of a great amount of good.

"It is scarcely necessary to remark, that in such places School difficulties and complaints against the School Laws, are rarely heard of.

"Among the Teachers exhibiting the greatest improvement, not only in literary acquirements but in their system of teaching, and whose labors are distinguished for the greatest amount of usefulness, are those who have enjoyed a course of training in the Provincial Normal School,—an Institution which, if duly appreciated, is destined to render an incalculable service to our country.

"Two years have now elapsed since the existing School Laws came into full operation; the party prejudices with which they were at first received, have gradually worn away, and the people have thereby been enabled to judge dispassionately of their various enactments.

"Their general provisions are at this time tolerably well understood; their practical adaptation to the wants of the country very generally admitted; and the feeling of dissatisfaction which prevailed with reference to them in the early part of 1847, has given place to a general desire that they may, in their leading and organic features, remain unaltered.

"That these laws are not only practical but popular with a large majority of the inhabitants of the Niagara District, the statistics in the accompanying Report, compiled from the official returns of School Trustees amply prove. By referring to that document, it will be seen that upwards of ten-thirteenths of all our children of School age have been enjoying instruction in the Public Schools the past year; that the increase in attendance at those Schools over the previous year was more than 15 per cent.; and over 1846, more than 33 per cent.; and that the increase in the aggregate number of months the Schools were kept open, over 1847, was 9 per cent., and over 1846 upwards of 19 per cent.; while the increase in the averages, and in the apparatus and School requisites, was even in a greater ratio, as compared with the periods before named—these improvements taking place, too, without any perceptible augmentation of the total number of children in the District.

"Although public sentiment here seems adverse to much farther legislation upon the subject at present, still I am inclined to think that some modifications of the Statutes referred to, not interfering with their essential principles, are expected; and that such modifications might be introduced, and some additional enactments be made, which would tend to increase the efficiency of the whole School system. The number of properly qualified Teachers is not, nor is it likely to be for some time to come, proportioned to the want of the community in that respect.

"It is believed by many that the repeal of that clause of the School Act, 9th Victoria, Chapter 20, prohibiting the granting of Licenses to alien Teachers would, under existing circumstances, afford considerable relief, and prove highly advantageous to us, without prejudicing the interests of any one; in which opinion I fully concur.

"The conferring upon School Trustees the power to raise by tax from the ratable property of their Section, (presuming that an equitable system of assessment will be established,) a sum sufficient, exclusive of the ordinary apportionment, to pay the Teacher's salary, would be a practically useful and popular amendment. It is not suggested that the powers at present possessed by the different Municipal Bodies be transferred to Trustees, or in any respect altered, but that Trustees may have the option of levying the tax themselves, or of applying to the Council for it to be done, according as the peculiar circumstances of the respective localities may render expedient.

"In justice to all parties, I feel bound to state, that the Free School System, whether to be applied by School Trustees or Dis-