

a programme of the examination and classification of teachers, I have been anxious that a previous preparatory step should be taken of convening all the District Superintendents at the Provincial Normal School, for a week or two, for the purpose of consultation and the establishment of a proper and common standard of proceeding and judgment in regard to both the subjects and modes of teaching, and in respect to the whole system of common school instruction and economy. The circumstances connected with the meeting and early prorogation of the Legislature, at its last Session, prevented me from submitting this, and several kindred subjects, for the consideration of the Government. At present the classification of the schools must be considered as the opinion of each District Superintendent of their standing in regard to other schools in his District, or in respect to his own judgment of what a Common School ought to be. From the statements of several District Superintendents, I think the classification of the schools is wholly *relative*, and has not been determined by any absolute standard. It appears from the Table and Abstract referred to, that 543 are returned as first class schools; 1,106 as second class; and 803 as third class schools. It appears also that, including all the cities and towns, (except the cities of Toronto and Kingston, from which no reports have been received on the subject,) there are only forty-one *separate* or sectarian schools in Upper Canada. These, I believe, are *generally* of an inferior class. The number of them has been diminishing from year to year. The very small number of them shows that the provision of the law permitting their establishment is of very little importance either for good or evil. I believe the fewer of these separate schools the better for the interests of youth and the diffusion of general education; but it is perhaps better to leave the law as it is in respect to separate schools, than to have an agitation arising from the repeal of it.

#### X. SCHOOL-HOUSES.

No information has heretofore been obtained on this subject. This first attempt to ascertain the nature and extent of school-house accommodation in Upper Canada has been more successful than I had anticipated for a beginning; although it will be seen from Abstracts D and E, that no reports whatever have been received from the Cities of Toronto and Kingston, and from the Bathurst, Home, and London Districts, no returns have been made of the state of school-houses in respect to repairs, furniture, appendages, &c. Information as to the present state and character of the school-houses is the first step towards their improvement. The information which has been collected, as is shown in Tables and Abstracts D and E, relates to the kind of school-houses, their sizes, titles, furniture, appendages, &c.

1. *Kinds of School-houses.*—It appears that the total number of common school-houses in Upper Canada in 1847, was 2,572; of which 49 are brick, 84 stone, 1,028 frame, 1,399 log.

2. *Sizes of School-houses.*—In the Statistical Table and Abstract D, school-houses are arranged in no less than fourteen classes in respect to size. It is unnecessary for me to state the whole number included in each class, as given in the tables referred to; but allowing an area of at least from nine to twelve feet for each pupil (according to the height of the room,) the extent of school-house accommodation in each Township as well as District in Upper Canada can be ascertained; and that compared with the number of children of school age as given in Table and Abstract A, will show the amount and deficiency of such accommodation in every District and Township respectively.

3. *Condition of School-houses.*—699 are reported in good repair, 817 in ordinary repair, 347 in bad repair; 1,705 having only one room, 98 having more than one room; 1,125 suitably furnished with desks, seats, &c., 683 not so furnished; only 432 furnished with facilities for ventilation; 1,119 not provided with proper facilities for ventilation; only 347 provided with a suitable play-ground; 1,378 destitute of a play-ground; only 163 furnished with privies, 1,571 reported as *not* so furnished.

This is a melancholy view of the state of school-houses in Upper Canada. Having no data on this subject in reference to former years, I am not able to compare the present with the former condition of school-houses. I shall not here dwell upon the intellectual, physical, social, and moral evils arising from such a condition of school-houses. I will only remark, that of so deep importance is the subject considered in the neighbouring States, that the Superintendent of Common Schools for the State of New-York concludes

his last Annual Report on this point with the following recommendation:—

“The Superintendent respectfully submits that it is equally right and proper to require the inhabitants of a School District to provide a comfortable school-house as a condition precedent to the annual apportionment of school moneys, as it is to require that schools shall be taught by a qualified teacher.”

*Titles of School-houses or Premises.*—The present School Act places the legal title of the Common School property of each District in the Municipal Council of such District,—the Local Trustees having the property in *trust* for the time being. As early as October, 1846, I called the attention of Municipal Councils to this provision of the statute, and suggested the propriety and importance of each Council instituting an inquiry into the titles and condition of Common School property within its own jurisdiction, and employing the proper means of securing it. Several Councils evinced a praiseworthy vigilance on this important subject; but the reports show that there is no sufficient title for *one-third* of the Common School property reported! Of the 2,572 school-houses returned, the titles of but 2,100 have been reported. Of these the titles of 1,403 are stated to be *freehold*; and the titles of 697 to be *leases*, written or verbal permissions of occupation. There were also 171 *rented* school-houses. The tables referred to will show the character, condition, titles, &c., of school-houses, so far as they have been reported, in every Township as well as in every District in Upper Canada. There is no reason to believe that either *rented* or *leased* school-houses or premises will be properly furnished, nor can we expect good schools without good school-houses.

6. *School-houses built during the year 1847.*—There are no returns on this subject from the Bathurst, Dalhousie, Prince Edward, Newcastle, Colborne, Home, Simcoe, and Huron Districts, in some of which I know that school-houses have been built during the year. The reports received state 55 school-houses to have been built during the year; of which 21 were log, 18 frame, 9 stone, and seven brick. From these returns, it is pleasing to observe that the proportion of log school-houses, is less, and that of stone and brick greater, than that of the school-houses erected in former years.

#### XI. SCHOOL VISITS.

The visiting of Common Schools is a test of the public interest in popular education, and a most important means of encouraging and animating both teachers and pupils in the performance of their respective duties. No impediment to Common School education has been more formidable and fatal than indifference to it on the part of the more intelligent and influential classes or individuals of the community. To a great extent in this country, the Common School has been considered as affecting only those who could not otherwise educate their children. Thus the very class of the population who most need prompting, counsel, and assistance in the education of their children, have been mostly left to themselves. The diffusion of universal education, under such circumstances, is out of the question. There is no example of an universally educated people, where the more wealthy classes are not identified in obligation and influence with the Common Schools. Because a person may not avail himself individually of the courts of law, or of the law of all, he is not on that account exempted from the obligation of supporting legislation and the administration of justice; no more ought he to be exempt from the obligation of supporting Common School education, because he may prefer a private or classical school for his own children. This principle is fully recognized in the Legislative Grant and Municipal Assessment in support of Common Schools; it is only defective in its application in the principle of imposing school rate-bills. And it was with a view of enlisting the active co-operation and influence of the most intelligent persons in each community in behalf of the Common Schools, that the provision of the Act was introduced, constituting Clergymen, Magistrates, and District Councillors, Visitors, and authorizing each of them, as such, within their respective Townships or charges, “to visit the schools—especially to attend the quarterly examinations of schools, and at the time of such visit to examine the progress of the pupils and the state and management of the school, and give such advice to the teacher and pupils as

\* The least quantity of pure air for each pupil is estimated by the best writers on the subject at from 135 to 150 cubic feet.