

Districts in Upper Canada, there not being sufficient educational intelligence in many townships, and some Districts, to work out the principles upon which it was constructed. The operation of the same cause will account for the difference in the working of the present School Act in different Districts. It is, however, gratifying to remark, that under all these disadvantages, the Local Reports evince progress in school attendance, and in Teachers' salaries, and a desire for educational improvement in every District in Upper Canada.

With these explanatory remarks, I proceed, in order, to the several subjects of this Report.

### I. SCHOOL SECTIONS AND SCHOOLS.

1. *Number of School Sections.*—School Sections are the smallest Municipal School Divisions provided for by law—each consisting of such a section of the country, as is considered suitable for a school. In each section, three persons are elected Trustees, by the householders, and constitute a corporation for the management of the Common School affairs of such section. One of the members of the corporation retires from office each year—so that each Trustee is elected for three years.

From the accompanying General Abstract A, it will be seen that there were in 1847, 3054 school sections in Upper Canada, being 40 less than the number reported in 1845. The number of schools reported is 2,727, being 327 sections without schools, or from which no reports have been received. The accompanying Abstract A, will show in what Districts these vacant or unreported sections occur, and in what Districts the number of schools corresponds with the number of sections formed; and Table A will show the Townships of these vacant sections.

2. *Evil of small School Sections.*—The decrease in the number of school sections and schools, in connection with an increase in the number of pupils attending the schools, augurs favourably for the progress of elementary instruction. The dividing of a District or Township into small school sections, is an insuperable obstacle to the establishment and maintenance of efficient schools. This evil has been deeply felt in the neighbouring State of New-York, the School Superintendent of which, in his Report of 1844, remarks: "Small and consequently inefficient districts have, heretofore for a long period, been the source of many formidable evils. Miserable school-houses, poor and cheap teachers, interrupted and temporary instruction, and heavy rate-bills, are among the permanent calamities incident to small school districts. The ordinary pretext for the division, and sub-division of districts, is the greater proximity afforded to a portion of the inhabitants, to the school-house. To this single fancied benefit, considerations of much greater importance are often sacrificed. The idea seems to be entertained by many, that it is a great hardship for children to travel a mile, or even half a mile, to school; and that those individuals are the most favoured, who find the school-house nearest their houses. It is true, there are a few stormy days in a year, when the nearness of the school-house may be deemed a convenience. But all children of school age, in order to maintain health, and secure the due development of their physical functions, exercise daily, to a much greater extent than is produced by one, or even two miles travel. The most aged and experienced teachers will testify that, as a general rule, those children who live farthest from the school-house, are the most punctual in their daily attendance, and make the greatest progress in their studies."

3. *Means employed to remedy this evil.*—Impressed with the importance of this subject, I called the attention of District Councils to it, in a Circular dated the 1st October, 1846, pointing out the evils arising from the establishment of small school sections, and the advantages of enlarging them. I am happy to find that several District Councils have acted upon my suggestions; though in some of the District Superintendents' reports the evil of the small school sections is represented as still existing, to the injury of the schools in several Townships. But in January last, I brought the subject again under the notice of the District Councils,\* and I hope that an improvement in this respect will be witnessed from year to year.

4. *The evils of improper modes of forming and altering School*

*Sections.*—Formerly the Townships were divided into school sections by Township Superintendents. This most important duty now devolves upon the District Councils; and the change has, I think, contributed much to the interests of the schools and the lessening of disputes. There are, however, some instances of Municipal Councils exercising their power in this respect in so inconsiderate a manner, as to occasion much dissatisfaction and embarrassment. In a Memorial addressed to the Legislative Assembly in February last, by the Western District Council, the Council speaks of the "spite, hatred, and malice between neighbours and friends," occasioned by the present School Act, and says: "So numerous are the petitions on that subject, that more than half the time of the Council is taken up in endeavouring to settle the differences, but unfortunately without any beneficial result." Now, in examining the printed report of the committee, to whom all these petitions were referred, I find that of the 29 petitions presented to the Council, one prayed for the establishment of a female school in one of the sections, (which was granted) one prayed for a local school tax in a section—which was referred, by the Council to the petitioning Trustees; two related the formation of new school sections, and the remaining 25 petitions related to the disputes as to the boundaries of school sections, and the non-payment of school moneys, which had been paid into the hands of Township Superintendents. Thus not one of these disputes could have arisen out of the School Act; but they must have all been caused by an improper division of the school sections, either by the Township Superintendents under the late Act, or by the Council under the present statute. In this District, where, the Council says, "we well know that a very large number of the Trustees can neither read nor write, and therefore, it must be obvious that the greater part of the requirements of the present law remain undone," it cannot be supposed that the Councillors are yet very expert in school matters, but in other Districts where the Trustees can read and write, and where the Councillors are correspondingly intelligent and discreet in their school proceedings, no disputes or inconvenience have, as far as I am aware, occurred on these subjects. I trust that the less advanced Districts will soon be in a position to imitate and emulate their more instructed neighbours.

In the District of Dalhousie, still greater dissatisfaction and confusion were created by the mode of proceeding adopted by the Council. Before the passing of the present School Act, the Council of the District had never imposed a school assessment! An amount equal to that of the Legislative Grant apportioned to the District, was reported to have been raised by *voluntary contribution*; but this included the Trustees' rate-bills. The introduction of a District assessment, in connection with the new School Act, would naturally excite some dissatisfaction, (as it had done in the first instance under former Acts in several Districts,) and especially in a District bordering on Counties in Lower Canada, where the school assessment had been resisted. But in connection with the necessary and proper introduction of the school assessment, the Council made a new division of the school sections throughout the District—a division which was to take effect in the course of the then current year. The effect of this proceeding may be inferred from the following By-law, which was passed by the Council itself, at the ensuing session, held early in the autumn of 1847:—

"In accordance with a resolution passed this session, No.—, Be it enacted, That whereas the School Section divisions for this District made by this Council at the last session are, in many instances, discordant to the convenience and wishes of the inhabitants, and that to correct them satisfactorily this present session is impracticable, the District Superintendent is empowered and required to make an appropriation of the School Fund, thus: He shall distribute it share and share alike, among qualified teachers, without reference to the number of scholars under their tuition, but in proportion to the time such teachers may have been teaching, to the exclusion, however, of any who may have been less than a month so employed. Every teacher's return shall be verified by the Trustees, and approved by the District Councillors, representing the Township in which he shall reside; and this Council do, and will justify the said Superintendent, in and against every suit at law, or in equity, that may be instituted against him, for acting in conformity to this By-law."

This By-law thus contemplated the abolition of the provision of the Legislative Statute requiring the school grant to be distributed

\* See *Journal of Education* for U. C., Vol. I, pp. 4-16.