

FURNITURE.

Reference will be made to seats and desks only. In this particular, I believe East Middlesex is the most favored county in the province. The seat and desk best combining convenience, comfort, elegance and cheapness, that I have ever seen, is a pattern manufactured by Bennett Bros., London East. It is adopted in about one-third of the schools of this district. The seats in nine of our schools are very ill-constructed, they slope downwards to the front; in twenty-one schools the seats are so high that many of the smaller children cannot while sitting back on the seat, rest their feet on the floor; in ten schools the desks are so low, and the seats so high, that their occupants cannot maintain while writing or ciphering, a properly erect position. None except those of the pattern referred to, are constructed with proper curvature of the seat and back suited to preserve the natural shape of the body.

The importance of correct seating can hardly be overestimated. "To the badly constructed seats and desks," says Dr. J. C. V. Smith "we can trace in some measure the cause of so many distortions of the bones, spinal diseases, and chronic affections now so prevalent throughout the country." Another authority Dr. Woodward, blames defective school seating as the cause of numerous instances of deformity of the spine, especially with delicate female children. In rural schools there are always pupils of widely varying size and age, and consequently there should be three or four sizes of seats and desks in all such school rooms. The seat should be placed so close to the desk that the inside edge of the latter should slightly lap over the front of the former.

CLEANLINESS.

On a little reflection one would naturally conclude that few houses require to be more frequently and thoroughly swept, dusted, scrubbed, and whitewashed, than a school-house. But I am ashamed to confess that few inhabited houses are more neglected in some of these respects than the average school. One of my schools is swept twice a week, six three times, two four times, and the rest daily. In nearly half the schools, the trustees leave the sweeping to be done by the children and teacher. In such cases it is generally done at noon, and often children may be dimly seen eating their luncheons in a cloud of dust. Not more than a third of the teachers report provision for dusting, after the dust has had time to settle; hence in most cases, the proportion of it that is not inhaled by the children, or settles on the floor, is wiped up by the children's clothes when they use their seats and desks. One teacher reports that his school has been scrubbed only once in five years, another twice in five years, and a third that neither he nor the pupils know when it was last scrubbed, in fact that there is no record that it has ever been scrubbed. The average number of times the school houses in this district have been scrubbed is four times in three years. I have no statistics on whitewashing, but I do not think the schools are whitewashed on an average more than once in four years. Two of my schools have been finished in rough plaster which is marked off to represent stone. On their rough walls the dust and effluvia of the last ten years at least, have found an easy and undisturbed resting place. My reports and recommendations in favor of whitewashing are usually made in vain. It is not that trustees are afraid of having their school-houses too wholesome, bright, and cheerful, but that they have great difficulty in getting men to do the work for what they are willing to pay.