

DIGBY COUNTY.

JOHN AMBROSE, Inspector.

SIR,—

In making up my Annual Report I have much pleasure in observing, in the first place, that but one of the Sections in this District was the whole year without a School. You will also notice that the average number of days in which the teachers were occupied in their school-work was quite satisfactory. The attendance at the schools also shows a satisfactory increase.

But on the other hand it will be noticed that the number of female teachers holding the lower grades of license has also increased. Whilst it is true that some of these held permissive licenses which they were able to exchange for higher grades at the July examination, and a few others were stationary in this respect, but yet zealous and successful in this work; several others of different grades were not such persons as the interests of sound education required. The Returns of some of these will further illustrate this fact.

I fear, however, there is an evil now at work, which—unless promptly remedied—will soon drive out our best workers, especially among the male teachers, and replace them with such persons as are willing “to put in the time,” as the phrase is, for a mere subsistence.

For some two years the monies which ought to have been promptly paid from the County Fund have, in many cases, not been forthcoming. Trustees, on sending or presenting their orders to the County Treasurer, have been informed that there were no funds in hand, and they must wait, and some have been compelled to wait for many months. Trustees were thus unable to fulfil their engagements with teachers, and many teachers, to my own knowledge, have in consequence suffered very severely. Appeals have been constantly made to me, as the Inspector, which—to my deep regret—I found myself utterly unable to satisfy. Finding this course ineffectual, both teachers and trustees have applied to you. As no amelioration has yet, I believe, been reached, those appeals are now becoming very importunate. It is very clear that unless something be shortly done to remedy this great and crying evil, teachers who can command good salaries elsewhere will be obliged to leave this District, and their places if supplied at all will be supplied with those who cannot find employment in localities where the Free School System is properly carried into effect. I do sincerely hope the Council of Public Instruction will interfere in this matter with a prompt and effectual remedy if such can be had.

The clause in the School Law which empowers the Board of Commissioners to enable Trustees to assess Sections where a majority refuse an adequate local assessment has been of great value here, and—so far as I know—has, when applied, left no heart-burnings behind. I anticipate further benefit from the property assessment of persons over sixty years of age, as the previous exemption of this pretty large class of property holders has hitherto crippled many Sections. In addition to these, a clause compelling the attendance of pupils at the Public School, or some other, (as in England,) is greatly needed, and the regular and large attendance which will bring in its train Graded Schools and sufficient accommodation will be the happy result.

I am glad to see the Council of Public Instruction has authorized the use of a new series of reading books, which are a decided improvement on those now in use.