

so important a matter should depend solely on his opinion, or, indeed, on that of any *one* person that can be named. If the latter, who are his responsible advisers, and why should we, who are so vitally interested in the matter, not have a voice in their appointment, and know what advice they give?

In speaking thus I need scarcely say that nothing is farther from my intention than to disparage the character or ability of the authors of the books referred to, or to imply that Ontario teachers are not able to prepare suitable and satisfactory text books for Ontario schools. I am only endeavouring to show that a system which excludes competition and virtually authorizes text books before they are written is essentially a bad one, and that we have no sufficient guarantee that the text books selected are the best to be had, or have been prepared by those best fitted for the task.

And now for a few words with regard to the results of the policy, as far as it has been tested. I shall not express any opinion in regard to the recently issued books, for we all know that the only true test of the suitability of a text book is its use for a year in the school room, and that our first impressions of a book, whether favourable or unfavourable, have often to be materially modified by our experience with it there. I merely mention in passing, and I do so from regard for the eyesight of our pupils, that I regret so free a use of very small type in the new Public School Arithmetic. Take then the list of authorized books that have been in use for a year or more. Of the Drawing Books I shall not speak, as I cannot lay claim to much knowledge of the subject with which they deal. That the Readers are a marked improvement on their predecessors I

readily admit, but that they are the best that could be had for the money is not so certain, nor am I sure that if left to depend on its merits the High School Reader would have found its way yet into general use.

Certainly, if the publishers are to be believed, there was but little sale for it until its use was made imperative in the schools. In the case of both it and the Fourth Reader I think the result has shown—what indeed the experience of the past might have suggested—that since they were intended to be used for teaching literature as well as reading, it would have been better, even though it would have necessitated the omission of some of the selections, to accompany each lesson with a brief preface and a few explanatory notes, hints and suggestive questions. Such a course would have left but little need or excuse for the compilation and extensive sale of the “Companion to the Fourth Reader,” and “Notes to the Third Class Literature.” As to the preface to the High School Reader, I am glad that I do not know who wrote or compiled it, for I can thus speak more freely in regard to it. Profound, philosophical and polysyllabic it may be, but of practical value in teaching reading to third class candidates it just as certainly is not. Such at least is my experience, and that of every master I have asked who tried to use it for that purpose.

The Manual of Hygiene I pass for want of time, but I do not think it would be hard to show that it is dearer than it need be, and that much of it has no proper place in a school text book. There remain then the Scripture Readings and the History. As to the former, we all know that a very great deal of nonsense, and worse than nonsense, has been spoken and written, in some cases by men who knew better, in others, by men