

### NATURE STUDY IN THE SCHOOLS.

Although nature study in our schools is far from what it ought to be there are signs that it is improving and one of these signs takes form in enquiries from teachers for further articles on nature study in the REVIEW, and for books that may assist them to make up deficiencies in their own early training. Teachers must see that nature study has come to stay in the schools, that the only way to teach the subject with success is, not from text-books, but from nature.

A writer in *Science* discussing this subject recently says that every well equipped academy and normal school should have one or more specialists, adapted to the work and thoroughly equipped for it. "But," the writer says, "There are many schools in which the question of economy must regulate matters, and many schools which are not large enough to require the services of a special teacher. Shall these schools, then, 'drop the subject altogether from the curriculum?' We answer decidedly not. Intelligent teachers, by reading and by study and use of material, should be able to fit themselves to do good work in this as well as in other lines. There are plenty of recent publications for their benefit, some of more, others of less, value. There are occasionally helpful lectures, and sometimes regular instruction at teachers' institutes. Every year the helps grow more numerous and are within easier reach. Current educational literature on this subject is not yet so abundant as it ought to be, but the demand will bring the supply.

### INSPECTOR BRIDGES AND THE FREDERICTON BOARD.

The Fredericton School Board is aggrieved at the reflections contained in Inspector Bridges' last report to the Chief Superintendent, concerning its action in reducing some of the teachers' salaries by which indirectly the service was impaired. It is stated that the trustees regard the matter so seriously that they have presented a memorial to the Board of Education asking that a retraction be made. The following is the objectionable paragraph:

"The new building, in appearance and appliances for school work, is certainly a credit to the city, and is fully the equal of any in the Maritime Provinces, but if it has been erected at such an expense as to compel the Board of Trustees to lower the salaries of some of their most efficient teachers, as well as increase their work, it would seem to have been promoted rather in a spirit of show than of wisdom. The Board have this satisfaction, however, of knowing that their action in this regard has been universally condemned, both on the

street and in the press, and it is the more to be regretted, as it will furnish pretext for parsimonious District Boards, and, unfortunately, there are such, to attempt to lower salaries that are already far too small."

The Fredericton Board is composed of very reputable gentlemen, who are well disposed toward what they regard the best interests of the schools under their control, but they must bear in mind that the schools are a public trust and as such their action is open to legitimate criticism.

Another feature which trustees very often lose sight of is that the schools are not entirely supported from sources under their control, but that the Province and counties bear a large share of the expense.

It is one of the duties of an inspector to see that these moneys are expended in the best interests of the service.

The Board moreover, in the matter complained of, has not as yet been able to show to the public that its action was justifiable; and as far as has been observed, has been condemned both inside and outside its own city of Fredericton.

Such being the state of public opinion it was not only Inspector Bridges' privilege but his duty to refer to the matter. It is not surprising that his report should confirm the opinion of the public regarding the action of the Board, and its extreme sensitiveness under it goes still further to confirm the idea that its action was impolitic. It would seriously impair the efficiency of public officers if they were constrained by the sentiments of private parties from reflecting on their performance of public duties.

### P. E. ISLAND SCHOOL REPORT.

The annual report of the schools of P. E. Island has been received. The report indicates progress in educational matters in the Province. In the number of schools, teachers and pupils in attendance, there has been an increase during the year. While there has been an increase of teachers, the number of the third or lowest class of teachers employed was less than in the previous year, making the increase of first and second class teachers still greater. This is a hopeful sign. The average attendance was less than during the previous year. This is attributable "to the prevalence of measles and scarlet fever in the rural districts." Comparing the percentage of attendance with the other provinces of the Dominion, P. E. Island is placed first with 58 per cent.; New Brunswick 57.94; British Columbia 57.80; Nova Scotia 57; Ontario 52. The average increase, however, is small. In 1877 the percentage was 57.75. From that date to the present there has been varying increases and decreases, and in the present year the in-