

of Upper Canada would prefer to have 321 volumes apportioned and sent to them, or have a classified catalogue of more than 3,000 volumes, from which they could select such books as they might prefer, and in such quantities and at such times as they might desire them. It may also be remarked that the prices at which the books are stated to have been bought in such large quantities at New York for the Indiana township libraries, are, in most cases, not so low as the prices at which the same books are supplied in single copies to the local school and municipal authorities in the remotest townships of Upper Canada.

State of New York.—I now proceed to the justly famed State of New York, which has been held up as a pattern for imitation in the School Library System of Upper Canada. Many eloquent eulogies of the New York State School Library System have been written, both by English travellers and American educationists, and not without reason. But on investigating it in 1849 and 1850, tracing its history and working as detailed in successive reports, and consulting many intelligent citizens of that State as to its operations, I believed it not adapted to Upper Canada without great modifications, and likely to decline in usefulness, if not fail, in the State of New York itself. These views I expressed in a letter addressed to the Provincial Secretary, September 23rd, 1850; and I regret to say that the apprehensions then expressed have already been more than realized. Many years ago, the State Superintendent recommended an extensive series of books for the school district libraries; but they were to be supplied through the ordinary booksellers, and the only check upon the introduction of all kinds of books into the libraries, was the power of the State Superintendent to eject any improper book from them; an ungracious and impossible task in regard to a hundred thousand dollars worth of books per annum, and these scattered over a large proportion of nearly 11,000 school districts throughout the State. The State School Library Fund amounts to \$54,937 a year, and is expended upon the condition that a like sum to that apportioned be raised in each school district. Yet, in connection with the annual expenditure of this large sum, has the number of volumes in the school libraries decreased during the last four years at the rate of more than 50,000 volumes a year! The State Superintendent, in his Report for last year, laid before the Legislature the 27th January of the current year, after having stated the whole number of volumes in the school libraries each year from 1847 to 1857, inclusive, proceeds as follows:

"It will thus be seen that notwithstanding the large sum appropriated annually to an increase of the district libraries, the number of volumes reported in 1857 is but little in excess of that reported in 1848, and 226,277 less than that reported in 1853.* To what particular cause this falling off is attributable, whether to the destruction of the books by use, or to their dispersion and loss by want of care and attention, I have no means of determining. A rational presumption would be, that the amount annually received from the State would, in most of the districts, be sufficient to guard against an actual diminution in the number of volumes possessed; but so far from this being the case, there has been an average decrease in the number of volumes during the last four years of 56,569 per annum. Certain it is, in many sections of the State, the interest heretofore felt in the preservation and increase of the district library has greatly diminished if it has not entirely ceased. That this is owing in part to the want of sound judgment in regard to the books selected is very probable. Works of an ephemeral character, embodying little amusement and less instruction, have too often been urged upon trustees, and found their way into the library more to the gratification of the publishing agent than the benefit of the district. It is true also, in many cases, that when a library has attained to a respectable number of volumes as measured in the estimation of those having it in charge, they look upon its enlargement as unnecessary, and seek to turn the appropriation from its legitimate purpose. Hence arise frequent applications to the department for leave to appropriate the library money to the payment of teacher's wages; whilst others, it is apprehended, divert it to this and other purposes, without the formalities required by law. Whilst I am not prepared to make a specific recommendation as to the legislative action required in the premises, the value of the property involved, to say nothing of the higher considerations connected with the subject, seems to demand some remedy for a rapidly accelerating evil."

Now it is a system of school libraries thus declining as rapidly of late years as it grew in former years, that we are called upon by certain parties to substitute for our present Canadian system of public libraries!

State of Rhode Island.—To the foregoing facts I will add the following extract from the report of 1856 by the Commissioner of Public Schools in the State of Rhode Island, containing as it does statements of peculiar interest, and a testimony to our Canadian Library System of the deepest significance:

"It should be the State's duty then to provide reading for such

purposes, in order that it may profit by all the talent it has discovered in the common school.

"It is believed that considerations like these have prompted our neighbors to engage in this very useful and very promising field. Massachusetts, many years ago, gave to each of her three thousand districts a school library worth thirty dollars. New York distributed more than a million of dollars among her inhabitants. Ohio pays a tax of one mill on a dollar, raising thereby some fifty thousand dollars annually, to give her children some good books to read. Indiana has expended two hundred thousand for the same great object; and Canada West annually gives to each of its districts a sum equal to that which it will raise by a tax on itself, for the great purpose of continuing the education of the children which the common schools begin. Other States, both east and west, are moving to elevate themselves by the same liberally devised and far seeing philanthropy. And shall we be less enterprising in our own behalf?"

"*The plan of providing such district school libraries, adapted by the Parliament of Canada West, is undoubtedly the wisest that has yet been acted upon.* It is in short this:—The Parliament by vote appropriated a specific sum to purchase a suitable number of books, charts and articles of apparatus for schools and school libraries. This sum was expended under the direction of the Superintendent of Public Education, and a large depository of excellent and select books for the reading of youth and older persons was made at the Office of Education. Whenever any school district or municipality wishes to form a library, it may send to the office of the General Superintendent a sum not less than five dollars, and the Superintendent adds one hundred per cent to the sum, and returns, at cost price, such books to the district as may, by a committee or otherwise, have been selected from the printed catalogue of the depository. Thus the books that go into libraries are books that have been well examined, and contain nothing that is frivolous, or that could poison the morals of those who read them; the libraries purchase them at the wholesale price, and of course can obtain a much larger amount of reading matter for their money than as though they had each made the purchase direct from the booksellers for themselves, and at the same time they are stimulated to do something for themselves as well as to ask that something may be done for them. It is believed that some such plan might be carried into effect in our own State greatly to the profit of the whole community."

After a further discussion of the subject the Chief Superintendent thus sums up:

I have argued this question upon general grounds, assuming that the private booksellers are as abundantly able to supply the variety of books recommended for the public libraries in Upper Canada as are the private booksellers in England. But what would be the condition of more than three-fourths of the Townships of Upper Canada could they not procure from the Department of Public Instruction the libraries, as well as the maps, globes, and school apparatus they require? But for the arrangements and catalogues of the Educational Department, they would not have known of the existence of most of these aids for their schools and that mental entertainment for their evenings and leisure hours, much less would they have been accessible to them. And even now, after all the information diffused by the Educational Department, how many of such aids and books could such Township and School Municipalities obtain from private booksellers? In what County or Township would or could the required supply be kept, and upon what terms, and with what guarantees? And if the result would be a sort of monopoly of certain booksellers in Toronto from whom local parties would obtain their supplies (assuming it possible to obtain such supplies), what would be the expense of the municipal and school authorities after payment of profits to each of these intervening agencies, and what security would they have against exorbitant prices, or as to the quality and kind of the articles and books required? If a bookseller had not a tenth of the articles and books mentioned in the official catalogues, and required by Municipalities, and sought to press upon them other publications of his stock, what other resource would such municipality have? The unsatisfactory working and declining state of the public school library system in the State of New York, as detailed above, is a sufficient illustration of the fruits of what is demanded by the book-selling assailants of our public library system, in a country where the private book trade is much more extended in its supplies and operations than in Upper Canada.

Whether, therefore, our system of providing public libraries, as well as maps, globes, and other school apparatus, be considered in regard to the higher or lower grounds above stated, the conclusion is that which was expressed by the President of the American Association for the advancement of Education at a late anniversary of that noble society, as quoted by the Earl of Elgin in a speech at Glasgow, after his return from Canada. The report says:—"The President made some remarks on the difficulty in the United States of procuring proper libraries for schools, keeping out bad books and procuring good

* The number of volumes in 1853 being 1,604,210, and in 1857, 1,377,933.