

Minister, owing its existence to his breath, extinguished at once should this be withheld; and, in the third place, that as a matter of fact, the Minister does not take its advice as a rule, nor does he agree to take it, and it is known that he has frequently acted contrary to its advice, as assuredly he has a perfect right to do, and that he has even accepted the advice of a minority of its members, as against the majority, and that sometimes, when matters have been referred to it for decision, and its report has been received, this report has been changed, by alteration and addition, so as to be at one time the reverse of its original intent, at another time inconsistent with previous utterances, and all this in strict conformity with the powers which the Minister possesses, and with no assumption of a right not vested in him by law.

As an instance of the popular misunderstanding of the *status* of the Committee and of the Minister's power, we have at the present time the authorization of two sets of School Readers, imputed to the Committee rather than to the Minister.

I shall not discuss whether but one set of Readers ought to have been authorized or not; though certainly if but one, the Minister must bear the responsibility of the question having been determined otherwise. The Minister causes it to be known that the old Readers are to be superseded, invites competition in the preparation of a new set, is aware of the undertakings of different publishing houses toward this end, knows that tens of thousands of dollars of capital are being devoted to this purpose by rival publishers, and is fully conscious that every device of wire-pulling and influence will be used to secure the authorization of the different sets: all this for two years, and then, although the Readers are to be used almost exclusively

in Public Schools, hands over to a Committee, not one of whom is a Public School inspector or teacher, and, as such, practically acquainted with the special needs of Public School work, and the special inconveniences which Public School children will suffer if more than one set is authorized,—hands over to these advisers, who, not being appointed by the people, cannot be held responsible by the people, the three rival sets for their opinion. What could they do? All the Readers had special merits; it was well known that the refusal of authorization would be disastrous to any competitor. They recommended two for immediate authorization, and spoke so highly of the third that it has generally been believed that the Minister would authorize it also. It does not appear that this Committee were asked by the Minister to determine which of these three series was, in their opinion the best, and to recommend but one; nor is there ground for saying that the Minister is justified in authorizing two or three series because this Committee pronounced them to be, as every one knows they are, each of great excellence. Had the Minister really directed the Committee to pronounce in favour of but one series, there is no reason for believing but that a majority of the Committee could have found one series, in their opinion, preferable to the others. The Minister, or in this case, we presume, the acting Minister, has found that he could not, without arousing opposition which it would be difficult to allay, authorize less than two or more sets, and he has made a plural authorization under the cover of this general verdict of favour which the Committee awarded to all three.

But if this authorization of more than one set of Readers be a mistake, upon whom should the blame rest? Upon the Committee, who recognize