

SOME NECESSARY LEGISLATION.

The N. B. Provincial Legislature has just been prorogued after a brief business-like session. Many useful measures, no doubt, have been passed, but in as far as relates to the schools, these have been left severely alone.

The rate-payers and teachers in this province, no doubt, consider the school system a satisfactory one, and this feeling seems reflected in our legislators, but there are some changes that would be beneficial, and attention has been drawn to them before by the REVIEW.

The present assessment law, by which the parish is made the unit instead of the district, needs revising. Many excellent reasons have been given for the change, and few, if any, valid ones have been advanced in favor of the present system.

A general assessment law is greatly needed for the whole province. Under the present system all kinds of standards of value are set up in the different parishes—the chief object being to lighten the proportion of county tax. Under such a system the valuation is often actually less than half what it should be, and the number of poor districts is largely increased in consequence.

It would be satisfactory to many of our best thinking people to behold some legislator bold enough to propose a compulsory clause in our school law on the floors of the house. Such a movement might not be successful at first, but it must come in the end, and would be hastened by consistent advocacy.

It would be very gratifying to the friends of secondary education to see some steps taken in the way of carrying out the excellent suggestions made by the Chief Superintendent of Education in his report for 1893, relating to high and superior schools. New Brunswick is plainly behind the other provinces of the Dominion in the matter of secondary education.

It was intimated in response to the request of the teachers expressed at the Provincial Institute that any teacher be eligible for senator of the university, that, with certain restrictions as to time of service, such a change would be regarded favorably by the government. No steps have been taken by the legislature as yet to give effect to this, and some disappointment is expressed in consequence.

It is no doubt satisfactory to some and disappointing to others that no change has been made in the school terms. It is usually good policy to avoid retrograde legislation.

THE STANDARD DICTIONARY.

The wonderful growth of our language is shown in that latest product—the Standard Dictionary of the English language, published by Funk & Wagnall. It contains nearly 300,000 words and phrases and nearly 5,000 illustrations, covering 2,300 pages. It is the joint product of two hundred and forty-seven editors, representing some of the best scholars of the age. The plan of the work is admirable. The pronunciation is distinctly noted and easily understood, the definitions are clear, concise, and exhaustive, and the illustrations, many of them, of great beauty.

The following are some of its distinguishing features: The etymology is placed after the definition; in the definition of words the most common meaning is given first; the scientific alphabet, recommended by the American Philological Association, is used in giving the pronunciation of words; quotations are used to verify or illustrate the meaning of important words, and the name of the author, book, and page, and the edition from which the quotation has been taken, is indicated; disputed pronunciation and spelling are referred to a committee of fifty leading philologists of the English speaking world; of words variously pronounced, the one first given is preferred by the work; the full page pictorial illustrations, made by the Messrs. Prang, are models of beauty.

We have not yet had time to examine with any degree of fulness this great work; but for convenience of reference, simplicity of arrangement, excellence of illustration and thoroughness of detail, it seems to possess in an eminent degree the excellences of a "People's English Dictionary." As a school dictionary, it would be of vast service to the rising generation. Teachers in New Brunswick who would like to have further information about this great work, should correspond with Mr. Geo. E. Price, Elliott's Hotel, St. John. The book is published either in one large volume, or in two volumes, and Mr. Price is prepared to furnish it to subscribers on the instalment payment plan if necessary.

Of the many favorable opinions given of the work, we quote from three representative scholars:

Edward Dowden, Professor of English Literature, University of Dublin, Ireland: "I am satisfied that the Dictionary will take a place in the highest rank of works of the kind."

Prof. Andrew Preston Peabody, Harvard University: "The 'Standard Dictionary' will prove of invaluable service, and will last while the English language remains essentially unchanged. It may need supplements, but will not have to be rewritten for three or four generations to come."

Prof. Wm. Clark, LL.D., D.C.L., F.R.S., Trinity College, Toronto: "As near perfection as we are likely to attain."