

The growing convictions of English educationists, which were awakened about the time of the Great Exhibition, in 1851 deepened into a profound feeling after the Paris Exhibition of 1867, that the state of "masterly inactivity" and general ignorance must be put an end to. It was then demonstrated that "something must be done" to provide for the general and systematic education of the masses of the English people. The system of eleemosynary grants and denominational schools was found to be the merest pretence of a substitute for a system of national education. English statesmen were, therefore, compelled by their own convictions, no less than by the force of enlightened public opinion, to take vigorous steps to place the education of the people upon a comprehensive and thoroughly efficient footing. The questions of local school rates and of local administrative school boards had therefore to be discussed. And discussed they were with a vigour and thoroughness which finally resulted in their incorporation in the proposed School Bill as a necessary part of the new educational machinery of the nation.

We shall not enter further into the question of English local legislation on this matter, but shall confine our remarks to an illustration or two of the practical results of that legislation in London.

In this connection we just notice the fact that in the same year that these great educational changes took place in England, our own Legislature, following Dr. Ryerson's wise counsels, adopted those features of our present educational system which have given such an impetus to its growth and stability. We refer to the incorporation in our school law of the principle of free schools with its complement of compulsory education—to the system of uniform examinations for teachers' certificates; and in High Schools, to the appointment of skilled educationists as County Inspectors of schools—to the establishment of Examining Boards of experienced and duly qualified men, and to the establishment of Collegiate Institutes and the improvement in the standard and status of High Schools.

From a printed "Statement" just issued by Sir Charles Reed, Chairman of the London School Board, on its reassembling for business, we learn the magnitude of the work entrusted to the Board. It has under its jurisdiction three-quarters of a million of children of school age—a large number of whom are of course privately and otherwise educated. It has school accommodation for nearly half a million of pupils. The average attendance at the schools, out of nearly 450,000 enrolled children, is a little over 350,000.

As to the progress in this direction since 1871, Sir Charles says that the Board has wiped out the reproach that more than a quarter of a million of children were growing up in ignorance and neglect; that school provision has increased 80 per cent., and the attendance more than 100 per cent. As to the neglected children, he says: "While in all England and Wales 79½ per cent. of the children were examined last year in the three lower 'Standards,' the per centage of the London Board Schools was 83.14—showing that four out of every five of our scholars are on the lowest rounds of the ladder." This, he says, would not be the case but for the great proportion of untaught children who are gathered in by the action of the visitors.

In brief it may be stated that while the Board has nominally to provide school accommodation for nearly 750,000 school children, it has now accommodation for 460,138. It is making arrangements this year to increase this accommodation up to 550,400. In a few years ample accommodation for the swarming thousands will be provided by the Board. The increase of school population averages about 25,000 per annum. The Board has, therefore, a gigantic work before it.

HINTS FROM THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD.

In the October "Statement" of Sir Charles Reed, on the re-assembling of the London School Board, we gather a few practical hints. 1. He gives a common instance of short-sightedness in building small school houses. In the case he mentions, "the building was originally planned for 1000 children, but owing to strong local opposition it was built for 580. Subsequently the Board had to go twice to the Department for power to enlarge it—at a very much larger cost than would have been required upon the original plans and estimates."

2. In regard to the cost of sites, he mentions that no sooner is it known that a site is required in a given district than prices rise accordingly. In one case £3,065 was claimed for a site, which was obtained by arbitration for £883. Delay, he says, has the inevitable result of raising obstacles and raising prices.

3. Sir Charles declares that it is the duty of the Board to build substantial schools, designed to last. Where space is no object, a school should be built all in one story. In that case there is no need of deep foundations or specially thick walls—thus promoting economy.

4. As to the teaching staff, the rule of the Board is to provide a Head Teacher for the first thirty scholars in average attendance, an Adult Assistant for sixty, and a Pupil Teacher, or Candidate, for thirty each.

5. In regard to subjects of instruction in schools, Sir Charles says:—"The idea may well be combated that Board schools "should confine themselves to giving instruction in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. To go to the extent proposed by "some of our critics would be the height of folly. Departments "for infants without singing, for girls without sewing, and for "boys without drawing, would be dreary indeed. Subjects such "as these impart greater life to the school teaching, and facilitate it without adding materially to the cost. Drawing is important in all the industries of life, and it is in the interest "of the people that it should be taught. So, too, of object "lessons, and of lessons in the elementary facts of nature. It "is astonishing to find intelligent persons objecting, even in "Parliament, to a modicum of instruction in domestic economy "and Animal Physiology, when the slightest enquiry would "show them how direct is their bearing on the laws of health, "the sources of disease, and the practical details of household "management."

—We have received a letter complaining of injustice in the departmental regulation granting professional second class certificates to those teachers who taught three years before