

ment, deemed the conclusions we had arrived at of sufficient public interest and value to merit being re-submitted, in a more connected form, to the individual attention of every member of the Government and Legislature, we are once more induced to revert to the same highly important topic, by the prevalent rumour of its being intended to introduce either a new or revised "*School Act*" during the approaching session, in the hope that our humble patriotic labours may not prove altogether in vain; and, as done on the two former occasions, we now propose taking as our guide the published official Reports on the subject. It will, however, be seen, by a reference to the titles at the head of this article, that unfortunately the *Report of the Superintendent of Lower Canada* alone has as yet made its appearance;—a circumstance greatly regretted by us, as doubtless that for the Upper Province would have thrown much additional light upon our devious path, and have thereby not only rendered our review of the existing state of the question comparatively more easy, as well as more satisfactory, but even far more conclusive.* In the absence of the latter much desired document, however, we are happy to be able to advert to, and profit by, a recently published periodical, of very considerable collateral value and interest, namely, "*The Journal of Education for Upper Canada*," from which every friend of education may glean much useful and instructive matter.

In throwing together our former remarks, we were led to divide the subject into two great distinct branches,—the one referring more immediately to Upper Canada, and the other to the Lower Province,—at the same time that we left ourselves at liberty to make use of any arguments that we considered applicable to both, as a whole. On the present occasion we proposed adopting the same course, but, from necessity, reversing the order of arrangement, and therefore commencing with a passing glance at the state of education under the present School Law, as existing in the Lower Province, as gleaned from the official Report of Dr. Meilleur. Here, however, we were unexpectedly destined to meet with difficulties in the very threshold of our undertaking; for, on consulting that document, we unfortunately found it of so elaborately discursive a texture as to puzzle us how or where to begin.

That the reader may be enabled to judge for himself

how far this remark is well founded, we cannot do better than refer him at once to the worthy Doctor's own introduction of his labours to the attention of the "Governor General and the other branches of the Legislature," as embracing—

1st. A general Report upon Elementary Education in Lower Canada, setting forth the causes which have embarrassed and retarded and, in some localities, even prevented the proper working of the present School Law, and the amendments which it has, perhaps, become necessary to make to that law, in order to obtain from it more perfect and satisfactory results.

2nd. A Statistical Table of the Schools which have, under the said act, been held under the control of the School Commissioners and Trustees; with the number of children who have attended them, and the amount of the legislative grant which has been awarded to each municipality (as constituted for school purposes) during the school period between the 1st of July, 1846, when the present act came into force, and the 1st of July, 1847, shewing also the municipalities to which no part of the legislative grant has been awarded, for the reasons mentioned in the Report.

3rd. A Table shewing the amount awarded to each county, out of the unappropriated balance of the legislative grant, for the scholastic years, 1842, 1843, 1844 and 1845, under the provisions made in that behalf by previous acts, and in the 49th section of the present school act, as an aid towards building or repairing school-houses; with the number of school-houses built or repaired under the control of school-commissioners, and the amount of the valuation of these school-houses, made, in every case, by three arbitrators appointed for the purpose.

4th. The circulars which I have issued under the operation of the present law; because it may be deemed expedient that their tenor should be known.

Having so far given Dr. Meilleur's own sketch of his theme, honest impartiality as reviewers compels us to enter at once our humble protest against the manner in which he treats the question, as tending rather to excite than allay existing discordant opinions on so vitally important a popular subject, and to express our deep regret that one who has evidently the good of his country much at heart, should adopt a line of proceeding so little likely to be productive of beneficial results: for it appears to us, that, instead of the leading two-thirds of the 178 pages of which his Report is composed, being devoted to a wandering review of the various theoretic and antagonistic matters discussed therein, that document might have been mainly confined to the details embraced by the far shorter 2d section, with probably part of the 3d section, namely, the statistical tables and other documents illustrative of the *actual working of the existing School Law*, as exhibiting the number of schools in operation during the official year, the amount of money apportioned to each county and township, and any sums awarded to particular localities for extra purposes from the unappropriated balances of former years; and that, whatever else occurred to the worthy Superintendent as deserving the attention of the Executive, might have formed the subject of an altogether distinct and separate communication. Indeed, it is but justice to add, that though we may not be altogether prepared to assent to all the conclusions at which Dr. M. has arrived, it is with the time and method, more than the matter, that we are disposed to find fault.

Taking this view of the subject, we were naturally led to turn our attention, in the first instance, to the 2d section of the Report; and what has been the result?

* It is to be regretted that the Executive does not feel itself authorized to publish these and other similar annual official reports, as soon as received, for immediate circulation among the Members of Parliament, &c., without waiting for the formal assent of the assembled Legislature, as they would, thereby, have a better chance of leisure consideration during the recess, instead of being subjected to the hasty perusal and crude digestion ever likely to result amid the many distracting claims upon their attention during the actual Session of Parliament. It would also, perhaps, be highly advisable that on so momentous a popular subject as the Education question coming before Parliament, the Superintendents of both divisions of the Province should be directed to be in attendance; so as not only to be able to afford opportune correct information, on any points, to individual members desiring it, but also to appear at the bar of either House, to give evidence or information, if required. We, however, adhere to the opinion formerly expressed by us—that the best way of arriving at a safe and lasting conclusion, would be by the appointment of a special commission. See former remarks.