

can hardly be over-estimated. A comprehensive catalogue of carefully selected and beautiful prize books has been prepared and furnished by the Department to Trustees and Municipalities applying for them; and, besides furnishing the books at cost price, the Department adds one hundred per cent. to whatever amounts may be provided by Trustees and Municipal Councils to procure these prize books for the encouragement of children in their schools. A series of merit cards, with approved illustrations and mottoes, has been prepared by the Department, and is supplied to Trustees and Teachers at a very small charge—half the cost—and these merit cards to be awarded daily, or more generally weekly, to pupils meriting them. One class of cards is for *punctuality*; another for *good conduct*; a third for *diligence*; a fourth for *perfect recitations*; There are generally three or four prizes under each of these heads; and the pupil or pupils who gets the largest number of merit cards under each head, will, at the end of the quarter or half year, be entitled to the prize books awarded. Thus an influence is exerted upon every part of a pupil's conduct, and during every day of his school career. If he cannot learn as fast as another pupil, he can be as *punctual*, as *diligent*, and maintain as *good conduct*; and to acquire distinction, and an entertaining and beautiful book, for *punctuality*, *diligence*, *good conduct*, or *perfect recitations*, or exercises, must be a just ground of satisfaction, not only to the pupil, but also to his or her parents and friends. There are two peculiarities of this system of merit cards worthy of special notice. The one is, that it does not rest upon the comparative success of single examinations at the end of the term or half year, or year, but on the daily conduct and diligence of each pupil during the whole period, and that irrespective of what may be done or not done by any other pupil. The ill-feeling by rivalry at a single examination is avoided, and each pupil is judged and rewarded according to his merits, as exhibited in his every day school life. The second peculiarity is, that the standard of merit is founded on the *Holy Scriptures*, as the mottoes on each card are all taken from the sacred volume, and the illustration on each card consist of a portrait of a character illustrative of the principal of the motto, and as worthy of imitation. The prize-book system, and especially in connection with that of *merit-cards*, has a most salutary influence upon the school discipline, upon both teachers and pupils, besides diffusing a large amount of entertaining and useful reading.

From letters received at the department, we make the following extracts, chiefly relating to the value of the merit cards in schools:—

HULLET.—In previous years we have had every reason to be pleased with the assortment sent from your Department, and merely forward you the above information for your guidance in selecting.

KINCARDINE TOWNSHIP.—I might state that the effect produced by these fine cards is charming. I consider them far superior to prize books.

MOORE.—The selection of books by the Department last year was excellent, and we intend to leave the choice to you again.

FLAMBORO' WEST.—I find that the merit cards are a great assistance to the teacher.

NELSON.—The selection of prize books made by the Department last year, gave great satisfaction; we therefore leave the selection on this occasion with it also.

ADMASTON.—Trustees and Teachers are beginning to see the benefits resulting from the merit and prize system, and to adopt it in their schools.

NORMANBY.—I should likewise take this opportunity of remarking that the Department, in the different selections which it has made for the Trustees requiring prizes, with whom I have been employed, has always given the greatest satisfaction.

KEPPEL.—At the annual meeting of our School Section, held last Wednesday, we passed a resolution appropriating a portion of the school fund to the purchase of some books for a section library from the Educational Department. It was well expressed by one man at the meeting—when we learn our youth to read, *if we do not give good books into their hands, they will find bad ones.*

ST. THOMAS UNION SCHOOL.—And have great pleasure in stating the selection Department of prize books is very satisfactory.

FARMERSVILLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL.—During the year \$30 worth of new prizes were distributed with pleasing results, as far as can be judged. I deem it no inconsiderable thing to have the pleasure of distributing such an amount of sterling English reading among the youth of the country. The effects cannot be estimated, but are in the hand of Providence. With every prospect of increased success during the year, and every wish to advance the prosperity of the Educational system of the Province of Ontario,

4. VALUE OF THE MERIT CARDS IN THE SCHOOLS.

From the report of the Board of Trustees in London, Ontario, we make the following extract on the use of merit cards in the Schools of that city:—

"The munificent gift of the Bishop of Huron has been, as designed by the donor, applied to the purchase of prize books. These will be mostly awarded to those who have succeeded in obtaining the requisite number of merit cards during last term. It may be interesting to the citizens to understand the nature of the workings of this system. The cards are of four different classes, viz., 'Good Conduct,' 'Diligence,' 'Perfect Recitation,' and 'Punctuality.' If, therefore, a child naturally slow cannot gain enough of cards to entitle him to a prize in that which requires a mental effort, still it must be his own fault if he do not obtain one in some of the other three. Though he cannot be brilliant, he may be good, diligent, and punctual. These cards are neatly prepared, under the direction of the Educational Department, at Toronto; they have each some choice Scriptural motto, and ornamented with appropriate devices. They are regularly graded in each class, from one to a hundred, in respect to value. When a boy obtains ten single merit cards of any class, he is supposed to bring them to the teacher and exchange them for a ten card of the same class; five of the ten grade for one of fifty; and two of the fifty for one of a hundred—the latter, if a holder have over thirty-five in each of the three other classes, is to be redeemed with a prize book or certificate. It is wonderful the impetus which this system, in the hands of a skillful and industrious teacher, gives to study; the change it effects in the outward demeanor of the children generally, and the spirit of honorable rivalry and emulation it excites among the members of the same class."

5. PRIZES AND LIBRARIES IN THE SCHOOLS.

From the reports of the Local Superintendents sent in to the Educational Department, we make the following interesting extracts, showing the great value and usefulness of papers and libraries in the schools. In reference to these extracts, the Chief Superintendent thus remarks in his test and report:—

PRIZES TO PUPILS IN THE SCHOOLS.—I refer to these extracts from local Superintendents' Reports, for illustrations of the system of *libraries and prizes*. In some instances but little benefit appears to be derived from the libraries, while in the majority of cases the most salutary influence is exerted by them. In but two instances is objection expressed to the distribution of prize books as a reward of merit to pupils of the schools, and in but four instances is doubt expressed as to the beneficial influence of it. In these exceptional cases, the evil, if any has doubtless arisen from an exceptional mode of distributing the prizes—being the act of the teacher, or of persons equally liable to the suspicion of partiality. But where the examinations for the *prizes for proficiency* are so conducted as to give no room for the suspicion of favoritism, and where the record is so kept, and so adjudged in regard to for *prize punctuality and good conduct*, as to be equally above any reasonable suspicion of unfairness, the distribution of prizes as rewards to pupils for proficiency and good conduct must exert the most beneficial influence; and this, with the exceptions referred to, is the all but unanimous testimony of the local reports, as it is the universal experience of colleges and the best schools in both Europe and America. It is the order of Providence, in every day life, that while the slothful hand hath nothing, the diligent hand maketh rich; and *merit and attainments* are the professed grounds of all prizes and rewards and distinctions which are bestowed in civil and political life. For any person, therefore, to object to encouraging diligence and good conduct in schools, by the distribution of prizes (and these prizes consisting of good books, obtained at half price), as the rewards of successful diligence and good conduct, is to object to the principles of Holy Scripture, and the rule of Providence, and the universal practice of civilized mankind in all other matters of common life.

The distribution of prize-books in the schools is the means of diffusing a great deal of useful and entertaining knowledge among the young, while it exerts a powerful and wide-spread influence in favor of diligence and good conduct among the pupils of the schools. In some schools this influence may be more limited than others; but it will always be more or less felt for good, where the system is properly administered. There are, indeed, many murmurers and envious persons against the wisdom and even equity of the distributions of Divine Providence; and it would be surprising, indeed, if there were not some who would be dissatisfied and envious at distribution of rewards and distinctions among the pupils of schools; but this is no more an argument against the system of rewards and distinctions in the schools, than in the Divine and human government of mankind.