

Education Office, Toronto, of several *blue* books. The postage was also paid, some seven or eight shillings, we presume at the expense of the people of Canada. We had always supposed the blue books of Dr. Meilleur to be the greatest bore in the province, until we laid hold of those of Dr. Ryerson. It will be a long time before any one will make us believe that the compulsory system of Prussia and the German powers is suited to a British people.*

Nor have matters stopped here, for,—to return to Upper Canada,—we find more than one municipal council gravely stultifying themselves by praying for either the total repeal or entire modification of the present system, on account of the expensiveness and uselessness of its superintendency, and its inapplicability to the circumstances of the country; and in one instance recommending, *as an improvement!* the engaging as teachers of men whose “physical disabilities,” and “decaying energies,” render teaching a suitable occupation for them; and further, that *emigrants* may be employed until “their character and abilities are better known, and can be turned to better account!”†

Now, while entering our protest against such sweeping objections as these, and more particularly against the injustice of at once visiting the defects of a system so recently sanctioned by the Legislature, and therefore still new and untried, upon the heads of the practical superintendents of the day, we are free to admit that there is still room for considerable improvement in the present school bill; but far from regarding the superintendents, whether provincial or districtal, as either expensive or useless, we look upon them as indispensable, and, in fact, the very life and soul of the system; and even go further, (following the example of more than one enlightened European statesman) in considering national education a matter of such paramount importance, that we conceive that far from the chief superintendence, resting, *ex-officio*, on an already over-burthened provincial secretary, as with us, it should be vested in an officer having no other duties to perform, and who should be recognized as a “*responsible*,” though, for obvious reasons, unpolitical member of the government.‡

Lest, after all, the foregoing observations should not prove sufficiently convincing or explanatory, we further beg to refer our readers to the following unobjectionable quotations from Dr. Ryerson’s special Report of the measures adopted for the establishment of the Provincial Normal School, (which has since so auspiciously taken place at Toronto) as well as for carrying into effect, generally, the common school system,—intended, as it evidently was, in reply to a few of the objections which

had been so unsparingly raised against the system placed under his superintendence.

It is not possible to pass a law against which objections would not be made from some quarters, and the introduction of the best law is necessarily attended with some inconvenience. When the Common School Act of 1843 superseded that of 1841, so serious was the derangement of the whole school system of Upper Canada, that many of the provisions of the Act of 1843, could not be carried into effect during the first year of its existence; Trustees, in many instances, could not be elected as required by the Act, the Chief Superintendent of Schools, by order of the Governor in Council, found it necessary to exercise an arbitrary discretion in disposing of many cases brought before him, without regard to the requirements of the Act; no School Reports for 1843 were presented to the Education Office, in consequence of the passing of that Act, and consequently the data contemplated by the act for apportioning and distributing, and paying the Legislative School grants for 1844, were wanting. Under such circumstances, there was much embarrassment and confusion, and in some cases, serious loss to individuals.

It would not have been surprising, then, if some confusion had attended the transition from the late to the present School Act. But I am not aware that such has been the case. The machinery of the new Act has gone into operation without occasioning any derangement of our School affairs.

When the School Law in the neighbouring State of New York was first established, many School districts, and even counties, refused to act under it; but I know of no example of the kind in Upper Canada, notwithstanding the efforts of a section of the public press to create such opposition at the time the Act was about to come into operation.

The dissatisfaction created at the time was not against the provisions of the School Act, but against what certain parties represented to be its provisions, before its general distribution; not against its operations, but against what certain parties represented would be its operations. However, the circulation of the Act itself, and its actual operations, have corrected most of the false impressions which had been produced by misrepresentations.

It has been found, that so far from the Trustees having no power to employ a Teacher without the permission of the Chief Superintendent, they have more power than had been conferred upon School Trustees by the former Act, and can employ whom they please, and in what manner and for what time they please; that so far from the Board of Education interfering in matters of conscience between parents and children, and compelling parents to forego cheap, and buy dear school books, the Board has no authority of the kind, and has employed its best exertions to bring within the reach of all parents cheap as well as good books; that so far from the Chief Superintendent of Schools having authority to introduce what books he pleases into Schools, he has no authority whatever in respect to introducing books, and so far from having power to employ and dismiss School Teachers at his pleasure, he has no power to employ a School Teacher at all, or even to give him a legal certificate of qualification; that he has no power to interfere in the affairs of any School Section, unless appealed to by some party concerned; that his decisions have in no case the authority of a Court of Law; that both his power and his duty relate to seeing the conditions imposed by the Legislature, fulfilled in the expenditure of the Legislative School Grant; that his power is much less than is given to a similar officer in the neighbouring State of New York, and is an accumulation of labour, and not an exercise of any arbitrary authority; that every act of the Chief Superintendent of Schools is subject to the authority of a Government responsible to the Legislature of the country. But while the constitution of the Board of Education has been ostensibly objected to, I believe the real objection is rather, against that with which the Board has been identified, namely, the prohibition of United States School Books in our Common Schools. It seems to be supposed that if there were no Board of Education to recommend books to be used in Schools, there would be no exclusion of American Books from the Schools.

The fact, however, is, that American School Books, unless permitted by the Board, are excluded by the 30th section of the Statute; whereas the Board of Education is constituted by the 3rd Section.

In regard to the exclusion of American Books from our Schools,

* The above was no doubt induced by the sad evidence at the time afforded of the unsatisfactory working of the last Lower Canada School Bill, of which we shall hereafter have occasion to say a few words; but that, surely, could not justify a gratuitous violation of courtesy towards either Dr. Ryerson or Dr. Meilleur, and far less towards these gentlemen conjointly.

† Instance the alleged memorial of the Gore District Council, and the circular letter of the warden of that of the Newcastle District.

‡ In more than one of the European governments this is the case; and in France this important officer is styled the “Minister of Instruction,” and has a council acting with him.