

# The Colonial Herald,

AND

## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND ADVERTISER.

Vol. VI.]

CHARLOTTETOWN, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1843.

[No. 289.]

### SCHOOL VISITER'S REPORT. FOR THE YEAR 1842.

To the Members of the Board of Education:  
Gentlemen;

Since the date of my last Annual Report, the state and prospects of elementary education on the Island, if not so far advanced and promising as those of older and more favoured countries, have yet become so important and interesting, as to demand and attract a considerable share of public attention; and the advances and improvements hitherto effected, inspire the hope, that year by year, the Schools of our country will become more and more efficient instruments in rearing a virtuous and intelligent generation. Happily it is not necessary at the present day, to dwell upon the advantages of providing for the people, abundant means of instruction. It is to be presumed that none will deny, that were all the Youth of the country brought under the influence of a sufficient and wholesome education, the whole character of the population would be speedily elevated, and their outward comfort would keep pace with their intellectual progress.

In proceeding to state all the Educational Statistics that have come under my notice during the past year, it will appear that all the Schools now maintained upon allowances from the Public Revenue are in number 112, affording instruction to 4630 pupils; giving an increase over the past year of 8 Schools and 274 Scholars.

Of these Schools, it will be seen from the appended summary, that 44 are situated in Queen's, 41 in Prince, and 27 in King's Counties.

It will be remembered from ample data furnished by the Census taken in 1841, it was computed by me in my Report of last year that about one fifth of the population are between the ages of six and fourteen, the juvenile educational age. Now, only one in nine of the Community attends School—falling yet far short of the proportion that ought, on the most moderate calculation to attend School to insure the education of all.

It is believed, and the fact has been generally assumed in the Statistics of education, that children even of the poorest classes, to receive the requisite instruction, ought to be in constant attendance at School, between the ages of six and fourteen. This state of matters, however, has not been realised among us; and it is not uncommon that the little education ever given, is hurried over in infancy, in order that the school may interfere as little as possible with domestic avocations—the culture of the mind with the labours of the hand—the preparation for the future, with the necessities and exigencies for the present. All the instruction, therefore, that very many receive, terminates before they have reached their ninth, tenth, or eleventh year. The fact then is established, that a very large amount of population has not the benefit of School instruction for such a length of time, as is requisite to ensure to them the education and the discipline which it is necessary they should possess.

It is not only, however, the want of a sufficient provision of the means of education on the Island, or the insufficient resort to those that have been provided, that calls for the immediate attention of the Government and the Legislature; not less worthy of their attention is the still defective quality of the instruction which, in not a few instances is given by the means that have been provided. To deny however, that great and important improvements in this latter particular have taken place of late years, would be to oppose the experience and testimony of all who have directed any attention to the subject, as well as an act of injustice to many able teachers, who for years have striven incessantly in a spirit of duty and emulation to raise the standard of education in their several localities. The strict examination too, which candidates for schools now undergo, as to their character and attainments before your Board, powerfully and materially contributes to this educational reform.

But the existing defects of elementary education which claim attention, consist in the very imperfect manner in which even the art of reading is often acquired—in the neglect, by many, of all instruction in writing, and the common rules of arithmetic—in the little exercise of the minds of the pupils upon the sense of what they read—in the insufficient teaching of the truths of Religion—and in the use of such methods in the Schools as can have no favourable influence on the improvement or general habits of the pupils. If there is a necessity, therefore, for carrying elementary education into districts where the semblance of it does not exist, it is almost equally necessary to carry it to other places where it does exist, but under such defects as those here described.

The very small proportion of pupils who prosecute the study of the higher branches of education in our schools, will also be seen in the sequel. Every day's experience however, strengthens the conviction, that if once elementary education is raised to what it ought to be, this shall have taken place by means which will extend a favourable influence towards the higher education, and lead to its more general pursuit. These means will be found in the more general and more liberal endowments of the district schools. This will present inducements to many who are capable of more than elementary teaching, and in this manner, not only will a set of teachers be found, qualified to instruct in the higher branches; but the disposition to take these higher branches, will spread largely among the people; for a good elementary education imparted with the vigour which the best methods require, and received with the avidity which always reciprocates an energetic mode of teaching, will inspire both the pupils and the parents with the desire of advancing to something of a higher description.

It must be confessed, that many settlements suffer this educational destitution, without sufficiently exerting themselves to call into action all the latent means on the spot, which might supply the want or contribute to do so. This is the natural source of remedy, and until it has been exhausted, there is no call either on charity or policy to offer any other. The want must sometimes be ascribed simply to indifference on the part of the people. In so far as that disposition may be the effect of a depressed and in some instances, a rude state of life, it cannot of course be removed or remedied by any power which the existing law confers. But where it is traceable to other causes, some influence may be brought to bear upon it, by which it may be at least diminished. Much may be done by pastoral admonition, and much by the presence of Teachers in the vicinity fitted to command attention to what they profess; when both of these means have been occasionally employed, they have not failed in having much of the desired effect. Something, too, might be expected of individuals interested in the locality, and able to provide for its proper education, when the people themselves are not in a capacity to do so; but it is remarkable how few are the instances of this mode of benevolence, in Prince Edward Island.

From the foregoing then, the fact will be apparent to your Board and the public, that the educational wants of the country are very far from having been adequately met. But from what source, the funds for the purpose of meeting these wants shall be derived, is a question for the consideration of our Colonial Parliament. I may, however, be allowed to add, that there are two in particular that offer themselves to view—an additional grant from the public funds, or a general assessment of the respective townships or parishes.

I shall merely add with reference to the second source of provision here alluded to, viz. Assessment that public opinion is divided on the question, whether the maintenance of schools should fall on the landed interest throughout the country, in proportion to their estates or rentals; or, whether it would be more equitable, that any assessment for educational purposes should extend to the other kinds of real property. Suffice it to say, that these two sources are the obvious resources against the existing evils of an insufficient provision for elementary education throughout the country. Which of them may be employed most readily, most acceptably, and with the best effect, is a question which must be left to the determination of the Colonial Legislature. But whatever scheme may be adopted, it is obvious that the Legislature alone can effectively impart that support to the schools which they plainly appear to need.

It is desirable, however, that these additional grants, if made, should take effect principally in the poorest districts of the country, where the people are unable to raise among themselves, that proportion of the maintenance of a teacher, which the regulations of the existing law require as conditional to any grant being made; and the people thus circumstanced, are unwilling to build where there is no prospect of an adequate support for the teacher, and consequently no assurance of a school being kept up even after the building has been provided.

There are sufficient grounds for further Legislative interference in a prevailing desire throughout the Colony, to possess a certain measure of instruction, and an inability to obtain it without aid. Such aid, will cause the establishment of schools in poor localities where they are urgently needed, and will sustain schools already in existence, but maintained with difficulty on account of the paucity or poverty of the scholars: by making an advance on the slender salaries of teachers, it will secure for the localities in which they are placed, the benefit of their services, and will encourage and stimulate them in the performance of their arduous though interesting duties, and at the same time, will raise and perpetuate a class of teachers whose qualifications may be adapted to the more advanced state, which education in many parts of the adjacent British Provinces is now rapidly approaching.

Under the following general heads, a view is given of the state and system of education in the Island From the uniformity of plan in tuition, which has for some time past, been obtaining among the schools, the same general remarks under the following heads will, with little variation, apply to each and all, and in those instances where such general remarks are not applicable, the exceptions will be found duly noticed in the sequel.

**SCHOOL-ACCOMMODATION.**—Nothing strikes the eye of the observer in traversing the Island, more than the improvements which have lately taken place in school-accommodations; although too many schools are yet sadly deficient and inconveniently small, more commodious school-houses have been built, and others put into good repair, during the last, than in any former year. Although improvements have taken place in the exterior of several of these edifices, and a larger space afforded within for the exercise of the classes, I regret to have it to state, that, among all the schools of the Colony, there are not more than a dozen instances in which the school houses are well furnished with benches and desks, or sufficiently lighted heated, and ventilated. Apart from any consideration for the comfort of the teacher, it is a matter of surprise, that parents should not display more solicitude than they do, in many instances, for the health of their children by their attention to those matters; none can be ignorant of the serious injuries children sustain, from being shut up seven or eight hours daily, in close, damp, ill-ventilated buildings, in consequence of which, their lungs are surcharged with a poison, which in the end, must produce consumption and death.

**ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOLS.**—The children generally enter school between seven and eight years of age, and seldom remain after thirteen or fourteen. About thirteen out of twenty, on an average, attend the whole year, with the exception of the usual vacations. The attendance is most irregular from May to October, when the children assist at home in agricultural and other occupations. Each teacher is required to keep a list of the names of the children, the number of days each has been absent and in attendance, their state of improvement on entering school, the branches learning, and their progress in each stage; these rolls are exhibited at each visitation, the state of the school easily and satisfactorily ascertained, and it is thus found, whether the proficiency of the pupils in the interim has been commensurate with their attendance and other advantages: some teachers also make it an invariable rule, which all might imitate with benefit, to call frequently at the residence of the children, to enquire into their behaviour at home, the causes of absence, &c.

**FEES AND OTHER EMOLUMENTS.**—It has never been the practice in Prince Edward Island to pay schoolmasters in advance. Teachers are of opinion, that were school-fees paid in advance, it would very probably be much in favor of the regular attendance of the children. A change ought at least to take place in the prevalent mode of annual payments, and all teachers paid in quarterly instalments. The fees per quarter, or the common branches of an English education, average from seven shillings and sixpence to ten shillings per quarter. It is provided by law, that four children shall be admitted to gratuitous instruction in each licensed school; but a comparatively small number avail themselves of this privilege. The total number of children in indigent circumstances, receiving free instruction on the Island, does not exceed twenty-nine. The yearly salary of a District schoolmaster, including the Legislative allowance, averages forty-five pounds. The amount of the fees seems materially to deter many from sending all their children to school, and from seeking for them the higher branches of education. The reduction of the present scale of school-fees, would doubtless afford considerable relief to many, and in all probability more members of a family would be sent, and some would be continued longer at schools. But without a corresponding increase of salary to the teacher, to be derived from some other source, the lowering of the fees would be an evil, by diminishing the inducement for young men of talent and education devoting themselves to the profession.

**BRANCHES TAUGHT.**—The attention of teachers is principally directed to reading and orthography; but it is a matter of regret that by far too many children quit school without being correct even in these branches. This is to be attributed in a great measure to the vicious habits of pronunciation first formed in tender years, under unqualified teachers. With several teachers also, possessed of the requisite qualification, to be able to read perfectly is too often a matter of secondary consideration; and neglecting this great groundwork of instruction, they frequently display a reprehensible ambition to push the pupil forward through branches unsuited alike to his years, capacity and attainments. The range of female education, I am happy to add, appears to have considerably extended of late years, and of the girls who now leave school, a considerable proportion are able to write, and possess some knowledge of arithmetic—while in several places, their attainments in grammar and geography, equal those of the best educated young men. But to return.—Arithmetic is taught first, principally from the board, and then from books. The children, after having been first instructed in the common rules, are also trained in mental arithmetic. Perhaps ten out of the hundred, leave school without having advanced beyond the Rule of Proportion. From data furnished me by every school, I find that one out of thirty, receives instruction in Mensuration, Practical Mathematics, and Geometry. Grammar invariably forms a branch of education in the best conducted schools, when the children have made sufficient progress. It is much to be regretted, that so important and useful a branch of human knowledge as Geography should be so much neglected in our country schools. There is not one school in twenty, in which it is taught, and even in those schools where it forms a part of the routine, the want of an adequate supply of books and maps, prevents it from being taught systematically or effectively. Out of St. Andrew's College and the Central Academy, not more than a dozen pupils will be found, learning the Latin or Greek languages in all the schools of the Island. The Scriptures are daily read in many of the schools; and in several, different Catechisms taught, and the mode of reading mechanically, only, is gradually disappearing before the explanatory system, which in almost all of the best schools, is effectively practised.

**SCHOOL BOOKS AND OTHER SCHOOL REQUISITES.**—The Books most generally employed in teaching, are for reading, Murray's spelling book, Introduction and Reader, New Testament; for Grammar, Lennie's & McCulloch's Grammars; for Arithmetic, Gray's, & Walkingame's treatise; for Mathematics, Playfair's Euclid and Davidson's practical mathematics. The expense of school books is found to be a very serious impediment in the way of a good education; even in the most ordinary branches, all the children have not books. These are consequently shut out from the benefit of study at home, and in a great degree made efforts to supply these wants, and some copies of the reading books used, are kept at school and lent to those who may not have copies for themselves.

**METHODS OF TEACHING.**—The explanatory or intellectual system is daily coming more into vogue and practice. The monitorial system is partly employed and felt in many respects to be advantageous. The plan of simultaneous instruction, and the elliptical method of teaching are occasionally employed.

**DISCIPLINE.**—Did parents more frequently co-operate with the teachers, for noticing and punishing all transgressions, either in school or out of it, a salutary influence would be exercised over the behaviour and morals of the children, and less necessity would exist for the use of punishment at school; under this head, tasks are prescribed to the Children when out of school, and to the preparation of these, they keenly devote themselves. Emulation is employed as a stimulus, and in addition to their place in the class, the practice of distributing occasional prizes with a reference to the merits of the children, appears to have a powerful influence. In one or two cases only last year, did the practice of inflicting degrading and unmerciful corporal punishment come to my knowledge—a mode of discipline, which appears to have been in former years, rather too extensively practised.

**ACADIAN AND OTHER SCHOOLS.**—There are six Acadian Teachers among the French population, all partially supported by Government; 130 children altogether are taught. Sabbath schools are on the increase. There are no infant schools, or schools of industry, with the exception of the one now in course of erection in Charlottetown. Week-day evening schools are sometimes kept during the winter months, attended for the most part by adult scholars.

The following is a detailed account of all the licensed Schools, showing the state of each at the period of the last examination.

#### QUEEN'S COUNTY.

Charlottetown, P. B. DOYLE.—The attendance on this School has fallen off during the past year; 24 only being on the roll; the only branches taught are reading, writing, and the primary rules of arithmetic. A congregational fund of considerable amount is set apart for the free tuition of poor children at this School, and as yet but two or three have availed themselves of such an advantage.

Charlottetown Royalty, T. A. MACCABE.—This school numbers 28; the state of improvement to which this school has attained is highly creditable to both the teacher and taught. The classes learning English Grammar are rapidly acquiring a correct knowledge of that branch, several read and write well, and the method of teaching pursued in the school is very praiseworthy. The schoolhouse is neat and comfortable.

(To be concluded in our next.)