

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE SCHOOL-BOOK QUESTION.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR.—It is seldom that I have a thought of criticising what you say in your notes on passing events and conditions; but as an old teacher I should like to say a few words about your note on the Public School books. During all my experience as a teacher I have not before found so great satisfaction with the school books among the people in country schools as at present, and I am certain that any candidate who opposes the present system will lose in public estimation.

One of the many difficulties with which teachers have to contend is that concerning text-books. No one but a teacher knows how hard it is to keep the children fully supplied with them. If a change is made there is an outcry at once, "When is this everlasting changing to stop? Why can't the same books do? They were good enough for us, why not for our children?"

Old school books are treasured up, often from one generation to another, with the expectation that they will still be of use. This, especially among the farmers, who at the present time have to save in all kinds of ways, and dare hardly spend enough to supply themselves with the necessities, to say nothing of the comforts and luxuries of life.

I do not say that you are wrong. Indeed, I believe you are theoretically right in your contention, and that most teachers and probably the Minister himself would agree with you in most points, but the people would not. Canadians are too poor to be liberal in matters of education, especially beyond the line of the three R's. I find that the present system, with the one set of books retained everywhere, seems to meet with satisfaction, because the books are as a rule satisfactory both in matter and binding, and sold, in comparison with other goods, at a reasonable price, and above all because they have come to stay.

There is no doubt that the Public School books are not all satisfactory to the teachers, especially those who depend altogether on the text-book for their pupils work. In all of them a great deal of outside work must be done by the teacher, and I believe that that most maligned Public School History will do a great deal towards introducing a better system of teaching history, chiefly for that reason. There are faults, glaring ones, besides in the history, arithmetic and grammar, but these may be improved in time, if they need improvement. However all may not see alike. For my part I should like to see text-books perfectly free and subject to constant change at the will of the teacher; but until the country becomes richer and teachers get better salaries, it is impossible.

E. W.

MISTAKES OF GREAT CRITICS.

HORACE WALPOLE called Dante "extravagant, absurd, disgusting; in short a Methodist parson in Bedlam!" Samuel Pepys, Esq., thought "Othello" a "mean thing;" and "Midsummer's Nights Dream," "the most insipid, ridiculous play I ever saw in my life," Bacon's "Instauratio Magna" was described by an eminent contemporary as "the silliest of printed books." Hacket, in his "Life of Lord Keeper Williams," calls Milton "a petty schoolboy scribbler;" and another contemporary spoke of him as "the author of a profane and lascivious poem called "Paradise Lost."

The critics have shown themselves very poor judges of style, either in literature or art. As a general rule an author of any merit or seriousness could not possibly do a more foolish thing than take their advice. Turner was incomparably the greatest painter of his age, yet his style during the greater part of his life furnished a common joke to every scribbler, and fledged the callow plumage of every would-be wit. Carlyle's effect upon his age was produced in great measure by his style: yet his style was for some time denounced as a travesty of English which was perfectly intolerable. Mr. Ruskin is now almost universally regarded as the greatest living master of English prose, yet many critics at first received his style with unmeasured ridicule. When Mr. Browning published his first poem—"Pauline"—some critic or other called him "verbose." Unfortunately—as he has told us—he paid too much attention to the remark, and in his desire to use no superfluous word, studied an elliptic concentration of style which told fatally against the ready intelligibility of "Sordello" and other later poems.

Surely the record of the past aberrations even of illustrious critics should teach every earnest man that he need not be afraid to hold his own. Dr. Johnson was looked up to as the literary dictator of his day, yet he said of the author of "An Elegy in a Country Churchyard:" "Sir, he was dull in a new way, and that made many people call him great." And, shrewd as he was, Horace Walpole had nothing better to say of Dr. Johnson than that "he was a babbling old woman. Prejudice and bigotry, and pride and presumption and arrogance are the hags that brew his ink." Of Horace Walpole in his turn, and of his play, "The Mysterious Mother," which Byron so extravagantly admired, Coleridge remarked that "no one with a spark of true manliness, of which Horace Walpole had none, could have written that most disgusting and detestable composition that ever came from the hand of man." Of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" even his friend Southey said: "It is the clumsiest attempt at German simplicity I ever saw."

De Quincy was eloquent and learned, but he thought that "even Caliban in his drunkenness never shaped an idol more weak and hollow than modern Germany had set up for its worship in the person of Goethe." We all know how Coleridge was abused like a pickpocket; how Shelley was almost goaded to madness; how the *Quarterly Review* (March, 1828) said that the poems of Keats had been received "with an all but universal roar of laughter," and how the young poet was brutally told "to go back to his gallipots;" how Jeffrey began his article on Woodsworth with "This will never do," called his poems "a tissue of moral and devotional ravings." Some of us are old enough to remember how the most powerful journal of the period mixed up its criticism of one of the noblest and tenderest poems of the present day—"In Memoriam"—with sneers at "the Amaryllis of the Chancery Bar;" and to recall the violent diatribes which were expended on the poem of "Maud." Mrs. Barrett Browning's "Aurora Leigh" lives by its intrinsic worth, though "foul words were used to blacken, and stupid wickedness to strangle it." Mr. Browning was over and over again insulted and browbeaten by hosts of critics for fifty years. He himself told me how any recognition of him was probably retarded for twenty years by the sheer accident of his receiving for one of his early poems two words, "pure balderdash" in place of an elaborate and appreciative essay on the poem by John Stuart Mill, which would have been inserted by the editor with equal readiness if the previous review had not appeared. I would rather have written "Proverbial Philosophy"—though I never admired more than two lines in it—than have shared in the common baseness of incessantly heaping insult on a defenceless and amiable man, who, like the rest of us, may have had his foibles, but who had done his little best in life.

Truth compels me to say that I have seen but few reviews from which I could learn the least information or adopt the most insignificant hint; and, like every one else, I have sometimes been criticised in a manner which reflects dishonour on the critic only. But, though I think with Mr. Ruskin that "a bad critic is probably the most mischievous person in the world," not even against the least honourable of them all do I cherish a particle of rancor.—*Archdeacon Farrar, in the May Forum.*

FORT MISSISSAGUA.

DESERTED, drear, and mouldering to decay,
A square low tower stands grim and gray and lone,
From Newark's ruins built its walls, storm-blown
When sword and flame alternate seized their prey.
Ontario's waves in rage or idle play
Sap palisade and fort with ceaseless moan,
Shall we historic relics see o'er thrown
And not a voice be raised to answer nay?
Four races here for empire sternly fought,
And brightly gleamed the red man's council fire
The beacon lights the dancing wave and lea,
Where brave La Salle both fame and fortune sought;
In fratricidal strife fell son and sire,
Where friends stretch hands across a narrow sea.

Niagara, 1890.

JANET CARNOCHAN.

NEW ZEALAND'S JUBILEE.

VERY interesting to the people of the Dominion at large should be a handsome pamphlet of over one hundred pages recently sent to us by a courteous contributor, and embodying the Jubilee Celebration of the Empire's youngest Colony. We give a few extracts from the work which is reprinted from the *New Zealand Herald*, and can be had of Wilsons and Horton, Auckland.

NEW ZEALAND A BRITISH COLONY.

In the years 1825 and 1837 attempts were made by public companies in England to colonise New Zealand, but these were firmly resisted by the English Government. In 1839 the New Zealand Company was formed, and while still unrecognized by Government, despatched on 13th May, 1839, its first ship, the *Tory*, with its agents, surveyors, and naturalist. On the 7th November, 1839, Mr. Somes, deputy-governor of the still unrecognized company, wrote to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Palmerston, urging the immediate assumption of sovereignty over New Zealand by the British Government, on the grounds that France might and probably would obtain sovereign jurisdiction over New Zealand, this letter having been written some time after the despatch of the *Aurora* with the first batch of company's emigrants to Port Nicholson.

There are two claimants for the honour of being the place in which the act of establishment of New Zealand as a colony, *i. e.*, an integral part of the British Empire, took place—to wit, Auckland and Wellington. In an earlier section we have shown how futile the claims of Wellington are. But were further proof needed it is afforded in the following unanswerable sketch of events:—

By a commission bearing date 30th July, 1839, Captain William Hobson, R.N., was appointed to be Lieutenant-Governor "over any territory which may be acquired in sovereignty by Her Majesty in the islands of New Zealand." Captain Hobson sailed for Sydney in H. M.S. *Druid*, and on his arrival there he took the oaths of office and set sail with a small party of subordinate officers for New Zealand in Her M.S. *Herald*, on the 19th January, 1840, arriving at the Bay of Islands on the 29th of the same month. He at once issued two proclamations, one announc-

ing his commission and the other the refusal of the Queen to recognise any titles to land not derived from or confirmed by herself. Although the ship *Aurora*, with certain emigrants sent out by the New Zealand Company, arrived in Port Nicholson on the 22nd January, yet, as we have already shown, another and earlier settlement already existed at Kororareka. Moreover, as against the New Zealand Company being a colonizing body, it is sufficient to state that its charter was only granted on the 12th February, 1841, *i. e.* more than twelve months after the landing of Governor Hobson, and, in fact, some five months after the selection of Auckland as the capital of the colony.

Clearly the date of the jubilee of the colony is January 29, the date of the anniversary as a colony, as distinct from the several provincial anniversaries, interesting as these latter are in the history of the settlement of the colony. These latter run as follows, *viz.*—Wellington, January 22, 1840; Auckland, January 29, 1840 (leaving Kororareka outside the question); Taranaki, March 31, 1840; Nelson, February 1, 1841; Otago, March 23, 1847; Canterbury, December 15, 1848.

THE SETTLEMENT OF AUCKLAND.

The town of Auckland has a history distinct from that of the settlement of the district, and the proclamation of the colony within its bounds. Governor Hobson was landed at the Bay of Islands, and originally intended to fix his capital at the spot now occupied by the town of Russell. The site was, however, found unsuitable, and he finally chose a site for his chief town on the right bank of the Waitemata River, a spot which in 1769 Captain Cook had pointed out as a good place for a European settlement. Under the Governor's instructions, Captain W. Symonds, the Surveyor-General, purchased the land from the natives, no difficulty being experienced in the transaction. On Tuesday, 15th September, 1840, the barque *Anna Watson* having on board several officers of the Government, mechanics, labourers, etc., anchored in Waitemata harbour. The Surveyor-General proceeded to select the site for the intended settlement on its shores, and on Friday, the 18th September, the ceremony of taking possession in the name of Her Majesty was duly performed. The whole party having landed, the British flag was hoisted on a staff erected on a bold promontory commanding a view of the whole harbour (afterwards crowned with Fort Britomart), and the flag was immediately saluted with twenty-one guns from the *Anna Watson*, followed by a further salute of fifteen guns from the barque *Platina*, which, together with the *Planter* were likewise lying at anchor in the harbour. Her Majesty's health was drunk at the foot of the flagstaff and greeted with three times three hearty cheers. The *Anna Watson* then fired a salute of seven guns in honour of the Governor, and luncheon was done justice to on board. In the afternoon was held the first regatta which ever took place on the waters of the Waitemata.

The first sale of Crown lands in the new town took place in April, 1841, when town sections sold at an average of £525 per acre. Meanwhile the most frantic indignation had been aroused in Wellington by the foundation of Auckland, the Wakefields and other agents of the New Zealand Association asserting the Governor should have established his capital there. The early volumes of the reports of the New Zealand Association are mainly taken up with these squabbles and charges against Governor Hobson. The latter was worn out with the weight of care and the persistent calumny of his enemies, and died on the 10th September, 1842, aged forty-nine years. His body lies in Auckland cemetery, and in St. Paul's Church, lately demolished, stood a marble tablet to his memory. The town of Auckland will, as Thompson remarks in his "Story of New Zealand," better perpetuate his fame than a pillar of stone or a statue of brass.

THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

The colony was established, but there were yet many vicissitudes, many difficulties to be surmounted, many hardships to be undergone by the dwellers in the infant settlements. It should be noted that from the first moment of its being proposed as a British colony, New Zealand was expressly guaranteed an exemption from convicts, and so escaped the infliction of this curse of Australian colonization. Emigrants chose it from its first establishment in preference to Australia or Van Dieman's Land for this very reason. Lord Normanby, in a despatch to Captain Hobson, dated 14th August, 1839, says:—"The character of a penal settlement shall not be extended to New Zealand. Every motive concurs in forbidding this, and it is to be understood as a fundamental principle of the new colony that no convict is ever to be sent there to undergo his punishment."

Taken as a whole, the early reports of the infant settlement were cheerful and hopeful. Pork and potatoes, we are told, was the staple dietary for all classes of the community. Complaints are to be heard of the price of clothing, but—happy days!—we read that "there are no taxes in New Zealand, nor any rates or dues;" and, moreover, money can be safely invested in real security at the rate of ten per cent. per annum. The main complaints are about communications. The town of Auckland was a morass overgrown with small tea-tree; beyond that again, for about a mile and a half, was a dense thicket, so dense in fact, that in order to find one's way through it, it was necessary to take the bearings of some of the loftier trees. Some four years after the foundation of this settlement, the main road leading out of Auckland was hardly passable in the winter season for the distance a mile. Epsom