

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

We are in the habit of pointing with pride to our educational system as one of the best upon the earth, and showing how it has brought the remotest parts of our wilds within its sphere. We have University Colleges, numerous High and Grammar Schools; while the most out-of-the-way place is provided with a common school.

We have two Training Schools, one at Toronto and another at Ottawa, where men and women preparing for the teaching profession attend lectures; while in connection with each such institution is a model school where the principles of teaching are shown in practical form. Year after year these schools turn out their hundreds of teachers; and as we watch procession after procession go forth, we feel that the cause of education is progressing; and that it is becoming the common heritage of our people.

Our views, too, are correct enough: for the Education that is propounded at the Normal Schools and put in charts of instruction by the Department of Education is fast becoming the common property. But we "distinguish" when we come to the point of declaring that our educational system is what it should be. We know, too, in calling the system in question that we are doing what hundreds of other writers have done before; some of whom write only for the sake of criticising, understanding nothing whatever about the subject. We are conscious, too, of the apparent disadvantages of an editor in discussing a subject about which he is not supposed to possess any technical knowledge; and are not surprised that the teaching profession is disposed to treat opinions from unprofessional quarters with amusement or even with contempt. Nevertheless, in the face of all these facts and probabilities, we presume to bring our educational system into court for trial. We affirm that it does not operate for the most substantial improvement of the people. The defect lies in the subjects taught, and not in the methods of teaching, which are the best and most desirable known to the world.

We shall at first content ourselves with making a specific objection or two, before coming to the more serious matter. There is too much of Mathematics in our schools. This fact is proved in the eyes of every one who reflects that a scholar who has run the gauntlet in Mathematics may not be able, and as a rule is not able, to write a business or a private letter in decent English. This, however, is only a lesser matter; though it is obvious to our readers that the teaching of Algebra and Trigonometry to pupils who will never put these branches into operation, and who do not intend to use them, is absurd when there is so much about his mother tongue, and about practical matters, that he knows nothing whatever about.

Our educational system lures our sons away from a tillage of the soil; and thus strikes a blow at the foundation of our greatest industry, agriculture. This is not at all strange when we come to consider what it is that they teach in the schools. The farmer's boy attends the common school and there hears nothing that enlightens him upon the work which lies before him in life; the tendency of all that he hears is to lure him away to other pursuits. And it is a fact that just as soon as the school gets an influence upon his mind he has come to look to something "higher" than the farm; and has conceived an intellectual contempt for the labor of his hands. "Well," says some withered pedagogue, "that is all right; that is the object

of education. We turn the clodhopper into a man of science; a learned professor, or something else in the intellectual line. What is what schools have been established for."

If that is the aim, if these are the results of our education, then, our reply is, better throw the pedagogues into the sea, and close up the schools. Does the creation of a few "learned professors" or educated men compensate for empty farm houses and neglected fields? Is an overcrowded profession a more desirable spectacle than a well-tilled, prosperous and populous agricultural section? This is the sort of spectacle we must expect to have since our educational system does nothing but makes war on the labor of the hands. A school in a country place is not considered successful at all unless it can succeed in getting a considerable percentage of its attendance out of the neighborhood; and if a teacher could only go and depopulate a district by starting the youth of the place off to Normal School or into "town," his fortune would be made. But if he succeeded in satisfying his pupils with their surroundings; if none of them, under his mastership, showed any disposition to roam, he would be put down as no good, and would soon get notice himself from the trustees to make ready for the road.

The pedagogue having heard this much, and, for all his contortions, being unable to confute it, then asks, "What would you do, then, to prevent the effects of the educational system? Would you close up the school, and relapse into eating, working and sleeping?"

And our reply is that to shut up the school, or in any way to restrict the operation of education, is no part of our programme. But instead of having a boy waste his time over Algebra and other useless mathematical lumber; instead of having him draw maps of Bulgaria, we would have him learn something about the composition of soils; the rotation of crops; the benefits and methods of draining; the housing, breeding and feeding of cattle; something of practical chemistry and of practical common sense. We would not by any means turn the school into an agricultural college; but we would go as far as to show that a boy had better be studying something about the soil upon his own farm than drawing maps of Bulgaria. And while it is well to give him a general knowledge of the history of the past, he had much better study something about the "russets" and "snows" that grow in his own orchard, than take days discussing the Golden Apples of the Hesperides; and trying to locate the garden where they grow.

Life is too short to study everything, and the mass of knowledge is every day becoming greater. But the educationists seem to think that as subjects increase in number the capacity for mastering them likewise increases; and so they go on adding to the curriculum every new thing, instead of putting the pruning-knife to the list. The chief duty of education towards the farmer's son is to elevate the work of farming into the dignity of a scientific pursuit. Just as soon as that is done the youth of the land will not consider it *infra dig* to go upon the farm when they have left the schools.

But we are not making a plea for the sordid and the merely utilitarian. It would be possible to so construct the teaching programmes as to leave there sufficient stimulus to any learner who might desire to try his fortune in some sphere beyond his environment. This is all a very serious matter; and it is growing alarmingly serious. Every learned profession is becoming overcrowded, as we now see the tribe of

half starving doctors and lawyers now at large over the country. And there are thousands of others full of an ambition for "clerking" who are to be found seeking employment in every form while good farms are running to thistles. We repeat that this is a sad as well as a serious matter; it promises to be worse, and it calls for the most earnest attention of the Minister, and of all interested in the cause of education.

A BRUTAL SPECTACLE IN TORONTO.

We have been boasting with very loud mouths about the morality and general propriety of our city; and our County Attorney has been accused of Puritanical tyranny in the discharge of his duty as a county officer. We have "prevented the street cars, and to a large manner all sorts of "Sinful wheels" from going on Sundays; we have closed the public gardens where in summertime there are tangles of beautiful flowers in bloom, lest looking upon the blossoms might in anyway clash with the laws of God;—but we permitted two men to meet in a public hall the other evening, strip, and there enjoy a prize fight till even the persons who delight in such sources of amusement turned sick at the spectacle. One gentleman present who witnessed a bull-fight in Spain declared when he came home that the scene in the amphitheatre was not nearly so revolting and so sickening as that at Fulljames Hall. It was not the ordinary bout between gloved men; but, we repeat, a deliberate and brutal prize-fight, each man having a hard piece of leather across his hands which, in no degree impaired the "mauling" capacity of his knuckles. Before the fray had been long in progress the face of one of the contestants was bathed in blood; his face was lacerated, and his eyes almost closed.

For years now admirers of the "brutal art" have been seeking to perpetrate a thorough prize-fight like those of the olden time, but the police have shadowed these parties, and always arrived in time to prevent the *rencontre*. Some American buffers crossed the line and selected a spot near Niagara for a bout; but the police spoilt their arrangements. But the honor is reserved to Toronto of permitting two men, in the midst of the city, in the centre of police, in a public hall, without any attempt at secrecy, to fight one of the most brutal fights of which we have any record. We do not know what instructions are given to the police respecting surveillance over these rough-sparring halls; but whatever the instructions may be the respectable people of this city, the order-loving portion of the community, will hold the chief of police to blame that such a revolting occurrence should have taken place among us.

We must not by any means be regarded as counselling nearly-pamphlet, or as crying out against the practice of sparring. Boxing we have always regarded as fitly described by the phrase "Manly Art," and it is not against the manly art of boxing that we speak, but against the brutal art. Rowing is an excellent means of exercise and recreation, and deserves encouragement for many reasons; but there is nothing to be said for it when it becomes "professional," when it lures thousands of men down to the water-side, away from legitimate calling, and sets them into the gambling pools. Then racing becomes a menace to society. So too was boxing. The art practiced within proper bounds is good for the muscles; it makes a man quick of motion; makes him self-reliant; it sharpens his eye;—and it is

well that every man should be able to defend himself from a ruffianly assailant. But boxing, as a profession, is the most brutal thing known to mankind; it is even if possible more revolting than the contests of gladiators in the *Forum* where they did each other to death with weapons; for there was something heroic in that.

The daily newspapers have said very little about the degrading spectacle in Fulljames Hall; but the reporters sometimes get their information from members of the "brutal ring," when, of course censure is not in their line. The "sporting editors" are in some cases, too, of much the same stripe as the participants in the matches at the sparring halls; and a trifle of blood more or less only gives zest to the occasion. We have been informed that the *Mail* denounced the fight; but we have not read its "sporting columns" for some time past, and don't know exactly the condition of its moral tone.

But in the name of all good citizens we have to ask that such a spectacle as that lately seen at Fulljames Hall, shall not be again permitted to a Toronto audience.

Lord Randolph Churchill has undertaken a solution of the Irish problem. He advocates the abolition of the Vice-Royalty and the Castle Executive, and proposes the placing of Ireland on the same footing as Scotland, having a secretary in the Cabinet. We never have looked for anything great from this pugnacious little politician; and this scheme, therefore, we do not regard with any surprise. The plan would not pacify the Irish, nor would it be a step in the direction of perfecting government. Lord Randolph would be an extremely ridiculous little person but that he is so pugnacious. It is only when parodying Lord Beaconsfield that he is at his best; When he tries anything original he cuts a sorry little figure.

Should the English Tories appeal to the country, they will take for their platform the cry, "No Dismemberment of the Empire."

The *Pall Mall Gazette* urges a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives to deal with the question of Home Rule for Ireland.

The "German" is the latest innovation in social circles; and it gives promise of being quite fashionable during the season in Toronto.

The Minister of Militia objects to the initials "A. P." and desires that he be addressed as Sir Adolphe Caron. It is usual to address a knight by only one christian name; for when the order is conferred the sovereign or the representative, says, arise Sir Hector, Sir John, or Sir Joseph as the case may be, never reciting more than one prænomen. Strangely enough we speak of the ex-Finance Minister as Sir Leonard Tilley, though in reality he was knighted Sir Samuel.

The *Montreal Post* has charged Captain Howard with mutilating the bodies of some of the dead after the battle at Batoche. Captain Howard denies the scolding, but admits that he possessed himself of the scalp-lock of young White Cap, chief of a band of renegade Sioux. Other officers, according to the Captain, brought away hairy souvenirs; but he emphatically denies that there was any scolding done. The *Post*, whose attitude on this entire Riel question, has been abominable, is pandering simply to the prejudice of its French readers; and it aims at injuring Captain Howard, who is about establishing a carriage factory at Montreal.