

EDITORIAL NOTES.

APPEARANCE VS. REALITY.

Educational systems are in a bad way when those to whom their interests are committed delude themselves with the belief that they have "reached unto perfection." We have all of us long burned incense at the altar of that ideal excellence to which our Ontario school system is supposed to have attained. The quaint but friendly letter, in the Contributors' Department of our present issue, from a foreign visitor to our schools, may, in the particular of school apparatus and general educational furniture, open our eyes to the real position of affairs. The truth of the facts related by our foreign critic will doubtless atone for the treason of his utterance; but is it not time that we should stop patting each other complacently on the back in the belief that no country has a superior or more complete school organization than we have in Ontario? We are not pessimists; but our correspondent's letter reveals a state of things with regard to the impoverished equipment of our schools which it is childish for us to hide from ourselves and criminal to conceal from others. But the letter challenges attention, not only for its revelation of the meagreness of the educational apparatus to be found in the schools, particularly of the rural sections, but in its indictment of our morality in accepting honours conferred at International Exhibitions under false pretences. As educationists, it is the weak side of our character that, misled by pretentious shows, we are too apt to blindly praise and ignorantly to admire. Theoretically, our schools are models; practically, in many instances, they are far otherwise. For years back the Education Department has maintained, for the manufacture of globes, maps, and school apparatus, a monopoly whose operations have been

as primitive and uncommercial as they have been silent and mysterious. If rumour is to be trusted, this phantom Company is represented by one of the chief officials of the Depository, and its charter, it is said, was obtained by the use of the names of business men in Toronto whose interests were conveniently forgotten on the incorporation of the Company. To this semi-mythical and quasi-official firm the schools for years have had alone to look for their supplies of school furniture and apparatus, and education has been deprived of the substantial advantages which an open market and the competition of trade might have otherwise afforded. That this Departmental trading-house has been able to make a good appearance at the Education Office, and has also found it politic to go into the "show business" at Philadelphia and Paris, is easily understood. That it has failed, as a business house, to reach most of the schools of the country, and been inert in extending to them the facilities of an educational supply-store, is, under the circumstances, equally comprehensible. But this the Minister of Education must see is not advantageous to the interests over which he presides, nor is it the function of a Government Education Bureau, either in connection with the Depository which he now wisely promises to abolish, or in connection with a mysteriously operating firm, the chief members of which are among the officials and employes of his Department. For the good name of our schools, and the credit of our educational system, Mr. Crooks will do well to look into the matter we have thus plainly referred to, that *appearances* may be justified of *facts*, and the Province be relieved of the odious imputation of winning its educational honours by fraud or by deceit.