

SCHOOL LEGISLATION.

The sudden and lamented illness of the Hon. Adam Crooks at the very opening of the late session of the Ontario Legislature, prevented any amendments from being made to the School Acts. Had he remained in his usual health it was his intention to secure a workable consolidation of a law which is now to some extent a thing of shreds and patches. Since the last consolidation several amendments have been made to the law by Act of Parliament, and it would be a benefit to all who have anything to do with school work to get the text of the Acts consolidated into a single statute.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Crooks' illness is only temporary and that he will be enabled to bring about this much needed improvement in the law, as well as continue to successfully administer it for a long time to come. But it is to be hoped also that when the law is thus simplified in form no more amendments will be allowed of the kind hitherto so common. Every statute is defective in some minor points, but it is frequently better to allow matters to adapt themselves to a defective system than to keep persistently tinkering it. The School Act would not absolutely require amendment for years to come, and those members of the Legislature who are always searching out little defects and introducing bills to remedy them will confer a benefit on the public by turning their attention for a while to other matters.

THE ENGLISH EDUCATION ACT.

The readers of the CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL can rightfully demand to be kept *au courant* with significant educational movements and advances in other lands. In our last number attention was directed to the voluminous and instructive Report of the National Bureau of Education at Washington. Our brief reference by no means exhausted the interest attaching to that important publication, and we propose at an early date to recur to its suggestive statistics for some lessons appropriate to our own educational position. From time to time we have chronicled the developments of popular education in Great Britain, as departmental circulars and parliamentary discussions have placed the means at our disposal.

As tending to show the depth to which the roots of national education have already struck down in the Mother Country, we may properly refer to a somewhat remarkable article contributed to *The Nineteenth Century* for December, by his eminence Cardinal Manning. It does not concern either us or our readers to discuss the main drift of the eloquent Archbishop's essay, which is in a word, to show that voluntary, as well as board schools should share in the rates levied for the support of elementary education. We refer to it in view of the distinct emphasis with which it recognizes the value and substantial permanence of the principles underlying the Education Act of 1870. "To propose its repeal," we are told, would be like proposing the repeal of the Gregorian Calendar."
....."The Act of 1870 was necessary. The population

outgrown all existing means of education. The children uneducated counted by hundreds of thousands, perhaps by millions. The standard of education was on a low level. England was behind both Germany and France in the diffusion of intellectual culture, at least among the lower and middle classes of the people." In these few and forcible words the whole story is told. Incidentally, we may refer to them as illustrating that rare power of compression which only the rarest literary genius can command. Further, the learned prelate has studied too deeply the phenomena of European politics and sociology to have any sympathy with Richard Grant White's monstrous dogma, that ignorance is a safeguard and guarantee of virtue:

"Putting away all ecclesiastical questions, it cannot be denied that the state is justified in providing for the education of its people. It has a right to protect itself from the dangers arising from ignorance and vice, which breed crime and turbulence. It has a duty also to protect children from the neglect and sin of parents, and to guard their rights to receive an education which shall fit them for human society and civil life." The subsequent suggested modifications of the rights of the civil power do not affect the validity of the primal principles here so eloquently stated.

The Elementary Education Act has been in force for thirteen years, working its way quietly and effectively, while the external life of the nation has been shaken by the conflicts of diplomacy, by "wars and the rumors of wars" "Its principles," we are told, "have been so long admitted, and have worked themselves so deeply into public opinion and daily practice, that no scheme or proposition at variance with them would be listened to. The condition thus made for us being irreversible, our duty is to work upon it and to work onward from it for the future." The "irreversible condition" is defined minutely in the following admirable summary of the principles of the Education Act:

1. That education, whether by voluntary schools or by rate schools, shall be universal, and co-extensive with the needs of the whole population.

2. That an education rate shall be levied in all places where the existing schools are not sufficient for the population in number or efficiency, and that such sum shall be administered by a board elected by the rate-payers.

3. That the standard of education shall be raised to meet the needs and gradations of the people.

4. That all schools receiving aid, whether by Government grants or rates, shall be brought under the provisions of the statute law.

5. That all such schools shall be under inspection of the Government, and bound by all minutes and codes of the committee of Privy Council as sanctioned by Parliament.

6. That education shall, under certain conditions and for certain classes, be compulsory."

Candor compels us to express a doubt if "the further extension of these principles" which the Cardinal Archbishop advocates be really feasible. Certainly it is not in accord with the prevailing temper of the English people at this precise epoch.