

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Ontario) FOR THE YEAR 1883, WITH THE STATISTICS OF 1882. Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1884.

First Notice.

FOLLOWING our usual custom, we shall but briefly notice this important blue-book, and leave the full consideration of it to future issues, as we have reason to know that the thorough analysis of late Reports given in THE MONTHLY have been of practical value, and very acceptable to our readers.

The present volume contains: Part I., Statistics of Public, Separate, and High Schools for the Year 1882; Part II., Education Department, 1883; Part III., University College and School of Practical Science; Part IV., Technical Education, and Mechanics' Institutes.

We remark, in passing, that the extracts from Reports of Public School Inspectors are very limited, only six counties being represented. Twenty pages are devoted to the Reports of Messrs. McLellan, Hodgson, and White. In reading the Reports of these gentlemen we are forced to the conclusion that our school system is unsatisfactory, and the results of all the teaching, and inspection, and examination, discouraging. Mr. White reports that he was unable to overtake his work; that a second inspector is urgently required; that one set of books, and that the best, is absolutely necessary; that too often the school houses are unsatisfactory; that the teachers do not understand ventilation; that little attention is paid to physical education; that there is wide-spread ignorance of the Separate School Law; that the teaching of reading is bad; that spelling is not a general accomplishment; that in arithmetic the work is generally beyond the pupil's capacity; that the study of geography is often productive of no real good; that literature is sometimes well taught, but often very badly taught, and children leave school, filled with disgust for all masterpieces; and that teaching has in

many cases not advanced beyond the dull routine of study and recitation.

Dr. McLellan calls "Quixotes" those that criticize the character of the Entrance Examinations, but admits that the Examination Papers are not perfect; offers a semi-apology to the Public School Inspectors for his statement of last year that "the work of the candidates is very badly put down—without neatness and without method," but repeats the statement in other words. He meets the expressed wish of the teachers that the whole period of English History should not be prescribed for Entrance candidates, by the remark that surely boys of to-day are no worse than the boys of a generation ago.

He admits that the Examination test to determine the teaching of literature is not very satisfactory, but still he cannot give up the idea of an examination, and would have better Examination Papers.

He condemns the multiplied option scheme as not being in harmony with the Public School work, and advocates a return to a judicious fixed course. He insists upon drawing being made an obligatory and fundamental branch in national education. As for music, he thinks that the Normal School training in it has been worthless. He would have every teacher capable of giving instruction in this art. Reading, he declares, is in too many of the Public and High School's very much neglected, and he proposes some remedies for this state of things. He pleads for more science, and would introduce it into all the schools.

He condemns much of the teaching of English grammar in vogue, and seems inclined to give up Mason and pin his faith to Whitney. He regrets that the Department no longer gives substantial aid in the establishing and maintenance of libraries in the Public Schools. He mentions a recent example of what an active teacher can do in the establishing of a reference library, but he might have found if he had been willing as good an illustration years ago.