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CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

TOPICS—	PAGE
The Ontario Text-Book System.....	259
Price and Mode of Publication of Text-Books.....	259
The Bremner Investigation.....	259
The Citizen's Meeting.....	259
Mr. Craig's School Bill.....	260
Colonial Rights Under Old Treaties.....	260
The Proposed U. S. Tariff.....	260
The New British Title Bill.....	260
Madness or Method—Which?.....	260
The Relation of Penalty to Crime.....	261
A Question of Conflicting Rights.....	261
THE TRADE RELATIONS OF CANADA IN CONNECTION WITH RECIPROCIITY.....	261
OPEN THE BAY (POEM).....	C. Mair. 263
THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIALISM.....	C. F. Newcombe. 263
PARIS LETTER.....	Z. 263
THE MURDER MICROBE.....	Fidelis. 264
ARSENIC AND SULPHUR.....	264
"TRE FILA D'ORO" (POEM).....	B. M. J. 266
LOOKING BACK.....	Louis Lloyd. 266
THE RAMBLER.....	266
AN INNOCENT PLAGIARIST.....	Hugh Cochrane. 267
NO ROOM FOR THE BABY (POEM).....	Fidelis. 268
ART NOTES.....	Templar. 268
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.....	268
OUR LIBRARY TABLE.....	268
LITERARY AND PERSONAL GOSSIP.....	269
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.....	270
CHESS.....	271

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THOUGH there is not much that is new, there is a good deal that is true, in the criticisms of the Ontario school-book system which were made during the recent debate in the Legislature. Three aspects of this subject are worthy of more attention than they have as yet received, namely, quality, price, and mode of publication. First in importance is undoubtedly the question of the excellence or otherwise of the books themselves. In the Public Schools, and especially in the junior departments of those schools, it is of great moment that the text-books should be of the very best description. The importance of the quality and method of the text-book is always in inverse ratio with the education, experience, and other qualifications of the teacher. In the more advanced classes of the graded schools, and in the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, the teacher is able to correct errors, supplement deficiencies, substitute new and improved methods, and, in many cases, even dispense, in a large measure, with the use of text-books, often to the great advantage of the pupils. But, in view of the mental immaturity and meagre acquirements of very many of the teachers employed in country districts, and in the lower grades of the town and city schools, it is clearly indispensable to even the most moderate degree of efficiency that the text-books be not only absolutely reliable, but most skilfully adapted to their purpose. Now, from the theoretical point of view it is simply absurd to suppose that the mode of prescribing text-books at present in vogue can afford any guarantee, or even any reasonable hope, that the best will be authorized. The time-honoured principle of competition is entirely, or almost entirely, eliminated. The ordinary stimulus to authorship is taken away. There is absolutely no inducement to any Canadian scholar or educator to give time and labour to the preparation of a text-book, and no one would be foolish enough to do so, no matter how confident he might be of his ability to produce a work very superior to any in use, unless he could, by some special influence, secure the ear of the Department and a virtual promise of authorization, before putting pen to paper. On the other hand, the folly and wrongfulness of promising authorization for a book not yet written are equally obvious. Even Homer nods sometimes, and neither scholastic acquirements, nor general skill in authorship, can afford any guarantee that a text-book written to order will not be decidedly inferior, or even utterly unfit

for class-room uses. Nor, were we to grant the Minister of Education himself possessed of the culture, versatility, and ability of a Gladstone, would it follow that he could at the same time discharge the varied political functions of his office, and successfully superintend the preparation or selection of the text-books required for all the various departments of the Public Schools. Coming to the test of fact, it is certainly not correct, as certain supporters of the Government in the House seemed to imply, that the text-books at present authorized are so satisfactory as to escape or defy criticism. Every one who knows anything of the matter knows that the contrary is the case in a marked degree in regard to some of them. It seems, moreover, impossible that any competent critic, who has opportunities for comparison with the books in various subjects which are constantly appearing in England and the United States, can doubt the inferiority of several of those now in use in our schools to the best productions of other lands. Nor is it altogether unworthy of consideration that the one-text-book system, itself, tends to deprive a teacher of the useful stimulus and educative influence that would result from the study and comparison of various treatises, were he to have, as every workman should have, some voice in the selection of the tools with which he has to do his work.

PRICE, though quite secondary in comparison with quality, is in itself a very important element in the school-book discussion. Whether the authorized text-books are, on the whole, furnished at as low a rate as they should be, under the system, is a question on which we shall not venture to pronounce an opinion. We say "under the system," for there can be no doubt that the one-text-book system, whatever its defects from the educational point of view, should at least have the merit of securing the maximum of cheapness. The comparisons which have been challenged with the prices of other books of similar size and mechanical quality are obviously futile. The element of certainty of sale must be taken into account. It is in fact one of the most potent factors in the calculation. What other book can be put upon the Canadian market with a guaranteed sale of so many hundreds of thousands of copies within one year or five years? This fact of certainty of demand, combined with absolute monopoly, should make the public school text-book cheap beyond comparison with any other books offered to the Canadian public. A net profit of even one cent a copy on a small book, whose authorization is equivalent to a guarantee of the sale of five hundred thousand, or even one hundred thousand copies, would be not a bad thing in itself. The simple fact that the drawing books, of which the total sales within a few years must approximate the millions, were reduced at a stroke from ten cents to six cents apiece, speaks volumes. We need not enlarge upon it. It ought to be the condemnation of the whole system. It suggests unanswerable objections from both the political and the politico-economical point of view. It is evident that the Minister who has in his hands the power of giving such a contract, under a close monopoly, has power to make the fortune of any publisher whom he may choose to favour. It is equally evident on the other hand, that the Minister is also in danger of putting himself, however unwillingly, and the public interests of which he is the guardian, into the power of the very publishers he may choose to favour. The incidents connected with the arbitration—and it cannot be denied that a secret arbitration in such a case is, what some member of the Opposition pronounced it, a sham—in the case of the drawing books themselves, and the fixing of the present selling price at six cents instead of five, illustrates this point. The ministerial defence of such a monopoly, by retorting that the Conservative Government at Ottawa is the parent of monopoly, is, as any school boy could see, no defence at all. It is open, also, to the ready rejoinder that a monopoly secured by Government is the worst of all monopolies. Trusts and combines are always more or less in danger of competition. The Ontario Education Department absolutely prohibits all competition in school-book making, once the contract has been given, save on conditions which have hitherto, so far as we are aware, proved unavailing. On the whole survey we should find it hard to retain our faith in the intelligence of the electors of Ontario if we

did not regard it as but a question of time when the Province will retrace its steps, so far at least as to place the control of public education largely in the hands of a board of competent educators, and abolish Government contracts and monopolies.

THE enquiry that is now being pursued by a special Committee of Parliament, touching the alleged confiscation or appropriation of the Bremner furs during the North-West Rebellion, is one that very intimately concerns the administration of the volunteer force of the Dominion, and the honour of its commanding officers. It would, of course, be highly improper to attempt to anticipate or to influence in any way the verdict of the Committee, while the matter is still *sub judice*. There can, however, be nothing wrong in calling attention to certain salient features of the case which are brought into distinct relief by the statements made on behalf of those directly concerned. It is very desirable that the Canadian public should realize more fully than it seems as yet to have done the importance of the case in its bearing upon military discipline and official morality. It is, it seems to us, unfortunate that charges, or even rumours, of such gravity as those now under consideration, touching an officer of the highest military rank in the Dominion, should have been permitted to go unchallenged for years, until the memory of particulars is obscured by lapse of time. A British officer is traditionally supposed to be peculiarly sensitive to any reflection upon his reputation. It is, moreover, matter for surprise and regret that, when at length a Committee of Investigation has been granted, in accordance, as was announced, with the special request of General Middleton, his counsel should not have urgently demanded that the investigation should take the widest range, and that anything in the parliamentary reference limiting the scope of inquiry should be at once amended. The friends of General Middleton and the Canadian people generally had surely a right to expect nothing less than this. The statement made on behalf of the General, that he believed himself to have power to confiscate the goods of rebels, is itself extraordinary, but is surpassed by the implied admission in his statement, and that of Mr. Hayter Reid, that he also believed the power of confiscation to carry with it the right to bestow the confiscated goods upon those asking for them, or even upon "the General and his staff." It may be hoped that the General and others implicated will yet see how desirable it is in their own interests, as well as in those of the Canadian volunteers, that no technicality should be permitted to stand in the way of the fullest inquiry into all the charges.

THERE can be no longer a doubt, we think, that the great majority of the citizens of Toronto, of all classes, are heartily in favour of the Viaduct scheme, as the only satisfactory settlement of the Esplanade difficulty. The public meeting on Friday evening seems to have been as thoroughly representative as it was unanimous and enthusiastic. The Citizen's Committee need not, and we presume will not, hesitate to stand firm in the position they have taken. It is to be hoped that the Municipal authorities may do the same. The opinion so heartily endorsed by the meeting, that it would be subversive of the best interests of Toronto to permit of the expropriation of the central and most important part of the water front, for railway purposes, on any terms whatever, seems so directly in accord with reason and common sense that the wonder is it should ever have become necessary to enunciate it in words. The right of the citizens of all classes, men, women and children, to "safe, free and direct access to the Bay," is, as Mr. Hugh Blain expressed it, the main feature of the scheme, and in this all are alike interested. Yet it is evident that this right, natural and inalienable as it appears to be, is not to be maintained and permanently secured without a serious and possibly prolonged struggle. The great battle will, no doubt, have to be fought before the Railway Committee of the Privy Council. Meanwhile every legitimate influence should be brought to bear to secure a just and satisfactory result. If it can but be made sufficiently clear that the people of the city, irrespective of party, are united and determined, the issue can hardly be doubtful.