

four fingers, and two strokes joined (V) to represent the hand, or five fingers. Ten was a picture of two hands, or two V's (X). But when the Romans and Greeks worked at the higher mathematics or attempted hard sums in arithmetic, they are much more likely to have used letters, in order to avoid the clumsiness of these numerals; in other words, they used what looked like a kind of algebra. We know that they tried to simplify the Roman numerals at Rome by making four and nine with three strokes instead of four, by placing an I before the V and an I before the X (IV. and IX).

Our use of the numerals which we call "Arabic" is comparatively recent, and it is believed that the Arabs got these numbers from India several centuries after the Koran was written, or about 800 years after Christ. Whether the Indian numerals were originally part of some ancient alpha-

bet, or a series of shortened signs originally somewhat like the Roman numerals that we still use, is not really decided.

The numbers used by the peoples of India who wrote in Sanskrit were very like the figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 0, that we use to-day. Even closer resemblances will be found if one goes back to the earliest forms of our numerals; for, during the last thousand years, our numbers have undergone some slight changes. Together with these numerals, the Arabs learned from India how to do sums by algebra. For algebra, though an Arabic word, is a science of which the Arabs were ignorant before they reached India.

It may be said that the invention of these numerals and of algebra for the higher mathematics stamps the old Hindoos as one of the most wonderful races of the world.—*St. Nicholas for September.*

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## A NEGLECTED WORK IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF ONTARIO.

BY W. H. HUSTON, M.A., HON. SECRETARY OF THE TORONTO INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.

WE hear so much with regard to the excellence of our Ontario educational system, that we have begun to think it perfect, or at any rate so nearly perfect that we need not concern ourselves in examining it carefully in its scope and work, or in estimating how it affects social conditions, and in turn is affected by them. Such a feeling of satisfaction and such indifference are always disastrous in connection with any of our institutions; but when the apathy concerns a matter so important as education, and especially when it is seen that this feeling of indifference

affects not only the general public, but also the teaching profession, which is so intimately connected with the shaping of our educational system, it is surely matter for something even stronger than regret.

It is not to be forgotten that "Experience is the best school-mistress," is true as well of educational as of other theories, plans and systems; and that like other teachers, she takes special pleasure in instructing the willing mind always on the alert for information. Reforms come slowly—even when urgently needed—because we fail to examine, to compare,