

OUR SCHOOL MANUALS.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE function of school books in the economy of education is admittedly an important one, the more so as educational science advances, and the teacher grasps an exalted notion of his work. In Canada, the two causes which, in past years, most hindered the introduction of good text-books into our schools, were the too-rigid insisting upon uniformity, and the premature desire that they should be of native authorship. Conservatism in the one case, and an excess of patriotism in the other, lost to education many valuable years' work. How mischievous was the system there is little means of knowing: how great has been the change, the present extensive school curriculum will indicate. To be just, however, there was more than a change of system that brought about the extension of the list of authorized text-books in use in the Province. The impetus given to the production of improved manuals by recent educational legislation in England, had much to do with the enlargement of the list, as it set in motion the activities of publishers to adapt their text-books to the requirements of the 'new code,' and increased the number of works available for introduction. Fortunately, too, the influence of this new publishing enterprise was contemporary with the reorganizing movement of the latter days of our own Council of Public Instruction, and the departmental régime which succeeded it. The result was the increased number, and

the improved character, of our school text-books. That the common movement may continue which brought about so desirable a result, must be a matter of earnest concern to all well-wishers of our educational system, though care must be taken that each movement shall keep to its proper sphere. But in few matters is there greater danger of the introduction of improper influences and undue pressure than in that of the submitting and approving of the text-books for school use. One distinctive motive should, by publishers and advisory committee alike, be kept in view, viz.: that no personal considerations should affect the act of approval, or interfere with the singleness of aim with which the task of selection is undertaken. Imperatively, the examining committee, at any rate, should be inaccessible to outside influence, and be rigorously impartial in its work. Trade may descend to jockeying: officialism, never! The Minister of Education, of course, should still further be aloof from the intrigues of trade, and from all influences, religious, political, and social, that would embarrass his actions or prejudice his mind. Still, there is necessity for an active sympathy between, and a hearty co-operation among, the makers of books, and those called upon to adjudicate upon their merits. It is incumbent upon each that they should appreciate and sustain a high standard of intelligent merit in their construction, and respect the considera-