

EDITORIAL NOTES.

EXAMINATIONS SUBSIDIARY TO
EDUCATION.

IT is as easy to declaim against any particular feature of our school system as it is easy to depreciate the general work of the schools. In regard to both, however, it will be admitted, that we have erred rather in the direction of over-praising than in that of underrating our school work. It is true that the results of our educational system, in the main, are rarely allowed to work themselves out, as boys are too often removed from school to earn their living at an age when, in other countries, they are only about to matriculate. Just as fast as the necessities for their removal diminish or pass away, so fast shall we see the schools relieved from this disability. But while the schools suffer from this evil, it is all the more to be regretted that what education can be imparted, in the short period of a boy's school career, should be wasted in the misdirected effort of competitive examinations. It may be that the physical evils of the "cramming" system are not so alarmingly brought before us as in the neighbouring States. Here, however, they are bad enough. A New York journal, at the close of the recent "commencement" celebrations in various parts of the Union, gave the following pitiful list of casualties as a partial result of our present day high-pressure education. One girl, says the journal, who succeeded in winning the highest honours fell into a fit in the exhibition room, and was carried home stricken with brain fever; another, who had worked beyond her strength for a year in order to pass into the Normal School, finding that she had failed, went to the river and threw herself in; a third, a boy of fourteen, was stricken down with spinal meningitis from the long overtaxing of his brain; and even

then was kept there that he might finish his task. The most alarming fact in such cases is, that they grow more frequent every year. Last summer, at the close of the examinations, two young girls were removed to the insane asylum from the schools, and one lad of eighteen who had not "passed" blew his brains out in despair. Another youth died reciting his lessons in his delirium and scribbling problems on his pillow. Such, lightly outlined, is the picture which the "cramming" system has set before our view. But distressing as these facts are, their recital may be said to pall before the tale of accumulated misery which represents that unknown aggregate of children left each year with minds permanently impaired for the work of life; just in proportion as their brains have been overtaxed. But as the journal to which we have already referred remarks, "the worst element in this wholly factitious system is the introduction of the stimulant of notoriety into the schools. . . . It is not the thorough, quiet comprehension of their studies, or the gradual increase of mental power, or the development of high principles or finer feelings, and the establishment of solid character, which is the aim of education with either teacher or pupil; it is the trivial distinctions of the class-room or the mere getting through the school at a certain time." Now, school work of this character, which is largely typical of that that prevails throughout Ontario, cannot but lead to the most pernicious evils. Under the system, it is evident, that so far as such examinations act upon education, they ride rough-shod over instead of being subservient to it. They compel the pupil to pursue that course of "cramming" which may secure him the doubtful successes of the examination day, but will leave his mind permanently unimproved, and his faculties untutored in that