

CONTRIBUTORS' DEPARTMENT.

"CRAM."

It seems as if, nowadays, you can get people to take sides on any question whatever, and so every question becomes a school-boy's debate. Now, one of the most hopeless symptoms that one of these little debates can take is, when one of the parties, on his own responsibility, divides the meaning of the chief word in the question, making one half to serve his own side, and leaving the other to his opponent. This is what they have done with the word "cram." I do not know who introduced the word, or what exact meaning is attached to it, but it strikes me as a somewhat vigorous slang expression, involving the idea of "too much" in it. Turkeys and chickens are crammed, and Nature is outraged in the process; if a bag or box be crammed with anything, we do not expect to get much more into it; if a learner crams, he puts more into his head in a short time than prudence can approve,—his memory is overloaded. If the learner be very young, cramming must mean the same thing. Professor Jevons has fallen into the error of dividing the meaning of "cram" into good and bad, and others have followed him. If the word is to be of any real use, let it have a definite meaning. As well might one, in discussing the question as to whether "Virtue is desirable" say, "From my point of view, No; for virtue may be of two kinds, good and bad." So we have "good cram" and "bad cram." If it be thus divided, discussion is at an end, for who would have the courage to object to that marvellous thing "Good Cram," and rightly enough, for it only means acquiring knowledge in a hurry for some definite object. Then, it is said that the good teacher "crams," and the good lawyer "crams," and the good preacher "crams." Now I do not think so, though the bad ones may. If the teacher crams, his

health will suffer, and his pupils will be little benefited; if the preacher crams, his congregation will yawn; if the lawyer crams, his clients will suffer; for, we cannot call the process of getting a rapid outline of a subject "cramming," because that is incidental to the profession, and I cannot conceive of people cramming as a profession. Even poultry are only crammed for a short period, and not habitually through their natural life. Now, reviewing a subject before an examination, after having studied it during a term, is *not* "cramming," good or bad; but requiring as much work to be done in three months as a growing, immature child—not a hard-headed lawyer—would require a year safely to master, *is* "cramming"—good and bad. A mature mind, whether it be that of teacher, or preacher, or lawyer, may perhaps do a little cramming, without much injury; a child cramming will feel the effect in his grey hairs, if he ever reach the age of them. Let us call study, "study," and cram, "cram."

A. B.

SPELLING REFORM.

Editor, Canada Educational Monthly.—

SIR,—A cursory glance over your first item under Editorial Notes in the MONTHLY for April, would lead one to imagine that you branded, indiscriminately, all who wish "to remove from the language its most glaring inconsistencies" in spelling—as "sciolists and tinkers," yet I can hardly believe that such is your deliberate opinion. Your whole article bears the stamp of desperate resistance to the reform, without advancing one argument in support of your views. It begins, continues and ends in an acrimonious tone of literary declamation against all who, prompted by philanthropic motives, wish to amend our barbarous spelling—orthography is a misnomer.