

CITY CHIMES.

The report of the Public Schools of Halifax for the past year submitted by Supervisor MacKay shows our schools to be in many respects in a very satisfactory condition, and we feel sure this report will be read with interest by parents, teachers and pupils as well as all who are interested in the progress and requirements of the public schools. The returns show a slight decrease in the number of pupils enrolled, which was doubtless due to the prevalence of diphtheria in the city during the winter of 1891. Mr. MacKay points out some defects in the present course of study pursued in our schools which deserve careful consideration. It is only too true that the average pupil is already overburdened with many and difficult studies and could not advantageously take up more subjects, but it is equally true that too much time is devoted to unnecessary details that might well be given to more important work. We quote Mr. MacKay's remarks with regard to the present system of study:—"I have already indicated how much could be made for the study of composition and literature by letting them take the place of grammar, geography and history as at present taught use up altogether too much of the pupil's energy. It is true that they do not take up very much time in school. But in the form of long and tedious memorizing of dates and unimportant facts, of lists of cities, rivers and ancient statistics they leave the conscientious scholar scarcely time for necessary sleep. Now the fault lies partly in the text-books as well as in the teachers, and arises partly from the tyranny of oppressive examinations. The text-book in British history contains 227 pages of uniformly small monotonous type, together with a table of 500 dates. No difference of letter press discriminates the more important dates or paragraphs of the text, nor do any historical maps illuminate its dreary pages. Although it is ably and impartially written, yet a book of half the number of words with illustrative maps for different periods and places would suit our schools much better. The text on its various pages would leave upon the memory a much more enduring impression. We are not yet ready to smile at judicious memoric helps. Our larger geography, though superior in type and maps, is likewise too ponderous. The fact is that this book is not at all needed. The junior geography somewhat enlarged would be all that is necessary for the common schools. For the Academy a small hand-book such as Mill's commercial geography with an atlas would give the best results. Let the pupils have short lessons in these subjects and let them be encouraged to read extensively works of travel and history." We think all interested will heartily endorse the Supervisor's opinion on this important topic, and as those who have received a public school training recall the long hours spent in committing to memory uninteresting and really unimportant facts, as quickly forgotten as learned, we feel sure the general opinion will be that this is a defect urgently requiring remedy. The Departments of Manual training and Kindergarten work which have been added to the public school system have proved very successful, and good work is being done in both classes. Mr. MacKay earnestly advocates a course of professional training for teachers, a "parental home" for unruly and unmanageable boys, to be under the charge of a superior teacher and under the control of the School Board, and speaks favorably with regard to the establishment of a cooking school in connection with the schools of Halifax. There is no reason why any child in our city may not obtain a good, practical education, and we are glad to hear encouraging reports of the advancement being made in the provision of educational facilities for the coming men and women of our land.

We have never sided with those in our city who deride the military nor with those to whom familiarity with the sons of Mars means social nirvana; but we have frequently expressed our contempt for those who toady after the officers, and for some of the latter who have not shown the hall mark of gentility in their bearing towards Halifaxians. We therefore feel free to speak plainly on the subject of the recent toboggan mishaps which, it appears, were in a large measure due to the inexperience of the gentlemen of the garrison who undertook, unwisely, the management of toboggans and the care of young ladies. The recklessness of the girls is apparent; but one is at a loss to understand why any young lady would care to confide herself to the unskilled guidance of a novice in the somewhat dangerous sport of tobogganing, rather than to some tried and well-proved Halifax lad, just for the reason that the former bears His Majesty's commission. It would be wise for strangers to perfect themselves in the art of going down hill before inviting young ladies to accompany them, and the latter, for the sake of sound bones had better not take the risks of a random descent on the ice-adel. We do not mean to say that officers should not toboggan, but that they should learn how to, and to the credit of most of them be it said they are not slow at making themselves at home in our winter sports.

Sunday will be St. Valentine's Day. The ancient custom of celebrating the 14th of February by the sending of love tokens appears to be gradually dying out, and in this matter of fact ago our young people consider this mode of expressing their feelings very much out of date. Perhaps Cupid is growing less sentimental and diffident as the years go by, and the victims of the blinded little god are not prompted in these later days to thus declare their devotion to the fair object of their choice. At any rate the custom is a pretty one and has at least age on its side to commend it. It has been said that Saint Valentine "was a man of most admirable parts and so famous for his love and charity that the custom of choosing Valentines upon his festival took its rise from thence." After perusing the lengthy lists of bachelors resident in our city and the towns round about, which have of late been published in the columns of one of our contemporaries, it seems that it is about time to revive the custom which was such a boon in times gone by to bashful lovers.

The sacred concert to be given by the choir of Trinity Church on the 23rd of this month gives every indication of being a very enjoyable entertainment for all who appreciate sacred music.

The carnival at the Exhibition Rink on Tuesday evening next promises to be a grand affair, and the public will probably turn out in large numbers to see "what is to be seen." The ladies and gentlemen of the private afternoon party who are to take part in the cotillion are perfecting themselves in their art by practice, and a very enjoyable evening is anticipated on this festive occasion. The 66th and Leicestershire bands will furnish music.

St. Patrick's Minstrels are preparing a first-class programme, consisting of new songs, witty stories, etc., for the entertainment to be given by them on Monday evening, 15th inst., at the Academy of Music, and will no doubt furnish their audience a limitless fund of amusement. This popular company has won many laurels in the city, and has an enviable reputation for truly enjoyable minstrel shows, and we feel quite safe in predicting a substantial welcome on Monday evening. The proceeds of this performance are to go towards the building fund of St. Mary's new Glebe House.

The energetic company of amateurs who are to present the comedy entitled "School" at the Academy of Music on Tuesday, March 1st, deserve a large and appreciative audience. This company consists of several well-known ladies and gentlemen of this city, assisted by a few of our Military friends who are ever ready to help forward any worthy social movement. The fact that the proceeds of this entertainment are to be devoted towards paying for the new drop curtain and scenery of the Academy stage which is now being finished by the well-known Halifax artist, William Gill, should appeal to the hearts (and pockets) of all patriotic theatre-goers of Halifax.

Supervisor McKay in his report to the school board speaks favorably of teaching boys as well as girls the use of the needle. In this we heartily concur. When we went to school the boys were allowed to bring various sorts of plain and fancy work to do during sewing hour, and they proved fully as industrious as the girl members of the sewing circle. Every boy should be taught at least to sew on buttons, for there are times in the affairs of men when female assistance is not available, and even a small amount of knowledge of this useful art is a valuable possession. It will not make Bettys of the boys to teach them this, and more, of sewing, and will serve to interest them in the hour devoted to needle work. It is well worthy the consideration of our educationists.

Are all the grumblers, as well as the good-natured people, satisfied with this weather? It is to be hoped so, for if not we are afraid the best is not good enough for them and they must needs turn their footsteps to some more congenial clime for full gratification. The bountiful fall of snow has turned our darkness into light and the transformation is very pleasing. The fine sleighing and typical winter weather of this week has brightened the aspect of our social as well as business life, and the clear and exhilarating air, not too cold, is thoroughly enjoyable; for as some aspiring poet said

"When ice is thick and deep's the snow
And winter days are drear, O!
Man wants but little here below
Zero."

Tobogganing, snowshoeing, skating and sleighing parties have been taking full advantage of the delightful opportunities afforded for the health-giving sports of our Canadian winter.

The entertainments given on Thursday and Friday evenings of last week by Zera Semon at the Academy of Music, under the auspices of the Wanderers Amateur Athletic Association, did not attract as large audiences as had been anticipated, though Professor Semon was at his best, and the long list of wenders he performed on these occasions were very interesting and provided much amusement to those present. The Club will realize about one hundred dollars from these performances.

Among the many merry parties who have taken advantage of the excellent sleighing this week none appeared to more thoroughly enter into the spirit of the occasion and thoroughly enjoy the "fleeting moments" than the Social Club, who, starting from their new club rooms, corner of Duke and Barrington Streets, on Tuesday afternoon drove to Bedford and there partook of a bountiful repast. The "boys bakers" of the city also had their drive on Tuesday. The snowy moonlit roads present a fascinating prospect for all in search of pleasure, and the merry jingle of the bells and happy voices of the young that resound on the evening air testify that many hearts are echoing the words of the old song:—

"Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh."

The concerts to be given this evening and to-morrow evening at the Academy of Music, under the patronage of his Honor the Lieut.-Governor, by the full band of the Leicestershire Regiment are going to be worthy of extensive patronage. One of the attractions of the programme will be a display of the famous Mrs. Jarley's waxworks, which have been brought to Halifax for this occasion, and which will doubtless be very interesting. The ladies of the Regiment have interested themselves in these entertainments and have spared no pains to ensure success.

And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of all the virtues of Puttner's Emulsion.