

BOOK REVIEWS.

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

We have received a small pamphlet of twenty-two pages, from the pen of George B. Elliott, of McGill Normal School, in which the "wants" of our Public Schools are somewhat fully discussed. The author would discard the educational system of this country, which places the University at the head, and the Public and High Schools as subordinate members of the system. He holds the Primary Schools, by which we suppose he means Public Schools, to be the foundation of any system of education, and consequently entitled to the largest share of Government support. The writer's ideas of Primary instruction are good. In speaking of the deficiencies of many of our teachers, he says :

"If you inquire for the result of this teaching, you will learn that children who have read scores of school-readers, containing a large amount of information, common and uncommon, have no real knowledge of the things they have read about. Children who have "gone through geography," as the phrase is, yet cannot describe the source, flow, and discharge of the nearest spring branch ; who can do every sum in arithmetic, yet in the counting house are non-plussed at the first settlement of accounts ; who have learned by heart every principle of grammar, yet cannot write a page without a grammatical blunder. It is not that these subjects are difficult, but the child has never been taught to observe, to express his knowledge, and to apply it to the reality of life. The words of books may have become familiar, but the language of books has not been learned, simply because no language can be learned

till the things, acts, and relations it represents, can be learned."

Mr. Elliott has certainly struck the right chord here. Any person who has had anything to do with Public Examinations could not fail to see the parrot-like recitations which some teachers, in their ignorance of true education, pronounced admirable. Nothing in the whole performance but the merest repetition of facts and names, without any mental assimilation whatever.

The standard which he has set for the teacher is a high one, but no higher than the educational interests of the country require. The moral element is thus tersely alluded to :

"Every teacher should be a moralist and theologian, and possess a heart in which morality—pure Christian morality—is established in the love and fame of the Omnipotent. The school that is wanting in the influence of such a heart, is without the vital spark. We ask not for sectarianism—it is the bane of true morality and religion. Neither do we ask for that moral instruction or religion that comes in the cold formal prayer. It is that religious morality which acts in every action, breathes in every breath, lives in every life—that which from its abundance in the heart flows in every vein, and lends its sweet and benign influence all around—that should adorn the teacher's instructions."

We commend the pamphlet to the profession, believing, though it smacks strongly of Beecherism, that the ideas which it sets forth are worthy of consideration.