

ambitious character. However this may be, the present value of Prof. Skeat's work can scarcely be over-estimated, for it brings before the student a greater store of learning in regard to the origin, history, and development of the language than is anywhere else accessible, and that at a price which has an infinitesimal relation to the years of labour spent upon it. The work, we should advise our readers, is not a pronouncing or even a defining lexicon, save, in regard to the latter, as it is necessary to identify the word and to show its parts of speech. The dictionary is essentially an Etymological one, and, though mainly illustrative of the English language, yet the author, by pursuing the comparative method of inquiry and exhibiting the relation of English to cognate tongues, has thrown a flood of light upon Latin and Greek, as well as upon the more important related words in the various Scandinavian and Teutonic languages. The author's explanations of the difficulties he met with in the investigation of his subject will be interesting to many students of the lexicon. The most of these seem to have arisen from what Prof. Skeat speaks of as the outrageous carelessness of early writers in spelling Anglo-Saxon, and from the fancifulness and guess-work of modern sciolists in attempting to trace the origin and derivation of words. The disregard of the vowel sounds and the principles of phonetics, it is shown, have been a fruitful cause of these blunders on the part of pre-scientific Etymologists. Prof. Skeat's scholarship and his marvellous industry save him, of course, from the mistakes which these lexicographers fell into; and no feature will be more marked in a study of this author's lexicon than the pains he has taken to verify his quotations and to test accuracy whenever he cites old forms or foreign words from which any English word is derived or with which it is connected. The labour he has given to this hunting up and verifying the earliest form and use, in chronological periods, of every word under review in the volume, will strike every one who examines it; and the work should therefore prove a helpful and interesting study to every enthusiastic student of the

language. Besides the contents of the lexicon proper, the compiler has added many appendices of great value, such as those that contain lists of Aryan roots, of sound-shiftings, of homonyms, of doublets, prefixes, suffixes, etc. But we cannot at present take up more space with an account of this exceedingly valuable work of Prof. Skeat, or deal further with those recent works of reference we have in mind to bring to the notice of Canadian teachers. We hope, however, to return to the subject in an early issue, and trust that our doing so may prove of profit to some of the readers of *THE MONTHLY*.

DEPARTMENTAL RECOGNITION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

THE Minister of Education, we learn, has lately taken a step which, whether he sees it or not, is likely to open up the discussion of a large and weighty question, viz.: the consideration of how far State Education is a help or a hindrance in the general enlightenment of the people. We are told that Mr. Crooks has given to a purely denominational school the right to hold Entrance and Intermediate Examinations, and further, that in granting the privilege to the private institution referred to, he is reported to have favourably compared it with the best of our High Schools and Collegiate Institutes. Now, it will be admitted, that we have time and again freely criticized the actions of Mr. Crooks in the exercise of his official duties as Minister of Education, and we are bound to say that we have as often unrestrainedly spoken our mind. But in the matter we have just referred to, we confess, that though at first blush the Minister seemed to us to have been guilty of an act of disloyalty to the school system of the Province, and to have placed in jeopardy the whole machinery of Departmental instruction, we subsequently failed to discover that he had committed any serious indiscretion, or had rendered himself liable to impeachment. The gravest part of the charge against the Minister, we will at once say, is his impolitic, unkind, and as we believe untrue, comparison of the school in