

## CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC AND HIGH, ALSO OF THE NORMAL AND MODEL, SCHOOLS OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO FOR THE YEAR 1877, WITH APPENDICES. By the Minister of Education. Printed by order of the Legislative Assembly. Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co.

The Report of the Minister of Education for 1877, is before us, and as we look over it we can realize something of Rip Van Winkle's feelings on waking up after his long sleep. A number of documents appear in it that had passed from our remembrance, and others obtrude themselves which, for their faults, we had willingly forgotten. It is greatly to be regretted that a report so valuable to the public should appear a year after its date. Might not the Minister, by the infusion of increased energy into his subordinates, and by a little extra exertion on his own part, get his Report out for the previous year before the end of the session of the Legislature in the succeeding one? Surely if in England the Report on Elementary Education for Great Britain for one year can appear in the following June, we, who are supposed to be not quite so slow-going, might have ours, for a population not one-twentieth the size, out by the middle of March. At any rate, we see no great necessity, save as a matter of official etiquette, for holding back the Report—presuming it has long ere now been ready—until the House meets. It is not so clear that its members are those most interested in its returns, and therefore they are not entitled to any excess of courtesy. Perhaps public interest in Parliamentary Blue books would be greater, and to the advantage of the subjects whereof they treat, if the traditional etiquette that withholds them from the public eye until their facts are stale, gave place to the consideration of the public interest and the public service. What motive of political expediency

may be concealed in refusing to accept common sense suggestions in this matter, we are not, of course, careful to answer. But to the report:—

The number of scholars attending the public schools, in 1877, was 499,860, being only 323 in excess of that of the previous year; though the school population, that is, children between the ages of 5 and 16 years, showed a decrease of 7,445. In 1876 there was an *increase* of school population of 1,167, and an increase of the total attending school of 16,296. This contrast is further increased in the returns of those not attending any school; in 1876 there were 9,260, while in 1877, the number swells up to 15,074, though during this period we are told the school population decreased 7,445: Surely some explanation is needed to make these returns intelligible; or are they untrustworthy?

The average daily attendance was 44 per cent., an increase of one per cent. upon the previous year. It is far from satisfactory to know, however, that only 44 out of every 100 children received the full benefit of our public school system. The evils of irregularity of attendance, which this lamentable state of things implies, are so forcibly pointed out in the Report of the Inspector for South Hastings, that we cannot do better than quote his words:—

“To remedy this great evil in our Schools calls forth the serious attention of every parent and ratepayer, for it neutralizes the benefits to be derived from the best arrangements, and the labours of the best Teachers. A child may attend School, yet so irregularly, or at intervals so far apart, that it will be fortunate if at the end of the year he knows as much as at the commencement.”

The total expenditure for the year was \$3,073,489; this is almost double what it was