

ent; but both believe that the annual report should not be wholly devoted to the small amount of ethnological work done in two or three months by one member of a staff of thirty, while more important practical questions and work which immediately concerns the development of our country are ignored. On this subject the Committee speaks strongly, and the fairness of its verdict is proved by a review of the last report of the Geological Survey in "Science." The editor of THE WEEK and its readers must still, therefore, regret the impaired usefulness and efficiency of the Dominion Geological Survey while recognizing the courtesy of the director of an American survey in coming to its aid when it cannot defend itself.

A. M.

## PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION.

To the Editor of The Week:

SIR,—No national interest has suffered so much of late for lack of intelligent criticism as Public School education. No such criticism can be expected from the Party Press. Our educational periodicals are almost equally unreliable. In what direction shall the public, who are extremely anxious to form correct opinions on matters that affect so materially their pecuniary, family, social and national interests, look for information, inspiration and guidance? Did THE WEEK pay attention to such matters the outlook might be more hopeful.

More than once the actions of the Minister of Education have called for criticism. Some of his appointments have been bad, and have been made in the spirit of a mere politician. Indeed, I fear Mr. Ross's career as a politician has done much to injure his usefulness as Minister of Education. His desire—strong anxiety—to increase in every way the patronage of his office has been very marked. His use of it has had the effect of closing the mouth of more than one critic. On every hand, in every quarter, expectations of getting some position, temporary or permanent, from the Department of Education are cherished. The effect that all this has on the morale of the profession is obvious. The effect that it has on the education of our youth may not be quite as obvious, but is, nevertheless, just as real and just as damaging. Mr. Ross is not to blame for all this. For much he is directly responsible. The system to which he owes his appointment is responsible for more.

What is needed, urgently needed, is intelligent, fair, outspoken and thoroughly independent criticism. Shall we get it? Only by a vigorous and well-informed public opinion on matters affecting our schools can danger be averted and the remedy applied. Its existence may yet spare us the perpetuation of the present truly remarkable and entirely unique method of preparing text-books for our schools; a method that assumes for the Minister and his advisers a wonderful amount of literary, professional and trade knowledge; a method the perpetuation of which will prove Ontario to be in such matter the most paternally-governed country in the enlightened world. Other evils such a public opinion may save us from. By it the Ontario Teachers' Association, which has in the past been so remarkable for its independence, may be able to withstand all attempts made to turn it into an instrument for singing sweet praises to the powers that be, and into an Association for aiding wire-pullers to climb into lucrative positions.—Very truly yours,

MAGISTER.

## SCAMPKOWSKI.

SCAMPKOWSKI was a Polish Jew, a friendless refugee;  
Although he called himself a Count, not much account was he,  
Until our church converted him and, with a helping hand,  
Snatched him from fierce Judean flames—an exhibition brand;  
Raised him from dark Mosaic depths, where Jewry toils and delves,  
And held him up to public view, a Christian, like ourselves;  
Yea! how we petted that young Pole from o'er the North Sea's foam  
(A foreign heathen's nicer than the pagans born at home).

His voice was lifted up in song; in prayer he wrestled long;  
And, did a tea-fight fiercely rage, Scampkowski loomed up strong;  
Or, was a widow in distress, or sick an orphan brat,  
Although he never gave himself, he "handed round the hat."  
"How good he is!" we often said: on this point all agreed,  
And when he heard himself announced, by one consent decreed,  
As Hon'ry Treas'r'r of the Widows' and the Orphans' Fund,  
He blushed, and, blushing, look'd as though his very soul was stunned.

Among his philanthropic deeds we church folks had to thank  
Scampkowski's fertile genius for our "Penny Savings Bank";  
And, verily, it seemed to us a pleasant, goodly sight,  
When workmen flocked to our bank on every Friday night,  
Depositing their gains, instead of spending all in drink,  
And, raking in their little all, we each one used to think  
Scampkowski's face divine, as, unctuously he said (how true):  
He "tankt de Lor vat mait me von convairted Polees Shoo."

And when that pious refugee had left for parts unknown,  
Although our church's debt remained, the communion plate was gone;  
The Widows' and the Orphans' Fund which once was now was not;  
The Savings' Bank deposits, too, had shared an Exile's lot;  
And our Parson's bitter, heartfelt words, no mortal tongue can say,  
When he had found the offertories gone forever and a day,  
As Sidesman Jones, the dentist said, "I never liked him, still  
Scampkowski's left an aching void, which no one else can fill."

HEREWARD K. COCKIN

BALZAC being asked to explain an abstruse passage in one of his books, frankly owned that he had no meaning at all. "You see," said he, "for the average reader all that is clear seems easy, and if I did not sometimes give him a complicated and meaningless sentence, he would think he knew as much as myself. But when he comes upon something he cannot comprehend, he re-reads it, puzzles over it, takes his head between his hands and glares at it, and, finding it impossible to make head or tail of it, says, 'Great man, Balzac; he knows more than I do!'"

## THE SCRAP BOOK.

## MEXICAN MONKS AND PRIESTS OF OLD.

I HAVE frequently spoken of the Mexican priests, and the time has now come for dwelling more explicitly on this priesthood.

It was very numerous, and had a strong organization reared on an aristocratic basis, into which political calculations manifestly entered. The noblest families (including that of the monarch) had the exclusive privilege of occupying the highest sacerdotal offices. The priest of Witzilpochtli held this primacy. Their chief was sovereign pontiff, with the title of Mexicati-Teohnatzin, "divine master." Next to him came the chief priest of Quetzalcoatl, who had no authority, however, except over his own order of clergy. He lived as a recluse in his sanctuary, and the sovereign only sent to consult him on certain great occasions; whereas the primate sat on the privy council and exercised disciplinary powers over all the other priests in the empire. Every temple and every quarter had its regular priests. No one could enter the priesthood until he had passed satisfactorily through certain tests of examination before the directors of the Calmecac, or houses of religious education, of which we shall speak presently. The power of the clergy was very great. They instructed youth, fixed the calendar, preserved the knowledge of the annals and traditions indicated by the hieroglyphics, sang and taught the religious and national hymns, intervened with special ceremonies at births, marriages and burials, and were richly endowed by taxes raised in kind upon the products of the soil and upon industries. Every successful aspirant to the priesthood, having passed the requisite examination, received a kind of unction, which communicated the sacred character to him. All this indicates a civilization that had already reached a high point of development; but the indelible stain of the Mexican religion re-appears every moment, even where it appears to rise highest above the primitive religions; amongst the ingredients of the fluid with which the new priest was anointed was the blood of an infant.

The priests' costume in general was black. Their mantles covered their heads and fell down their sides like a veil. They never cut their hair, and the Spaniards saw some of them whose locks descended to their knees. Probably this was a part of the solar symbolism. The rays of the sun are compared to locks of hair, and we very often find the solar heroes or the servants of the Sun letting their hair grow freely in order that they may resemble their god. Their mode of life was austere and sombre. They were subject to the rules of a severe asceticism, slept little, rose at night to chant their canticles, often fasted, often drew their own blood, bathed every night (in imitation of the sun again), and in many of the sacerdotal fraternities the most rigid celibacy was enforced. You will see, then, that I did not exaggerate when I spoke of the belief that the gods were animated by cruel wills and took pleasure in human pains, as having launched the Mexican religion on a path of a systematic dualism and very stern asceticism. But the surprise we experience in noting all these points of resemblance to the religious institutions of the Old World perhaps reaches its culminating point when we learn that the Mexican religion actually had its convents. These convents were often, but not always, places of education for both sexes, to which all the free families sent their children from the age of six or nine years upward. There the boys were taught by monks, and the girls by nuns, the meaning of the hieroglyphics, the way to reckon time, the traditions, the religious chants, and the ritual. Bodily exercises likewise had a place in this course of education, which was supposed to be complete when the children had reached the age of fifteen. The majority of them were now sent back to their families, while the rest stayed behind to become priests or simple monks. For there were religious orders under the patronage of the different gods, and convents for either sex. The monastic rule was often very severe. In many cases it involved abstinence from animal food, and the people called the monks of these severer orders Quagnacniltin, or "herb-eaters." There were likewise associations resembling our half-secular, half-ecclesiastical fraternities. Thus we hear of the society of the Telpochtliizli, an association of young people who lived with their families, but met every evening at sunset to dance and sing in honour of Tezcatlipoca. And finally, we know that ancient Mexico had its hermits and its religious mendicants. The latter, however, only took the vow of mendicancy for a fixed term. These are the details which led Von Humboldt and some other writers to believe that Buddhism must have penetrated, at some former period, into Mexico. Not at all. What we have seen simply proves that asceticism, the war against nature, everywhere clothes itself in similar forms, suggested by the very constitution of man; and there is certainly nothing in common between the gentle insipidity of Buddha's religion and the sanguinary faith of the Aztecs.

The girls were under a rule similar to that of the boys. They led a hard enough life in the convents set apart for them, fasting often, sleeping without taking off their clothes, and (when it was their turn to be on duty) getting up several times in the night to renew the incense that burned perpetually before the gods. They learned to sew, to weave, and to embroider the garments of the idols and the priests. It was they who made the sacred cakes and the dough idols, whose place in the public festivals I have described to you. At the age of fifteen, the same selection took place among the girls as among the boys. Those who stayed in the convent became either priestesses, charged with lower sacerdotal offices, or directresses of the convents set aside for instruction, or simple nuns, who were known as Cihuatlamacasque, "lady deaconesses," or Cihuaquaquilli, "lady herb-eaters," inasmuch as they abstained from meat. The most absolute continence was rigorously enforced, and breach of it was punished by death.—*The Native Religions of Mexico and Peru, by Albert Revillé.*