

EDITORIAL NOTES.

HIDE-BOUND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS.

It will startle no one to affirm that our systems of education are too much based upon theory and tradition. Enslavement to the doctrines of the past is as much the sin of the educationist as of the theologian. Fortunately a New Reformation has dawned for both, and the dogmatic utterances of the past are to be looked at anew in the light of the present. Education is a Science as well as an Art, and while it seeks in the latter the best means of attaining a given end, it must in the former analyze the methods, and place on a rational basis the rules, by which this is accomplished. It is the *rationale* of their art that modern educators are now looking at, in the hope of solving, in a more satisfactory manner, the complex problems of teaching. The new movement, however, first concerns itself, not so much with the methods and processes of education, as in considering afresh the primary question of what it shall consist. Hitherto, we have thought that we had done with "first principles," and have gone on piling subject upon subject, feeling sure that the tramway was laid on the right road, and that all we had to do was to add to the load as we went over the ground. But we are awaking, in some degree, from this delusion; and the individual teacher is here and there beginning to express himself, not only in regard to the way subjects should be taught, but emphatically as to what should or should not be the subjects of instruction. And it is time that, as a body, teachers should be taking this matter a little more into their own hands. They are as much, or more, concerned in what is taught, so as to arrive at successful results, as those that are the objects of their teaching. The question what studies our youth shall take up,

and what the time respectively apportioned to them, ought primarily to be determined, of course, by the circumstances and wants of the country. The answer must also be given in view of the short time Canadian youth, as a rule, remain at school. Giving consideration to these matters, it is obvious that, for the mass of our school population, anything but the rudiments of what should be a plain, practical education cannot be thought of. Even for High School pupils it is doubtful whether the curriculum of what is termed a liberal education can for many be much more than entered upon. How foolish, then, to charge our school programmes with all the studies taken up in a leisured and wealthy community, or to import fashions in education, without respect to our circumstances, which are both profitless and unsuitable. Still greater is the mistake when the less practical studies occupy time in the school disproportionate to their value, and to the detriment of those whose claims should be paramount. The disciplinary value of some subjects—Mathematics, for instance—must, of course, be considered when we are reviewing the studies which more sharply compete with them in practical life. But, in our Ontario school system, Mathematics, it is notorious, have been given a prominence altogether out of proportion to their rightful claims. Moreover, in a great measure, they have been taught as the art of a conjuror rather than the mental exercise of a sober logician. Classics, too, have had undue attention in our school system, unmindful of the circumstances of the pupil, in regard to his age, his mental capacity, his tastes, the vocation he is to follow in life, or to the length of time he is permitted to give to his education. Both Classics and Mathematics, moreover, are taught in disregard of the sex of the pupil, the former being frequently imposed upon