

ERRORS IN THE USE OF ENGLISH.

SOME one has said that "the reward of a good sentence is to have written it." The remark reminds one how little of good writing one meets with, as a rule, in the Canadian press. We have often vigorous thought, and what is called "trenchant writing," in our public prints; but it is sadly lacking in logical precision and in the power of making a clear and symmetrical statement, which is the charm of many modern English writers, particularly among the scientists. But the great deficiency in our journalists and writers for the press, and an especial defect, we fear, in not a few of those who teach English composition in our schools, is the lack of style and that evidence of culture which should be more manifest in our public guides and teachers. The authors of our school manuals would seem to be not the least sinners in this respect; and the Educational blue-books present, in the Inspectors' reports, and even in the Minister's memoranda, English as atrocious as could well be written. In our newspapers there is also constant and wholesale evidence of careless writing; and even in the great dailies an utter absence of the literary art, for which, no doubt, our party politics is to blame. The remedy, so far as teachers are concerned, is in part hit upon by Mr. Strang, of Goderich, in the excellent papers published in our issues for the past and the present month, and in the work, now currently under the charge of Mr. Seath, of St. Catharines—the English section of the University Department of THE MONTHLY. Together with the perusal of these papers, the literary student in this profession should not fail to make a close, daily study of the best English authors, and to devote some portion of his reading to the English critical journals and the more notable of the modern Reviews. The increased attention in future to be given to the study of English in the schools, and the critical analyses of choice productions in English literature for University and the "Intermediate" work, will no doubt show important results in coming years. The scholarly compend of

Canadian, American, and English literature, now preparing for the new series of Readers to be issued by the Canada Publishing Co., we may here make the statement, will prove a timely aid to the critical study of English; and from what we have seen of the work, we are free to say that Canadian Bureaux of Education will be fortunate in having so admirable a native text-book to place in the schools. Meantime, as we have said, Mr. Strang's emptying of his collected Scrap-book of "bad English" from Canadian sources, is a service of the highest value to our teachers of English, and his examples of incorrect writing must prove of great use as exercises to the scholars. We can somewhat supplement the service Mr. Strang has done the profession by calling attention, which we most heartily do, to a volume recently issued by an Edinburgh publisher, and which contains a very mine of "Errors in the Use of English," collected over a period of thirty years, by the late Dr. W. B. Hodgson, Fellow of the College of Preceptors and recently Professor of Political Economy in the University of Edinburgh. This work, we say with all deliberation, should be in the hands of every teacher of English in the country, and form a text-book in the school as an aid to correctness in English composition by one of the best means of securing this, viz.: in furnishing thousands of instances of inelegant or faulty writing. The work is divided into four sections, as follows: (1.) Vocabulary; (2.) Accidence; (3.) Syntax; and (4.) Rhetoric. Under the first head are grouped, in alphabetical order, spurious words, and words used with meanings other than their own; Section 2 deals with the parts of speech (viewed in relation to the sentence) and with inflection; Section 3 is devoted to errors in the construction of sentences, violation of the rules of syntax; and Section 4 cites instances of incoherent, ambiguous, and inelegant writing,—examples of the most amusing and yet instructive character, which must make the book a *vade mecum* to every student of English. The book, it may be added, is founded on actual blunders, and the source of every quotation