

## TORONTO AND ABOUT.

The *Mail* last week contained an ingenious criticism upon a certain report of local public school examiners, which said report contained so many inelegant phrases and ungrammatical sentences, that one ought to be forgiven in supposing it to have been written by the simplest infant of the primary school. We have heard so much about our more than perfect Ontario public school system, since the Centennial Exposition, that we are hardly prepared just now to hear unfavourable comments upon this pet boast without raising our indignation to fever pitch. Our marvellous educational system has instructed us, through the exertions of the Rev. Dr. Ryerson, in the belief that there is nothing wanting in our public schools one way or the other; and surely he is a brave and clever genius who has the temerity to propose an improvement for the guidance of trustees, or the enlightenment of the Department of Public Instruction or the Minister of Education for Ontario. So much has been said upon the subject, and nothing to its disfavour, that I feel a certain fear and apprehension in approaching it at this time lest I shall be accused of casting a stain upon the spotless white of the reputation of this remarkable boast. I should like to ask one question. What is there in the Ontario school system so extraordinary? I must confess I am at a loss to understand, for as a matter of fact the public schools of Ontario are but reproductions of the schools of the States of New York and Pennsylvania. I have been through certain of the schools of New York and through every school in Toronto, and others throughout Ontario, and from a careful study of the several modes of operation, I am unable to discover any peculiarity favourable to Ontario that is not possessed in an eminent degree by our cousins across the line. I am fully persuaded our normal schools could obtain some very suggestive, useful and practical hints from the excellent normal school of Buffalo. I am very much mistaken if, instead of distancing all competitors in the race of education, in a few years, at the rate we are progressing, we shall not find ourselves far behind both the States and Europe, if indeed we are not already in the second line. We have but to be too sure of our safety, and it is the time of our greatest danger.

Now that the papers have taken this matter of education in Ontario up in earnest, it will not be out of place for me to refer to the report of George Hodgins, Esq., LL.D. Deputy Minister of Education, in the Ontario Exhibit at the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 1876; for though the exhibition is long past the report is still fresh. This report, which is very elaborately got up, would lead one to suppose that the bust of the great men of all nations, the instruments, models and machines, minerals, chemicals and botanical specimens were very generally supplied to the public schools throughout the Province; for instance, an extract from the "Pennsylvania School Journal," edited by the Hon. J. P. Wickersham, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, reads "For ethnological instruction there are busts of celebrated men, representing every country, which are constantly before the pupils while they are studying and help to serve to make firm impressions upon the memories," as a matter of fact there is not a school in the Province that has one bust in it. The same journal was about right when it said "There are in it," alluding to the Ontario Exhibit, "several specimens of school desks and seats. These we do not like nearly so well as the best ones made in this country. In scholars' work the exhibit is very poor, there being only a few specimens of drawing and writing." Again the *Globe* of Toronto about the same date says: "Of specimens of pupils' work, on the other hand, we make comparatively but a poor show." The Ontario Exhibit was a great farce; the Depositary and Museum of the Education Department were rifled to make a grand display at Philadelphia, and the people of all nations were made to believe that the public schools of Ontario were pretty well supplied with such things as were on exhibition. There is scarcely a school in Ontario where any sort of material aid is obtained through this source, with exception of a few high schools. When the veil is removed that hides the secrets of this wonderful department and shrouds the privacy of the Minister and his Deputy how very inferior our school system will appear to what it generally receives credit for.

How have the mighty fallen! It is the custom to send Protestant young ladies of all ages to one of the two large convents of the city to be educated. However false the public school system may appear, it is only surpassed by the convents. It is remarkable to note the magnificent display of wool and embroidery work, painting and drawing exhibits on view at the midsummer examination of these celebrated institutions *all done by the scholars*; the parents are wonderfully surprised, but they are more surprised when they find their children are very little wiser than when they first entered. To elucidate:—A few weeks ago, Miss —, a day scholar of one of these academies, desired to receive a prize for map drawing, and to this end enquired of an ingenious and well known draughtsman the correct mode of procedure; he gallantly informed her, and she skilfully pencilled the outline; then came our draughtsman's turn; he inked the outline in, coloured it beautifully; engrossed a flaming title, and printed the names of States, rivers, cities, towns and a thousand other etcetras, until the map had all the appearance of one of "Chambers' best." Sister —, upon receiving this unparalleled production, said softly "— don't tell me if you received any assistance, I don't want to know, say nothing." Sister — then had the map framed in a golden frame, and Miss — received the first prize. Our excellent draughtsman in the meantime had been made, through the kindness and consideration of Sister —, the recipient of a box of Joab Seale's best brand of cigars. This is education of the higher class with a vengeance.

The city engineer's resignation is hailed with delight. He was the wrong man for the place. It is to be hoped a good, sound, practical man of honest principle and common sense may be found to fill this important position. The judicious expenditure of the public money very largely depends upon the engineer, and no pains therefore should be spared in securing the right man. We have in the city of Toronto an island, which, as the *Mail* says, is capable of being made a second Coney Island; but nobody feels inclined to take hold of this grand speculation; nobody desires to invest money in a scheme so safe, and sure to give a remunerative return; because, first, the members of the City Council have not the ability to appreciate the advantages of so desirable a place; secondly, the Dominion Government is too niggardly and short-sighted to attempt to reclaim the harbour. The Council is forever trying to extend the city westward; Mayor Beatty would like to introduce into his charter a clause to extend the city westward to the river Humber, four miles from the present limit, though it is hard to see where the advantage would be to the city by the extension. Certain members of the Council would like to see Toronto's limits extended northward, taking in the villages of Seton and Yorkville, and to this end they would grant an exemption of a large proportion of their taxes for two years or so; what advantages are supposed to accrue through this extension northward is only known to the initiated; it is time enough to annex these villages when they desire it. Certain other interested Aldermen would like to see the city limits extended a mile and one-half eastward beyond the Don for some supposed advantage, though what that supposed advantage is no one knows. Time and again in the Council interested Aldermen bring these things up to the exclusion of legitimate business. Now, we have an island close to our doors, in fact, a portion of the city, for which, many years ago, a plan was drawn out and streets marked out, but now, alas! this island is being destroyed. The streets, as supposed to be laid out, would be under water or through the marsh. The City Council is clamorous for an extension west, north or east, but right to the south of them is the very thing they want, so situated that with judicious expenditure a road from the city could be constructed to it and street cars ply a brisk business. The thing is so feasible that every intelligent citizen can see through it; it is not only desirable, but as an investment for the city would be of considerable worth. The question is asked time and again in the daily journals, why is this not done? The answers are vague, but the true answer may be found in this, that so long as certain Aldermen or their wealthy friends, managers of financial corporations, control so large a bulk of the property immediately adjoining the western and eastern limit of the city, so long will the island of Toronto remain unremunerative and a positive burden to the city.

Queen City.