

CONTEMPORARY OPINION ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

CHANCELLOR BLAKE'S ADDRESS.

THE Chancellor rose and said that the proceedings of this Convocation being about to close, he would address them for a short time, in accordance with the custom which prescribed that some words should be spoken by the person presiding on such occasions as the present. He must commence with an expression of regret (in which he was sure all would join) that they had not present to-day one who had frequently presided here, and who had always cordially assisted in the proceedings—Vice-Chancellor Moss. The Vice-Chancellor was prevented by illness from being present, but the fact that in a few days he had expectation of being well enough to attend would shew that he was recovering. He was sure that all would agree with him in hoping that next year, and for many years thereafter, the Vice-Chancellor might be able, as he certainly was desirous, of attending the Commencement. He proposed to present to them some facts and some considerations with regard to our educational institutions, which well deserve the active interest taken in them by the people. The University of Toronto and University College were distinct institutions, yet so closely connected that he would be obliged in his remarks to refer to both together. Together they were certainly the crown and glory and the flower of our general system of education. In this country, where there was no great accumulation of wealth in single hands, where there were but few hereditary fortunes, where it was the lot—the happy lot on the whole—of almost all to earn their own bread by their own exertions, there had been in times past, and there still was, a temptation to cut short the education of the youth. This was a circumstance as far as possible to be got rid of, and in view of the importance to us of the avoidance of that diminution of education, every friend of the true progress of the Province must scan anxiously the statistics of education to ascertain whether we are going forward or backward. We must educate not merely those who took care of our souls, our bodies, and

estates, but also those who were to be our rulers and guides, the leaders of public opinion scattered through the country, and those who formulated public opinion in the halls of our various legislatures. We must educate our educators, and that these things may be done was of extreme consequence to our true progress. The universal dissemination of elementary education was of vital consequence. It ought to be our aim to see, as it was measurably our boast, that there lived in this country no young person who was ignorant of the elementary subjects of education. But it was equally important that, while we gave to all an elementary education, we should have a system which would provide for the superior education of those who were willing to devote their time and talents to study. The Report of the Minister of Education for the year 1878—the last year, he believed, for which it had been issued—contained some interesting statistics bearing upon this question. From that report it would seem that the school population, made up of children between five and twenty-one years of age, from 1871 to 1878 was about stationary, and numbered about 500,000. The number of those who attended Public and Separate Schools was increased from 445,000 in 1871 to 490,000, or about 10 per cent. If they assumed that this shewed that practically every child of school age attended school they would be starting out on a fallacious assumption, for there were a considerable number who, though above the age mentioned, still attended school, and who were included in the figures given, there were also a number of children who attended school only for a short time in the year. Still it would seem that so far as elementary education was concerned we were in a fair position. The number of Public and Separate schools increased from 4,600 in 1871 to 5,010 in 1878. In this branch we presented a gratifying contrast to England. There the school age was from five to thirteen years. Up to the year 1870 there had been no real effort to assume and act upon the duty that the State owed to its young, but the Elementary Education Act was passed in that year. There was at that time accommodation in the elementary schools for