

educated men, not only in Ontario, but throughout the Dominion and the United States. Should the attempted Confederation prove a great success, the example of Ontario will be pretty sure to be followed elsewhere at an early date. The movement is an earnest attempt to settle the vexed question as to the comparative merits of State and denominational or voluntary colleges, by an arrangement designed to preserve and combine the best characteristics of each. Upon the merits of the scheme itself there is room for wide differences of opinion. Tried by any abstract standard, its provisions are certainly open to grave criticism, both for what they contain, and what they omit. From the point of view of an on-looker, the plan for dividing the teaching functions of the Provincial institution between University College and the proposed University Professoriate, seems about as clumsy as can well be conceived. But this, as other parts of the scheme, is doubtless the outcome of compromise, and must so be judged. The framers of the measure had to consider not what would be symmetrical, but what was practicable. Discussion will no doubt help to enlighten us as to this curious contrivance. Meanwhile it is gratifying to know that the movement has so far progressed as to enable the representative men engaged in it to agree upon anything. The regents or boards of several of the universities have already accepted the scheme either in its entirety or with slight modification. The Senate of Toronto University has also pronounced in its favour, so that there is a probability of its becoming law. The union has so much to recommend it that its friends may well consent to have it freighted at the outset with some incongruities. Time, experience, and fuller discussion will do much to tone down any objectionable features. We shall watch the progress of the movement with great interest, and recur to the subject in future issues.

The Reader question is developing some new phases. The jobbers and retail dealers are at war with the three publishing houses, in consequence of the reduction to 20 per cent. of the discount allowed retailers on these books. It appears that in the agreement made with the three firms by the Minister of Education, 20 per cent. was fixed as the minimum rate of discount to be allowed to retail dealers. As must have been expected this rate was made the rule by agreement between the publishers. A meeting of the booksellers was held in Toronto the other day for the double purpose of protesting against this discount as too low, and of presenting to the Minister a petition in relation to the matter. The representatives of the publishing houses refusing to increase the rate, and alleging that in consequence of the expensive character of the books they cannot afford to do so, the booksellers present bound themselves by resolution to purchase no other goods than the books in question from either of these three firms. The *Mail* claims that if any boycotting is to be done, not the publishers but the Minister of Education, who practically fixed the discount, should be the victim. We should be disposed to go still further back and lay the blame at the door of the indefensible system, which the Minister has been so ill advised as to adopt. So long as there is an attempt to carry out a one-

book system, so long will there be no competition and practical monopoly. The firms publishing such books will always be sure to combine. No Minister can possibly be astute enough to determine exactly the lowest price that will be fairly remunerative for any new book. If a maximum price is fixed the few publishers that will undertake to bring out a work under the conditions offered, may be relied upon in every case to make that maximum, rather than any lower figure, the ruling price. They are not at all likely to try to cut each other's throats, when it will pay them so much better to secure the highest figure they can, and then quietly divide the profits. To secure for the public the benefit of a genuine competition, a wider field must be afforded than can be found in the mere reproduction of a single set of books after a prescribed pattern and from uniform plates furnished by the Department of Education. It will thus be seen that the one book system, and departmental copy righting, which some of the book-dealers took credit to themselves for securing, are really at the bottom of the difficulty of which those dealers are now complaining. But the policy of which those two maxims are the principal features is responsible for worse evils than the embarrassment of the retail book trade. It is already leading, as we pointed out last week, to the worst possible methods of book-making. A good textbook, or book of any kind, is not a thing which can be made to order like a coat or a pair of shoes. To promise authorization to a book before it is written is to buy a pig in a poke, a thing which one may do for his own amusement if he can afford it, but which one in a position of trust should certainly not do for the public. No man or minister, though he were a second Solon is competent to decide on the merits of text-books on the various subjects of our school curricula, much less to select infallibly the men who can produce such books. When the minister is a man and a politician, and not an angel, his judgment and choice are, in both cases, tolerably sure to be biassed by personal and partizan influences. Again the policy increases the power and patronage of the minister for the time being to a degree which is incompatible with free, not to say democratic, institutions. The autocracy, which the people of Ontario refused to tolerate in an educationist of great ability and large experience they are not likely to entrust for any length of time to the average cabinet minister under a system of party government. If we recur again and again to this topic it is because we deem it of the utmost importance in its bearing upon the educational interests of Ontario.

A few weeks ago a gentleman entered the office of a well-known insurance agent, and tossing a paper on the counter, said to the clerk: "That's run out and I want to get it renewed." The clerk unfolded the document, and with a smile inquired, "Are you sure that this is run out?" "Oh, yes," said the gentleman, "my wife told me it run out yesterday." "Well, I am sorry for you; but we are not taking that kind of risks now," responded the clerk, as he handed it back. It was his marriage certificate.

Goethe made one utterance which it is possible many patient souls in some of our modern congregations will sympathize with when he said: "I will listen to any one's convictions, but pray keep your doubts to yourself. I have plenty of my own."

Prof. Agassiz when requested to deliver a course of lectures and tempted by a liberal offer of remuneration, replied: "I cannot afford to waste my time in making money."