

EDITORIAL NOTES.

THE MINISTERSHIP OF EDUCATION.

THERE is no reader of the MONTHLY, we feel sure, who will not unfeignedly regret the illness of the Hon. Mr. Crooks, or withhold from him active sympathy in the trouble that has befallen him, in the midst of his trying and exacting duties. The break-down of his constitution is an impressive indication of the extent to which the Minister has taxed himself in the administration of his Department, as it also speaks of official friction and the cares and worries of office which bear heavily upon even the most robust frame in the enjoyment of the best of health. It is a question that will arise in many minds whether it is well for any public man to put such a strain upon himself as Mr. Crooks has for years past undergone. The charge of a Department, such as that of Education in Ontario, is certainly as much as one man can overtake, without having to assume his share of work in the general political administration of the Province. And this introduces the question whether we do wisely in connecting the Executive of Education with any Cabinet office, and of subjecting its administrator to the harassing troubles and the responsibility which attach to a Department of the Government. Nobody, of course, denies the advantages of having a head directly accountable to the House and the country in charge of our educational affairs; but it may reasonably be said that the plan has its disadvantages, and in one aspect it has its grave perils. Herbert Spencer has said that the aim of school discipline should be to produce a self-governing being, not to produce a being to be governed by others. The latter, we fear, is just what a Minister of Education must be. He is not and cannot be his own master. Attach the

bureau to a political party, and the political party will "run" and control it. There may be resistance, and the best of resolves to keep the Machine at arm's length, but at arm's length the Machine and the Bosses will not stay. We do not affirm that Mr. Crooks has of set purpose allowed politics to govern him; but if they have not governed him they exercise their influence both upon him and upon others about him. We must remember, moreover, that the Ministership has been tried under exceptionally favourable circumstances. Had there been repeated changes of Government during Mr. Crooks's *régime*, will any one say how the experiment of a political head to the Department would have fared? In the merely personal interests of Provincial politics it is not difficult to tell what disasters would have befallen education. As it is, Mr. Hardy may declaim as he likes upon the neutrality of the Department, but he will not remove the suspicion that our educational affairs have suffered and are suffering by the alliance with politics. This is not alone to be seen in acts of commission as in those of omission, and, particularly in Departmental acquiescence in the acts of others which were prompted by, and had their inspiration in, party politics. That the safety of education lies, and can only lie, in the complete severance of the political connection, scarcely requires to be said. The Government organs may be dragooned into affirming the contrary, but the opinion of the country at large is a unit on the point. Educational administration must of course be subject to legislative control, but this can be secured by machinery which will not put grit in the wheels and debase its work. Nor are the experiences of the Ryerson *régime* to be taken as an indication of the disadvantages of the other system. The Ryerson reign was an exceptional one, and its bureau-