

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF PRECEPTORS.

BY WILLIAM BURNS, B.A., M.C.P., LONDON.

THERE can be no doubt but that the educational question is becoming every day of more absorbing and practical interest in this Province. It will inevitably force itself upon the consideration of every parent, in one or other of its multitudinous forms, and on that of every taxpayer, when the vast expense of teaching the young is considered. Now, as has been well said, "schools are a necessity, not a luxury"; hence the question to the ratepayer is, How to secure the maximum of efficiency at a minimum of expense? By this, we do not mean, by the payment of low salaries, for it is a well known maxim of Political Economy that "cheap labour is generally the dearest in the end," but, due regard being given to the requirements of the situation, the question is to solve the difficulty of finding the most suitable person to fill the place who will thus be the best and cheapest. When the present school system of Ontario was instituted, it fulfilled all the requirements of the country, but the rapid growth in its population and wealth, along with the ever increasing desire for education, and that of a higher order, have outstripped the ability of our educational system to supply the demand created. The expansiveness of the system, however, is so great that only a few changes need be made to meet the new state of things. First, in regard to the teachers themselves. We must admit that these are now quite able to manage their own professional business, otherwise they are not fit to be teachers, but we find the paternal kindness of the department taking so much care of them that, like rapidly

growing children, the clothes once useful are now becoming harmful to health and development. The rules and regulations of the department are certainly too rigid to allow of the rapid growth that is going on, the question is, then, What is the least radical change that can be carried out at once, so as not merely to preserve their personal independence but to increase their usefulness? We claim that this can be best done by making them a self-governing body. Next in regard to the future supply of teachers—this is a matter of vital importance; so many leave the profession every year that unless an efficient means of supplying the vacancies can be found, things will soon be at a standstill. One objection to the college as proposed is, that entrance to the profession will be made more difficult, so that the salaries of the present holders may be raised; but it will be well to remember that most of the men who are likely to be upon the council will be those who themselves are engaged in supervising the work of others, and that if these assistants are not forthcoming, they will be required to do the work themselves, hence they will be interested in securing a good supply of qualified assistants, and next in seeing that these be duly trained to the work—two facts which will practically overpower all such theoretical objections.

In regard to the popular view of the matter, it seems to us that the offer of the teachers of this Province is simply to relieve the public purse of a heavy item of expense, in order to increase the efficiency of national education, and this at no cost, except,