

THE ONTARIO TEACHER:

A MONTHLY EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL.

Vol. 3.

AUGUST, 1875.

No. 8.

FALSE ECONOMY IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Economy has become such a cry during the last few years, that it is beginning seriously to interfere with the educational progress of the country. Boards of School Trustees are beginning to pride themselves upon the cheapness with which they manage their schools, and no matter what the consequences may be, they look upon the reduction of expenses as one of their first duties, and one of the cardinal virtues of a school trustee. While freely admitting the importance of due economy in the management of all trust funds, particularly public funds, we hesitate not to say that it is quite easy to *purchase* economy too dear. Indeed, in nothing is there greater danger than in attempting to manage our Public Schools on too economical bases. Let us consider this question under two heads—cheap school-houses, and cheap teachers.

CHEAP SCHOOL HOUSES.

By the provisions of the revised School Act, the minimum dimensions of school houses are pretty well defined. Trustees are required to provide at least nine square feet of floor room, and 100 cubic feet of air space for each scholar. So far as super-

ficial and cubic contents are concerned, this provision of the law is well enough. Indeed it is hardly possible *by law* to do much more than to fix upon some limitations of a general character. But how many trustees cheerfully comply, even with this general provision? How much bantering and trimming, about cost of material and cost of site, before a commencement is made, and when it is made what is the result? The dimensions of the school site are cut down to the smallest limits, and an enclosure called a "fence" put up in the flimsiest and *plainest* style conceivable. There is no levelling of the grounds, no planting of trees, in fact nothing done that can by any possibility be left undone. Then as to the school-house itself! It is such a model of *plainness* as would gladden the heart of the most puritanical stickler for pure, unvarnished utilitarianism. Not a trace of ornament about door or window, not a daub of paint, if painted at all, that could be spared. Neither steps, nor platform, nor porch, nor gravel walk to give an air of comfort and cleanliness to the situation. There *is* a school house, and it meets the requirements