

PAPERS

READ BEFORE

THE .ONTARIO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

1884.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

When appointed your President a year ago I had no expectation that I would, at the next meeting, be so burdened with official cares as to be almost practically debarred from delivering the annual message expected from your chief officer. It is, however, a source of considerable relief to believe that I can claim your indulgence, inasmuch as the time which might have been spent in preparing an address has been devoted to the interests of the profession in which you are so earnestly engaged.

The most noticeable feature in the educational activity of the day is the desire on the part of all civilized nations to educate the whole people, and everywhere the question is asked, "In what way can we most widely diffuse the benefits of a thorough elementary education?" With this end in view, improved methods of teaching are carefully examined in the light of modern experience. Even scientific tests are applied to the operations of the schoolroom, and by the aid of psychology it is believed the science of education will soon take its place among the other sciences, with the principles on which it is founded just as well defined. But while it is the province of the educator to study the laws of mental development, and the application of those principles by which the best results can be secured, it is the duty of the legislator to consider the various interests of the community for whose benefit those principles are to be applied. Any system of education that does not consider the social, and perhaps the religious organization of the people, their business life, their material resources, and their political wants, is necessarily defective. Out of deference to the religious differences of the people, our school system is non-denominational. On any other basis it could not exist as a national system. It is the common property of every member of the State. Not that it is irreligious by any means; for it recognizes in the fullest degree the cosmopolitanism of Christianity without those denominational limitations by which, as society is now constituted, its different families are designated. Happily for us in Ontario, the unity of our system in this respect has been well sus-