

NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

THE Government, frightened out of its wits by the vindictive violence of Dr. Ryerson, rushed into a sweeping change of our educational system, when it had better have considered calmly the alternative of modification. Supposing it to be better that the administrative functions, with the financial responsibility, should be vested in a political minister, there are still important functions which a body like the Council of Instruction, enjoying the confidence of all parties, seems best qualified to discharge. Especially is it best qualified to settle the text books, the squabbles about which, religious, literary and commercial, have kept the educational world in hot water ever since the political system was introduced. To the Council no suspicion of corrupt or sinister influence, any more than of partisanship, could attach. The account of the revision of Collier's history, with a view to the excision of language offensive to the Roman Catholics, which was given the other day by the Archbishop, shows how quietly the Council could settle a question which under the political system would set the Province in a flame. The curriculum also might be better settled by an impartial authority, and by one whose ordinances would be more stable than those of an ephemeral minister, while the controlling influences of men really eminent in education, and above hollow display, would be the best practical safeguard against the introduction of ambitious subjects which cannot be thoroughly taught, and can only fill the pupil with conceit. Possibly the election of the heads of training colleges might with advantage be entrusted to the same hands. For all this two

meetings of the Council in each year—perhaps even one meeting—would suffice. Plenty of work would still be left for the Minister of Education.

THE advocates of a political Ministry of Education are right in pointing to France as the country in which the political and centralized system is carried to the highest perfection. But they should also tell us what are the fruits. Mr. Hamerton, than whom we believe there can hardly be a better authority, describes the French peasantry as not wanting in natural intelligence, but "inconceivably ignorant." "The French peasant," he says, "is not a Philistine, he has not any contempt for culture, he simply does not know that there is such a thing; he does not know that science and art and literature exist." A peasant, and one quite of the higher order, fancied that Mr. Hamerton's printed books were manuscripts written by their owner, and compared them with other printed books which he thought were written by the booksellers. He had, in short, never heard of the existence of printing. "From the intellectual point of view," says Mr. Hamerton, "France is a Scythia with very small colonies of Athenians to be found in it here and there." Politically, the French peasant does not know his right hand from his left, and the constituencies are swept, as Mr. Hamerton tells us, by the most ignorant and absurd fancies. It is difficult not to connect this failure in some measure with the tendency of a highly centralized system to kill local interest and activity. The refined taste of Mr. Matthew Arnold is pleased by the symmetry of the machine and the