

Railways Committees for several sessions, and at a time when the incorporation of further railways was urgently insisted upon by municipalities which had been placed at a disadvantage by the undue discrimination of existing railways, and the necessity for extended railroad facilities; as Attorney-General, from December 20, 1871, till October 25, 1872, when he became Provincial Treasurer, he introduced vigor into the whole administration of justice, and in Parliament, was entrusted by Mr. Blake with the consolidation of the whole Municipal Law. His successful arrangement of it, has rendered it accessible to, and intelligible by, all who have occasion to refer to it, which means every tax-payer in the Province. As Provincial Treasurer, from October, 1872, till May, 1877, Mr. Crooks had the difficult duty of considering the grants of aid to the different railways, and the grounds which would entitle them to be recommended. He was always able to show in his financial statements, from 1873 to 1877, a large surplus of assets of the Province over its liabilities of more than five millions of dollars.

When he became Minister of Education in addition to holding the office of Treasurer, his responsibilities were not only increased, but the amount of work discharged by him personally was more than doubled. However much the Provincial Educational system had been built up by the Chief Superintendent, Dr. Ryerson, Mr. Crooks, in his review of its position, soon became convinced that the system was in urgent need of further improvement in many essential points; in the confused state of the law and regulations, and in their rigid application; in the inferior text-books and qualifications of teachers; in the Normal Schools not sufficiently fulfilling their special objects as training schools for teachers, and in their consequent costliness to the Province; also in the too centralized administration at Toronto and dictation of County Inspectors. Before the end of 1877 much of this was remedied, and beneficial progress has attended the administration of educational affairs up to the present, with the general approval of those who are conversant with the subject; and the increased efficiency of both Public and High Schools is universally admitted.

The liberal and advanced views held by Mr. Crooks can be judged from his Mechanics' Lien Act; the Act which enabled married women to hold property in their own right, and as if settled to their separate use; the Liquor License Act, acceptable to both liquor dealers and prohibitionists, and other acts affecting the social well-being of the people of the Province, now to be found in the Revised Statutes, and showing his work as a legislator. He takes a decided stand on the question of Provincial autonomy as against a Legislative union and favors the view that, in the interest of the whole of Canada, confederation can be made more acceptable and successful, if the limits of Provincial jurisdiction were extended, and those of the General Government more confined to that class of subjects which, from their generality, must necessarily be committed to some central joint authority. He thinks Legislative Union would give a deadly blow to progress in the future.