

## EDITORIAL NOTES.

## THE EDUCATION OFFICE AND ITS HEAD.

HOWEVER readily the public acquiesced in the appointment, in 1876, of a Cabinet Minister to the head of the Department of Education, it can by no means be affirmed that the experiment has given satisfaction to the people, or been beneficial to the interests of education itself. Circumstances at the time when Mr. Crooks assumed his portfolio no doubt were such that it was expedient to make a change. That the change, however, has been in the right direction, the experience of late years, and the position of things to-day, abundantly disprove. In many respects the Department of Education has been unfortunate under both *regimes*. Under that of Dr. Ryerson, its affairs were administered by a bureaucrat, who, from his lengthened service and immunity from governmental control, fell into the worst ways of officialism, though he was an efficient public servant and an especial friend of the teacher. Under that of his successor we have had the officialism, *plus* politics, and *minus* the late Chief Superintendent's knowledge of educational affairs. Of course, we cannot have all things, and the best of men have their limitations, yet the ideal man for the office was and is surely to be had. Mr. Crooks had many of the qualifications which quickened the hope in not a few breasts that we had got the man for the place. The essential combination necessary to success in the administration of the office is that consisting of ability and tact. The present Minister has some claim to the former, but none whatever to the latter; and this has been fatal to him. Without the pre-requisite virtue, it was easy for him to fall into the mistakes which have so disastrously marked his career. What these have been the Press of the country during the past four months,

has, in regard to two matters, at any rate, made every one familiar. During this period Mr. Crooks has furnished journalism with almost exhaustless materials for criticism, and it would seem that, as the Scottish journalist has phrased it, "there are pickings on him yet." That he has been subjected to this vivisection, even his most fast friends have affirmed, has been his own fault. But for his unfortunate manner, and utter lack of tact, his praise might have been in all the land. Few men who have attained to so exalted a public position have so wantonly discredited themselves as Mr. Crooks has done, and fewer still have so persistently blundered. Only commanding abilities, if the Minister possessed them, could now save him from rejection and ruin. Unfortunately, the official grace he has spurned has disclosed both his weakness and his mediocre talents. Moreover, his waywardness has not only exposed his unacquaintance with important details of his Department, which tact and gracious intercourse with the teaching profession, with his subordinates, and with those interviewing him on the business of his office, would have given him the means of acquiring, but has also proved his lack of those gifts by which alone he could adapt himself with success to his position. Knowing little, practically, of the business of his Department, his infelicitous habit, too, when educational matters have been broached in his presence, of turning on the stop-cock of his own speech, and turning off that of his interviewer, has been fatal to the making good of his deficiencies. Nor have his "stand-off" manner and failure to put himself into sympathetic, not to speak of friendly, relations with the teaching fraternity, helped him in his acquirement either of professional information or of departmental experience. While maintaining such an attitude, that the Minister has had not only to