

*C.—Degradation of the Common Schools:—The possibility of obtaining a good English education made virtually conditional on the study of Latin.*

1. Will any man say that this state of things is satisfactory—a state of things in which the Common Schools are degraded, by being suspended from the exercise of all their higher functions? Unless I misunderstand the object of the Common School law, the Common Schools are designed to furnish a good English and general education to those desiring it. But how can this end be accomplished, where the Common Schools are subject to arrangements, under which the highest stage of advancement ever reached by the pupils is to be able to parse an easy English sentence? I have pointed out that in many of the Union Schools, the machinery of the union is managed in such a way as systematically to empty the Common Schools of all moderately advanced pupils, male and female, and therefore to leave only very elementary work to be done by the Common Schools. If, in an important and flourishing place like St. Mary's, the highest class of boys in the Common School department of the Union School, were, in September last, utterly unable to parse the sentence, "I always do my work well," it may be imagined what the state of things is in ruder localities. Is this an example of the good English and general education which the Legislature desired, through means of the Common School System, to place within reach of all the children of the Province?

2. It may perhaps be said that though, in cases like that referred to, nothing but the most meagre English education is furnished in the Common School department of our Union Schools, the defect is remedied by the instruction given in the Grammar School department, into which the pupils are drafted from the Common School. Mark, if you please, what this involves. All the boys entering the Grammar School, with an exception so slight as not to be worthy of consideration, must study Latin. As a matter of fact, in the majority of the Union Schools, the study of Latin in the Grammar School department, though not legally, is yet virtually, made imperative on girls also. If not literally compelled to take Latin, they are put into it, and they accept the arrangement. Only "moral suasion," as an excellent teacher explained to me—not, I think, without some veiled humour—is employed to induce them to take Latin, "*that being sufficient.*" The plea, therefore, that the degradation of the Common School department, in many of the Union Schools, is counterbalanced or relieved by the facilities afforded in the Grammar School department, amounts to this, that the possibility of a decent English education being obtained by our Canadian children may properly be made conditional on their studying or professing to study Latin. Such an idea, when nakedly put, must be felt to be monstrous.

3. There are two aspects in which the Common Schools may be regarded. They may be considered either as having a complete and independent work of their own to perform, namely, to impart a good English education to those desiring it, or as stepping stones to something further—institutions designed to prepare pupils for the Grammar Schools.

It will not be denied, I suppose, that the former of these offices is incomparably the more important of the two. Yet, in Union Schools of the kind which I am criticising, this, the chief and proper business of the Common School, has wholly ceased to be performed, in so far as the upper parts of what may be called a fair Common School programme are concerned. I look upon this as an excessive evil. I have such a sense of the importance of maintaining a high standard of education in the Common Schools, that, rather than see them degraded—rather than see the goal, beyond which their most advanced pupils are not to pass, fixed at the point where an easy English sentence can be parsed,—I would be willing that all the Grammar Schools in the country should perish. I protest against making the Common Schools, in all above the most primary classes, mere hotbeds to force forward seedlings for the classical field.

*D.—False show of Classical Study in the Grammar Schools.*

If the current, under which the Grammar Schools are at present drifting, operates, in so many cases, to the degradation of the Common Schools, how is its influence on the Grammar Schools themselves to be characterized? I am obliged to state, that it leads, in a painful degree, to a show of classical study, where the reality is wanting. Of course, I make no charge of wilful deception. All that I wish to indicate, is, the existence of a state of things which is not truly what it holds itself forth as being. There is a good deal of such false show in some Grammar Schools which have not Common Schools united to