

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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Copy of the Quebec School Bill, has at last reached us and we shall endeavour to give a fair review of its provisions. The subject has been repeatedly discussed in the *Presbyterian*, and although the members of the Church in Ontario, may consider it more especially a local question, yet we believe it to be one which indirectly, at least, affects the whole Dominion. Considerable and not unnatural misapprehension existed in Upper Canada, as to the demands of the minority in Lower Canada. It has been persistently represented and was generally believed that they sought to obtain advantages, and concessions denied to the minority in Upper Canada. A more correct view is now, however, taken of the question, among those who have studied the subject, although there still remain traces of the former ignorance, even among the better informed. In Upper Canada the schools are open to the whole community, no child's religious belief is interfered with, and if a concession was made to the demands of the Roman Catholics for sectarian, or separate schools, it was made rather as a matter of favour than of right. In Lower Canada, on the other hand, the public schools in many parts of the country are essentially Roman Catholic institutions for the teaching of the dogmas of that faith, and for the initiation of the pupils into the practices enjoined by that religion. It will, therefore, be seen that it was an absolute necessity for the minority there to have separate schools, unless they were prepared to have their children brought up in a religion against which they protest. The bill now passed is an attempt to arrange amicably the points in dispute between the majority and minority, and can only be looked upon as a compromise, the best probably that could be obtained. Many

of the provisions for placing the minority on a better footing were only secured by much persistence and labour on the part of those who undertook to represent the minority, and if they have failed in obtaining a fuller amount of justice, they can scarcely be held responsible. Every effort was made by the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church to defeat the bill, and country papers in their interest were filled with declamations on the subject. It should be said to the credit of the journals published in Montreal and Quebec, that much more liberal views were expressed and broader grounds taken, in judging of the demands of the minority.

The first change made is in the constitution of the council of Public instruction, which it was formerly provided should consist of not more than fifteen, nor less than eleven. The present law provides for twenty-one, fourteen of whom shall be Roman Catholics and seven Protestants. The council is to resolve itself into two committees—Roman Catholic and Protestant—to whom all matters affecting the education of each persuasion shall be referred. By clauses 5 and 6 it is provided that the council may, by a vote of ten Roman Catholic and five Protestant members, from two separate councils of public instruction, of both of which the minister of public instruction shall be a member *ex officio* with a right to vote only in the Council of the religious faith to which he belongs. If there is no minister, but only a superintendent of education, he shall be a member of the council of his own religious faith, and there shall be two deputy superintendents appointed, between whom and the superintendent the duties shall be divided. To these separate councils the grants for normal schools shall be appointed in proportion to the population at last census. These are the clauses which alter the constitution of the council, and which certainly provide by