

PROVINCIAL POLITICS.

1890.

From Mr. Mowat's Speech at Embro, December, 1889.

Origin and Existence of Separate Schools.—I should greatly prefer, and I have always in the common interest preferred, that the children of Roman Catholics and Protestants should be educated together in our Public Schools, as well as in our High Schools and Colleges. But in spite of all who took that view, Roman Catholics have had Separate Schools in this Province for nearly half a century. The first Act for their establishment was passed as far back as 1841. In 1844 Rev. Dr. Ryerson became Chief Superintendent of Education, and he filled that office with acknowledged ability from 1844 to 1876. Dr. Ryerson was one of those who did not like Separate Schools. He thought them needless, as he himself said, and at the same time injurious to their supporters; and in the common interest he preferred mixed schools, so conducted as not to disturb the consciences of parents or children, Protestant or Roman Catholic. But he found difficulties which he thought insuperable, in consequence both of the doctrine of the Church of Rome with respect to schools, and the anxiety of the Protestants of Quebec to retain the Protestant Separate or Dissident schools in that section of Canada. Dr. Ryerson thus explained the first difficulty, in one of his writings before Confederation: "Separate School education is now a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, as much as the immaculate conception is. In 1850 the Roman Catholic College of Thurles in Ireland, passed a statute condemnatory of mixed education; the Roman Catholic Provincial Colleges of Baltimore and Quebec have since done the same. These statutes have been ratified by the Pope. This is therefore the dogma of the Church, however much it may fall into disuse in some places, as Sir Thomas N. Redington says it does in some places in Ireland. But as a dogma no member of the Roman Catholic Church, however liberal, and however he may disregard it in the education of his own children, can possibly oppose it. *It is therefore preposterous to think of legislating Separate Schools out of existence.* The Roman Catholic will as hitherto vote against the repeal of the Separate School provisions of the law." In another of his writings before Confederation, Dr. Ryerson made the following statement: