

increased. The Church of England was no longer the church of the majority, and the exclusive privileges granted to it as the Established Church by the statutes of George III were one by one removed, until finally the highest judicial court in the British realm declared that, "In all colonies in which there is an independent legislature, the Church of England is in no better position than any other religious body, and in no worse." *

The more recent controversies which have resulted in the removal of the college and the grammar schools from ecclesiastical supervision should not be allowed to blind the eyes of any unprejudiced reader to the fact that the province owes a debt of gratitude to the old S. P. G. missionaries of the Church of England for the great interest they took in the education of the young. The efforts of Oliver Arnold in Kings County, of Frederick Dibblee at Woodstock, of Samuel Cooke at Fredericton, of John Beardsley at Manguerville, of Richard Clarke at Gagetown, of James Scovil at Kingston, of George Bisset and Mather Byles at St. John, and of Samuel Andrews in Charlotte County, were largely instrumental in the establishment of schools in all parts of the province shortly after its formation; and although the number of the schools was far too few and the work done was of a simple and even primitive character, the children of the early settlers were enabled to acquire the rudiments at least of a common school education, which proved of incalculable benefit in after life. Men who were destined to fill high positions in the learned professions and in the government of the province were indebted to the foundation laid in the schools thus established for a large measure of the success they afterwards attained.

As already mentioned, four Acts dealing with educational matters were passed by the House of Assembly in the year 1816. Three of these have been already described; they were designed to promote secondary education. The remaining Act

concerned the common schools and was largely experimental in its nature. The event proved that some of the provisions were in advance of the spirit of the times, but the Act is of special interest as containing the germ of our present free school system. An abstract will enable the reader to form an idea of the departure inaugurated by the promoters of this important bit of legislation.

The Act is entitled, "An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Schools in this Province." The preamble repeats the well worn phrase, "The education of youth is of the utmost importance, and public attention to that object in affording them every means of acquiring useful knowledge has been found to be attended with the most beneficial effects in society." A summary of the provisions of the different sections here follows:

1. The justices of the General Sessions of the Peace for the several counties shall, when making the annual appointment of parish officers, have power to appoint two or more fit persons as trustees of schools in the several towns or parishes, who shall be sworn to the faithful discharge of their duty, and shall be subject to the same rules, regulations and forfeitures as other parish officers. In counties where the Court of General Sessions shall have been held before the publication of the Act, the justices of the Sessions may call a special session for the appointment of such trustees of schools, who shall in all cases continue in office till others are appointed in their stead.

2. As soon as may be after their appointment, the trustees, having given fifteen days public notice, shall summon the inhabitants of the parish, being free-holders, or having a yearly income of forty shillings, to meet for the purpose of voting a sum of money to be assessed for the establishment and support of schools in the town or parish to the end, that the youth therein may be taught orthography, reading, writing and arithmetic. The money thus raised to be not less than £30 nor more than £90 per annum; and if raised by assessment, the same to be determined by a majority vote at the meeting.

3. The inhabitants at such meeting may subscribe or raise money for building or providing one or more school-houses in each parish and procuring necessary furniture and utensils for the same, and may also define and settle the limits of school districts.

4. At the request of five free-holders the trustees of schools shall once in each year, either on the first Monday in March, or the first Monday in October, summon a meeting for any of the purposes before mentioned, fifteen days public notice to be given of the same.

5. The amount of money voted at the annual meeting to be assessed and collected in like manner as poor rates and paid into the hands of the trustees; the sums voted to be assessed by the parish assessors upon such inhabitants as reside within three miles of some school-house.

6. Trustees may agree, from time to time, with proper persons, being duly licensed, as by His Majesty's Royal

* Bishop Medley, in his charge to his clergy of June 30th, 1868, says: "To talk of an Established Church in this province at this time is one of the idlest dreams that could enter into the mind of man. The words—found indeed in the Statute Book—apply to the time when all officials and most of the inhabitants were actually churchmen. Emigration and other causes have reduced that statute to a dead letter, and the legislature deals with us exactly on the same footing as with all other religious bodies under the protection of the state. I would not wish it otherwise; for what can be a more invidious and dangerous position than to be the church of the small minority, caressed and pampered, and perhaps corrupted by state patronage, whilst all our fellow Christians, equally worthy of assistance with ourselves, are willingly giving their hard earned money to the building of their churches and schools, and to the support of their clergy, and are denied other assistance or favor. On this ground it may be said that we have paid dearly even for the glebes granted to us by the crown, which have yielded more odium than profit, and have contributed to foster the injurious suspicion that the clergy of our church are paid by government and have some secret support of which no body can give any account."