

If, finally, he were to suggest a state system of elementary schools which should be "essentially confessional," wherein religious instruction should be "given compulsorily in school hours and inspected by the clergy," his fitness for an asylum would, on the most charitable interpretation, be self-evident, or, on a less charitable, his jesuitry and consequent unfitness for citizenship in "a free and Protestant country."

Canada, it would be argued, by the mildest opponent of such a suggestion, is too Protestant, or too "mixed" a country, in some provinces more than in others, to allow the idea to be seriously entertained, for a single moment, "by any man in his senses," certainly not be any statesman or politician who set any value on his continued "public usefulness."

It may be well, therefore, to insist, first of all, on certain evident weaknesses in our Canadian systems of elementary education, as at present existing in various provinces, and then to enquire whether, in any modern, civilized and progressive country, in any country predominantly Protestant, if you will have it so, such a system as is here indicated, and so readily condemned as impossible and impracticable, if not essentially "popish," exists, or has ever existed, and with educational and national results. For, if it can be shown that a system, in any way resembling the one proposed does exist, under the conditions specified, the question is at once transferred from the domain of the theoretical to that of the practical, and a real and actual comparison of principles and results can be at once, and satisfactorily instituted.

The first and most obvious weakness attendant on the toleration of a school system other than that of the state is that taxation, municipal or provincial, is unequal to the task of providing adequately for both; there is not, in the homely phrase, "enough to go round." One, or both, of the existing—and in some sense, rival—systems must suffer in consequence; or where, as in Ontario, the public school system has, or appears to have, the manifest advantage of a larger taxable area on which to draw, not only are the children in the "separate" schools (who may be the majority) exposed to the risk of being less efficiently educated (to the state's detriment and their own); not only are their teachers less justly remunerated, but there is a distinct, and absolutely iniquitous discrimination, in the matter of rating, against the conscientious supporters of the less favoured schools. Where, as in some provinces there is no "separate" school system recognized by law, the double taxation imposed on those (be their creed Protestant, Catholic, or Hebrew) who conscientiously ob-