

# APPEAL

## TO THE FRIENDS OF FREE SCHOOLS AND UNSECTARIAN EDUCATION IN THE MARITIME PROVINCES :

The crisis to which your Education Institutions have been tending has arrived. After years of arduous labor and of hard struggle Free Education has become the constitution of these Provinces—rich in actual results and full of promise for the future. That system, so admirably adapted to secure for your children thorough training, repudiates all sectarian influence and gives to you the absolute control of its operation. Its originators refused to make it in any shape the vehicle of denominational propagandism ; and while fully recognizing the necessity of moral training determined, and justly, that public funds should not be applied to build up sectarianism,—leaving to the different denominations the religious instruction of their respective adherents. That arrangement Protestants generally accepted, believing that religious education was not the business of Government.

This enlightened, impartial policy, did not however meet the views of the Roman Catholic authorities. They desired the entire control of the education of their own youth, and claimed as a right that Government should pay for a system repudiating efficient inspection and control. Dissatisfied with existing arrangements, efforts have been persistently made by pressure on Government and other means, to undermine and destroy your Educational Institutions ; and to some extent these efforts have been successful.

Deeming the times favorable, because just now Roman Catholic votes are in demand—the Bishops of the Maritime Provinces have come out boldly with demands equivalent to the utter subversion and ruin of your Free School system. They ask as a right that Government should give to them the irresponsible use of Public Funds for the propagation, not of secular Education, but of their peculiar religious views. They do not complain that your Free Schools teach positive error, but that they do not allow them to disseminate their religious principles. On this ground they are stigmatized as *godless*, meaning thereby that they are not under their control, and that the pupils are not instructed in the doctrines of the Church of Rome.

Taking this position, and confident of their political influence, they demand as a right

that your Rulers should reverse the legislation of years by inaugurating in the interests of their Church, a system the logical result of which is the overthrow of your Free Education.

The crisis is momentous, and you, as the friends of independent thought and guardians of your children's rights, must meet it with prompt and decided action, and the demand with a determined negative.—You must teach the aggressors their true position as citizens, and compel them to keep their religious peculiarities within their chapels and convents ; and you must let your Rulers understand clearly, that under no circumstances and by no class of men however useful will you permit a finger to be laid on your Educational Institutions.

Should this crusade be successful the results will be ruinous to the country. The coming struggle is not between doctrinal Popery and Protestantism, but between ignorance, superstition and half-hearted loyalty on the one hand, and intelligence, mental independence and whole-hearted loyalty on the other. Should this attempt at establishing the denominational principle in Public Education succeed what educational system is to supply its place? Social divisions, heart burnings and alienations will be its fruits, and you Protestants will become the supporters of an organization, whose grand object is to establish over the Province, the supremacy of a Foreign Potentate. Contrast things as they are with this view, and are you prepared tamely to yield to this arrogant assumption and demand? Now we most solemnly protest against becoming through the Government of a Protestant Province, the abettors or supporters of an educational system, whose effects, stamped on every page of human history, have been mental paralysis, national imbecility, and religious bondage.

In no doubtful terms, you have now a demand made upon you to retrace the path trodden hopefully for years and enter upon the hopeless path of compromise with a crafty assailant ; and the demand amounts simply to this—a large share of Public Funds, and schools under the complete control of the Rowish Priesthood, teachers to be selected and the subjects to be taught to be