

the increase of the population—the attendance is nearly double the attendance of 1861. There are similar results in other counties—and counties which once stood, as regards school attendance, as one to five and one to six, now stand as nearly one to four? I believe it is a reasonable estimate, that about 25 per cent. of our population—men, women and children—in this Province of Ontario, are going to school. When this state of things exists, I do believe that you will get by judicious legislation, by liberal encouragement out of the public purse, and by preserving the elements of elasticity and local control, all the educational advantages that the people desire, and will avail themselves of. I do not believe the compulsory clause is one that will do much good. It will not be enforced. I dare say that in cities there is a class that ought to be compelled to go to school; but as regards the other parts of the country the working of a compulsory measure is practically impossible. And I need hardly add that a law which is not observed is a positive injury to the community. It encourages lawlessness.

Again, with regard to the Roman Catholics, they should not be forced, in spite of those conscientious scruples which have produced Separate Schools, to attend the public schools. That is not calculated to promote,—it is calculated to retard, what we all hope for—the general use, by the whole school population, of the public schools.

With regard to the proposals made on the subject of Common School education, I cannot help expressing the repetition of the feelings of apprehension I ventured to state on that point in the debate on the Address. The more I have reflected on the matter, the more difficulty I have felt as to the possibility of our dealing thoroughly, in the present state of our schools, with the subjects with which the Bill proposes to deal. I look first of all at the salaries of teachers of our Common Schools; and secondly at the number of children they are called on to instruct. I am obliged to say that, having regard to what I see in the reports presented as to the proficiency of these schools in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and looking to the salaries we pay the teachers, and the numbers of the scholars, and the character of the school accommodation, I do not believe we can at present introduce into our Common Schools, instructions in new branches, without a diminution in the efficiency of the instruction in the practical branches of reading, writing, and arithmetic. I would rather, if it is proposed to add these new branches, proceed with extreme caution—I would rather try and apply them to the grammar schools, which are supposed to be of a higher grade, and in which children of a greater age are instructed; children who have al-