

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN OUR PROVINCE.

An Important Measure for the Promotion of Elementary Instruction

A SUBSTANTIAL GRANT IN AID OF PARISH SCHOOLS.

Better Pay for Lay Teachers and Free School Books Where Necessary.

Masterly Speeches by Premier Flynn and Hon. Mr. Hackett on the Past and Present Condition of the Schools.

A JUST TRIBUTE TO OUR RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

THE promise made by the Hon. Premier Flynn several months ago, that his Government would pass an important measure in regard to the promotion of Catholic elementary education in this province, has been fulfilled.

As will be seen from the able and thoughtful addresses delivered in the Legislative Assembly by himself and the Hon. Mr. Hackett, which we give below, the measure is an important one, and shows how fully alive the Government is to the requirements of the province in this respect.

Hon. Mr. Flynn began by saying it might appear late in the session to introduce such an important measure, but the resolutions had been on the order sheet since December 23rd, and had been announced in the Speech from the Throne and discussed to a certain extent in the debate on the Address. This was probably the last Government measure, but it was far from being the least; in fact he regarded it as one of the most important. He had placed education at the head of the programme, because he regarded it as the question which demanded most attention from the Government. The present resolutions might be incomplete, but he wished to emphasize the idea that it was necessary to encourage in a greater degree primary education in this Province. The Government had asked authority from the House to set aside and appropriate for elementary school purposes one million five hundred thousand acres of lands, which shall be disposed of in such manner and under such conditions as may be fixed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The product of these sales would be capitalized to form a fund of \$60,000 a year to aid the primary schools. The Government will have power to advance \$50,000 a year until the fund arising from the sale of these lands shall attain the sum of \$60,000 yearly. The House would surely not object to this grant of 1,500,000 acres when they consider that by the decision in favor of this province in the affair of the northern boundary the area of the Province of Quebec has been increased to over 200,000,000 acres. It seems reasonable to take 1,500,000 acres out of this immense territory to help elementary education.

Hon. Mr. Flynn went on to say that so soon as the finances will permit the Government will still further increase the grant for technical teaching. They have already increased the grant to the Monument National School of Arts and Manufactures and Agricultural schools. The Polytechnic School of Montreal had asked for assistance, and the attention of the Government has been called to this question. The only thing which keeps the Province from giving more is that

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO KEEP WITHIN ITS MEANS, although they know that the population of this Province would endorse an additional expense incurred for this object. In the distribution of this new fund equal justice must be given to Catholics and Protestants. The Government has no intention of disturbing the present system. The principle and system of education in this Province are of the best; we must help to develop and perfect them. There are three opinions on this subject. One pretends that the system is all wrong, another that it is perfect, and the third that it needs help in pecuniary matters for its improvement. We accept this last theory.

The Premier declared that he did not wish to be quoted as reviving a burning question, but he must say that there was no room in this Province, either among Catholics or Protestants, for schools without God or religion. Education, to be conformable to nature, must be intellectual, moral and physical. If it has not these qualities it is not complete. Should any other opinion exist it has no reason for its being, some people attach blame to those who are at the head of education in this Province, but they only look at the defects and forget to examine the good points in our system. We must examine both sides of the question if we wish to act as patriots and good citizens of this Province. One great fault with those who quote statistics for comparison is that they fail to take into consideration circumstances of time, place and means.

MORE ENCOURAGEMENT REQUIRED.

So far the encouragement given to these schools has been within the means of the Province, but it has not been large enough. The amount spent on public schools this year, as shown by the Superintendent's report, was \$392,760, including evening schools. The provision made for next year is \$394,760, and \$25,000 has been voted for agricultural schools. Adding to this the present sum of \$50,000 the total voted by the Government for education in the Province will be \$469,760. The Prime Minister expressed his regret that the state of the finances did not allow them to make the grant \$100,000 instead of \$60,000, but he expressed the hope that in a few years they would be able to make up the deficiency and add \$100,000 more. The Premier quoted resolution No. 3, "That the income of the said funds shall be applied under the direction of the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in promoting elementary education in poor municipalities, aiding schools for the benefit of the working classes in cities and towns, improving the conditions of elementary and model school teaching, supplying school books gratuitously and generally providing for the more efficient diffusion of elementary education throughout the Province, the whole to such an extent as the Lieutenant Governor in Council may be pleased to order and under such regulations as he may be pleased to make." He went on to explain the manner in which the Government intended to distribute the amount voted.

THE ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOLS

is materially affected by the distance. Some pupils have to travel long distances to reach school in the immense regions of the North Shore, Gaspesia, north of Montreal, Temiscaniquic and Lake St. John. In Ontario there are 24 towns with a population of over 5,000, whereas in Quebec there were only 11. The 24 towns in Ontario have a population of 493,163 inhabitants, while the eleven in Quebec have a population of 308,344. The children in the towns have only a few yards to go to reach a school, whereas in country places they have sometimes to travel many miles. Then our rural population, as a rule, are poor. Notwithstanding all this, the average attendance is higher in Quebec than it is in Ontario. In Quebec the number of children from 5 to 16 years of age is 328,420; enrolled in schools there are 308,619, and the average attendance is 230,419, or 76 per cent. In Ontario the children between 5 and 21 years of age number 593,840, of whom 483,203 are enrolled in public schools. The average attendance

is 268,384, or a percentage of 56. On this head we have a decided advantage notwithstanding the difficulties.

NO RIVALRY BETWEEN SECTS.

There is no rivalry between our Protestant and Catholic schools, but there exists a praiseworthy emulation. In elementary schools the Catholics have an average attendance of 71 per cent, and the Protestants 79 per cent. This shows that our population takes advantage of every occasion to educate themselves. When we consider the amounts given by the Government and municipalities we find that Ontario pays much more than we do for education. The difference is made up by the religious houses of education, which educate children at a very low figure, and in many cases gratuitously. The Government and the people should be grateful for this.

Mr. Flynn added that he was not discussing systems but establishing facts. Some papers attempted to prove that education made no progress whatever, but the statistics they published, if rightly considered, show that in the last fifty years the progress has been marked. Manual work has been introduced in all our schools and further developed. We must recognize the services of those who have given their time to the mental improvement of the young in our Province. He mentioned Dr. Meilleur, Hon. Mr. Chauveau and Hon. Mr. Oimet, and said that there were a host of others.

THIS PROVINCE STANDS FOREMOST IN THE DOMINION

for classical and professional education, but the critics of our school system forget to mention this fact. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the teachers who, for a mere pittance, have given their time for the formation of youth. Clerks and messengers are better paid than teachers. We owe still deeper gratitude to those humble members of religious orders who devoted themselves to the education of the young without other remuneration than the knowledge of the accomplishment of their duty.

He mentioned several religious orders, notably the Ursulines, who founded the first educational establishment in this Province, and who were so deeply afflicted at the present moment. The Government will consider their case and act as circumstances will allow. He concluded by making an elaborate comparison of the educational system, likening it to a tree which the Government does not wish to uproot, but to fortify and improve. The subject was a most important one for the boys of to-day, who will be men of to-morrow. We should make it our duty to render them good men, loving God and their country.

The Premier resumed his seat amidst applause, which lasted for some minutes.

Hon. Mr. Hackett spoke as follows: I feel that there is no excuse whatever requisite for me to take up the time of the hon. members of this House in urging what they must all so freely and so readily admit, namely, the importance of a proper system of public instruction, not to the individual alone, but also to the community in which he lives and moves and has his being also to the State and to the nation itself. But since the duties and responsibilities of providing education for the masses are no longer confined either to the parents or teachers, but are shared in and to a certain extent supervised by the State, it became a part of the duty of the Government, and especially of that particular member of it to whose department belongs the great cause of public instruction, it becomes the duty of myself and colleagues to day to see that no stone is left unturned in the important work of providing for the rising generation of the masses of the people the very best and most approved system of education that is compatible with our resources and our income. This is why the present administration, having solved the great question of an equilibrium between revenue and expenditure, has turned its attention to that next important one of public instruction. The announcement contained in the programme speech of the hon. leader of the Government almost immediately after the formation of his Government, touching its educational policy, has, perhaps, attracted more attention than any of the other important declarations of the Premier. It has been followed by weighty expressions of opinion from all parts of the Province

IN FAVOR OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM.

These opinions have been by no means confined to those who are political supporters of the present administration. Liberal as well as Conservative newspapers have joined in the movement. This is as it should be, and I am convinced the Government nor the public would not have it otherwise. The question of education is one that should be entirely divorced from politics. It is the duty of both sides of the House to unite in the improvement, and in so far as it may be possible in the perfecting of our educational system. Though the responsibility of action lies with the Government, the privilege of making suggestions for improvements in this great work belongs equally to both sides of this House, and to every member in it. I have already referred to the fact that the newspaper press upon both sides of politics have freely admitted the need for the Government's action fore shadowed by the Prime Minister in educational matters. We have looked in vain for the suggestion of any remedy on the part of the press for the supposed defects in the existing system which has been signalled by them to the public. The Government, on the other hand, has made a careful study of the situation, and of the needs of our schools and our teachers, so far as has been permitted by the time at their disposal since their acceptance of office.

Before proceeding to speak of the changes the Government would like to make in our present system of public instruction, I must state that we have

AN EDUCATIONAL HISTORY in the Province of Quebec of which none of us have any reason to be ashamed.

That history is largely identified with the history of the nation. Prior to the year 1760 there was no public system of schools in Canada, and no regular grants were made by the Government for the purpose of education. Yet very important educational work was done under the French Regime, and work of a most interesting character. It was chiefly carried on by members of religious orders who had come to New France to carry in missionary work among the native tribes of Indians. The Recollets, the Jesuits, the Ursuline Nuns, made Quebec their headquarters, the Ladies of the Congregation and the Sulpicians selected Montreal as the scene of their labors; the Ursuline Nuns and the Ladies of the Congregation devoted themselves to the education of girls and the other orders provided institutions for boys. Thus was established the system of separate education of the sexes which forms so prominent a feature of the Roman Catholic schools of this Province at the present time.

In aid of their work these orders received from time to time grants of land from the French King and also benefactions from private individuals. I am not going to weary the House by following with it the interesting developments.

UNDER THE FRENCH REGIME

of these primal educational movements in the Province of Quebec. It is true they were undertaken largely, in the first instance, for the teaching of the Indian youth, but they also made themselves responsible for the education of the children of settlers. The history of some of these institutions, such as that of the Ursuline Convent at Three Rivers, and of its mother house and the old Jesuit College at Quebec, is closely interwoven with that of New France. I must not linger long, however, upon these points nor upon the heroic deeds, the Western discoveries and the final martyrdom of some of these self-denying men who were for a time amongst the professors of the Jesuit College. The result of their labors still endures, and Canada will ever revere their names and keep their memory green. In connection with the old Jesuit College may be mentioned the Petit Seminary of Quebec, founded by Bishop Laval, in 1668, and which, for many years, served as a preparatory school for the College. Before taking leave entirely of this period there is one other reference that should be made to the Congregation de Notre Dame in Montreal, founded in 1658, by Marguerite Bourgeoise for the education of girls. The work of the ladies of this convent extended so rapidly that they were unable to meet it themselves, and we are obliged, in 1668, to organize a class in the art of teaching in order to prepare teachers, whom they sent out to carry on the work of teaching that they were unable to do themselves. The fact is important because it marks what may be called

THE FIRST NORMAL SCHOOL WORK

done in this Province. It is somewhat of an object lesson, in the many young people who now-a-days consider themselves fully qualified to become teachers without undergoing the best training as soon as they leave school themselves. It may not have occurred to all the members of this House that they ordered things so differently in what we are accustomed to consider the backward days of 200 years ago. In 1836 when the first effort was made to provide regular normal schools for this Province, the Ursuline institutions at Quebec and Three Rivers were requested to arrange for the training of teachers in connection with their institution, and in 1857, when the three existing normal schools were first established, the girls' department of the Laval Normal School was placed under the direction of the Ladies of the Ursuline Convent at Quebec, and this arrangement was still in force. In the latter part of the last century and early in the present one, a large number of other schools were established in various parts of the Province. Roman Catholic schools were conducted in the large villages under the direction of the curé. The Quebec Education Society under the able presidency of Joseph F. Perrault, and the British and Canadian School Society, also did much for education by supporting schools in and about Quebec and Montreal.

THE UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS

generally started a school in each of the settlements established by them in Canada, and immigrants from the British Isles often erected log school houses in their townships by voluntary efforts where they sent their children to be taught, defraying themselves the cost of the school. In order to reach the period of 1824, when the first system of public schools was established in this Province, I shall pass over the period of the Royal Institution, a kind of State Committee on Education, and also over the establishment of the Royal grammar schools of Montreal and Quebec and the classical colleges of Nicolet, St. Hyacinthe, Ste. Therese, Chambly, Ste. Anne and L'Assomption. In the year 1829 the first public elementary school act for the Province of Quebec was passed. It provided that five trustees, elected in each parish or township, should have management of the schools therein. If they erected a school they received a grant not exceeding \$50. They also reported to the Legislature. An annual grant of \$20 was made to each teacher, and also a grant of 10s for each pupil up to fifty. The system was a voluntary and temporary one, and there were no taxes imposed upon the property of the inhabitants for school purposes. If they wished for a school they were required to provide a suitable building, and to pay certain fees for the children in attendance. The teachers were paid

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directly by the Government. There was no efficient supervision of the schools; no superintendent of education, and no paid inspectors. The clergy and the members for the county exercised chief control. All grants were paid upon a certificate of the local trustees and of the county member that these conditions had been fulfilled. Although this school system of 1829-32, and the amending acts left much to be desired, over 1500 elementary schools were established under its provisions in the rural sections of the Province of Quebec.

THE ELABORATE REPORT OF THE STATE OF EDUCATION

in this Province drawn up under the direction of Lord Durham in 1838, and the publication in 1841 of an important series of letters of Charles Monnet concerning a public school system for the province, prepared the way for the act of 1841, which established a common school fund, provided for a superintendent, and effective school commissioners, the dissentient schools for the minority, and introduced the system of compulsory taxation for the maintenance of the schools. This law, as modified in 1846 and amended in 1849, is substantially the same as the present school law of the province. Under this enactment very substantial progress has been made by the cause of education in Quebec. Since Confederation a number of important amendments have been made in the school laws, chiefly in the direction of dividing our educational work into two sections, Roman Catholic and Protestant, and of giving the Protestant section of the Council of Public Instruction complete control over Protestant schools, by placing the choice of all school officers for Protestant institutions in the hands of the Protestant Committee. An important guarantee has been given that these appointments will be made in a manner acceptable to the Protestant minority. It will not, I am sure, be a moment's surprise that I am seeking to drag in here the discussion of matters foreign to our subject and our province when I refer, as proof of the existence of the minority in Quebec with their present status in educational matters, to the somewhat recent utterances in favor of extending a similar system of separate schools to their own to the minority in another Province, which were made by such leading educational authorities as Sir Wm. Dawson, the ex Principal of McGill, and Dr. Heneker, the respected Chancellor of Bishop's College of Lennoxville.

the co-operation of eminent experts in the cause of public instruction and by a comparative study of the existing systems of education in Ontario and the United States.

The hon. gentleman concluded with an eloquent peroration upon the necessity and advantages of a proper national system of public instruction.

THE "STAR" COMMENTS THE PROPOSAL. Under the heading "Help for Poor Schools," the Montreal Star has the following editorial reference to Premier Flynn's proposal:

"The Flynn proposal to go with an open purse to the practical assistance of elementary education in this province is a good one. In no other way can we—especially the adult taxpayers—help ourselves so much as in helping the children to a serviceable education."

"The history of rural education in Quebec is an honor roll of private and public heroisms. Conditions have been such—especially the rural condition of poverty—that teachers have had to go with a pitiable pittance, and the women have devoted their lives to the high task of training future masters of the nation and makers of our progress."

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