

data, then, show that the schools of this country being maintained under the operation of the system of local self-government we enjoy—by which the people of each locality learn and judge for themselves whether or not to adopt the principle of free schools—very great progress is being made in the direction of free schools. It is highly satisfactory, as the intelligence of the country advances, and the circumstances of the country become improved, that we should see a healthy progress—a progress not in advance of the public opinion or circumstances of the country—towards the goal which we all desire to see soon attained. But I do not know that progress however grand and rapid, is an argument for interfering with the wholesome process under which that progress is being made. I do not think it is a sound argument to say, that because under the natural operation of laws which allow our schools to become free, these schools are gradually becoming free, we should therefore step in and make them free in spite of the wishes of the people. If, however, the data were correct, it would be said that the House is only legislating a little in advance of public opinion. But it is not so in fact. If the House will look at the record of the amounts levied in aid of the common schools, it will find that in 1869 that amount was by no means insignificant—in fact it amounted to \$45,000—and this sum the Government scheme proposes to sweep away. It may be questioned whether this be prudent; but what is of almost vital consequence in considering the argument of the Provincial Secretary is, that the decrease in the amount levied in the rate bill in aid of schools not free, is as to cities, towns and villages, entirely imaginary. The sum levied by the rate bill in cities, towns and villages, in 1866, was \$19,500; in 1867, \$20,900; in 1868, \$22,300; in 1869, \$23,343. Do these figures indicate that the public sentiment in cities, towns and villages—which have to bear, in comparison with counties, a very heavy burden of taxation—has shown such a decided progress towards the adoption of the principle of free schools, as to lead to the supposition that there is a universal concurrence on that point? In the counties, where the taxation, as compared with towns, is nominal, they are going on, I rejoice to say, in the direction of free schools; but, in the cities, towns and villages, where the taxation is heavier, and the incidence of taxation is different from that in counties, they are not going so fast. I dread, if the House should choose to sweep off by one blow the sum derived from the rate bill in these corporations, nearly \$24,000 a year, by declaring that the schools shall be free—that the House may injure the cause of education. If the House calls on the cities, towns and villages, at once, to provide, by direct taxation, the sum of \$24,000 in addition to their present burden,