

Separate Schools.

The affirmation in the British North American Act, which constituted the Dominion of Canada, of the privileges which the Church had enjoyed prior to Confederation, was undoubtedly the greatest mistake in the Constitutional history of Canada. The granting of the privilege of state-sustained denominational education has been the one bulwark behind which the old hostile feeling between the two races in British North America have entrenched themselves and prevented a full and free assimilation of the two races into one common nationality. Not only is the establishment of denominational education a violation of the civil functions of government, and an improper diversion of public money into sectarian channels, but it is equally indefensible as a matter of public policy. There is no good and efficient reason why all the people of this country, to whatever sect they may belong, should not send their children to the same common schools to receive the ordinary branches of instruction. The possession by the Church of the privilege of teaching so-called "Christian education" in the schools, every year entails upon this province an enormous extra expense by reason of a needless duplication of the school-staff, etc., that is not justified. And I venture to say that all the other causes of discord and strife and ill-feeling in the Province combined have not entailed such aggravated evils upon us as this one question of church endowments, for that is really what it means. Heretofore, education had to a very large extent been monopolized by the classes. The masses had but little opportunity of acquiring even the bare rudiments of education, but with the founding of the common school system of Ontario this has been changed, and a very general diffusion of education made possible. This is undoubtedly the grandest triumph of the age. With its introduction the latent genius of the race expanded into science, art, literature and invention.

The people of Ontario enjoying these great blessings should be very jealous that nothing is done to impair the efficiency and the stability of that system. But that is not what Separate schools are calculated to maintain; on the contrary they prove a constant menace to its stability by dividing it up into sectarian factions, and detracting from its efficiency, by the supervision which the church is permitted to exercise over it, resulting in the employment of unqualified teachers and the discardment of some of the most important branches of study in order that Church doctrine and ecclesiastical history may find a place in the school. The conclusion which every thoughtful and candid student of politics in this country must