

several members in this House with reference to legislating on this subject in advance of public opinion. I do not mean at this moment to pronounce upon the state of public opinion, but I do say that we under-rate the intelligence of our people, and the amount of attention they bestow on this subject which so nearly concerns themselves, if we suppose that they are not fully competent to discern its practical working, or that they are in the slightest degree indiffer-ent to it, or would not be ready at once to complain of any serious defects in the present common school system. The Secretary has stated that the Chief Superintendent of Education is a man of great experience, and that we ought to listen to his suggestions and adopt them. On former occasions, when measures were before us for amending the Common and Grammar School Acts, I stated that it was not the mere right, but the bounden duty of the House to form its own judgment and decide upon questions of this description. I denied then, and I deny now, that the House is called on, at the dictum of any man, no matter how learned he may be, or how experienced, to bow down its judgment to him in matters of this kind. And the fate of those measures as a whole, and of some of the discarded absurdities they contained, justifies my remark. I would be ashamed to go back to my constituents and say that in any one particular, in which my reason had convinced me that a measure was wrong, I had failed to exercise my reason. I propose to give this Bill due consideration, but will exercise my own judgment in spite of the suggestions of the Provincial Secretary and the Chief Superintendent. If I could agree with the Provincial Secretary in the view that we ought to do whatever was suggested by the Chief Superintendent, I should advise him to condense this Bill into one short clause providing that the Common Schools and Grammar Schools of this country should be administered according to codes to be from time to time promulgated by the Chief Superintendent. Thus we should be relieved from that painful process of incubation through which this Bill must pass before it comes out of Committee. If we are not to judge of these provisions, do not submit the provisions for our judgment. But if you do submit them, we, and no other, must decide upon them.

With reference to the question of free schools, I heartily and cordially agree in the aspiration that the schools of this country should become free. But I am bound to point out that the arguments in the published remarks by the Chief Superintendent, on which it is proposed to take that step, are based on a very great fallacy. I will for a moment assume the data given by the Chief Superintendent to be accurate, and not susceptible of objection. These