

III. Letter from the Chief Superintendent of Schools, to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Toronto, in reply to the foregoing :

Department of Public Instruction,

EDUCATION OFFICE,

TORONTO, 13th March, 1852.

MY LORD,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 20th ultimo, and of the 7th instant, respecting a difference between the trustees of a separate school, and the Board of Trustees of the public schools in the town of Chatham. On the 21st ultimo, I received through the Honorable S. B. Harrison, a communication from the trustees of the separate school in the town of Chatham on the same subject.

In respect to the complaint that Goldsmith's England is read as a text book in one of the mixed schools of Chatham, there can be no reasonable ground for it, since the 14th section of the school Act* expressly provides that "no pupil in any Common school shall be required to read or to study in or from any religious book or join in any exercise of devotion or religion which shall be objected to by his or her parents or guardians." Therefore every Catholic and Protestant child is effectually protected against the use of any book, or joining in any exercise, to which his or her parents or guardians religiously object; and I presume the parties who made the complaint which you state, will not complain as a grievance that they cannot dictate as to what text books shall be used in a mixed school by the children of other parents, as long as their own children are under their own protection in this respect.

Though I had not heard before of the objections which you mention, to Goldsmith's very defective compendium of the History of England, the book is not sanctioned by the Council of Public Instruction; nor has any elementary history been recommended to be taught in the common schools, beyond what is furnished in the admirable series of text books prepared and published by the National Board of Education for Ireland, and which are as acceptable to Roman Catholics as they are to Protestants.

I have observed with regret, that demands for exemptions and advantages have recently been made on the part of some advocates of separate schools which had not been previously heard of during the whole ten years of the existence and operations of the provisions of the law for separate, as well as mixed schools. I cannot but regard such occurrences as ominous of evil. It is possible that the Legislature may accede to the demands of individuals praying, on grounds of con-

science, for unrestricted liberty of teaching,—exempting them from all school taxes, with a corresponding exclusion of their children from all public schools,—leaving them perfectly free to establish their own schools at their own expense; but I am persuaded the People of Upper Canada will never suffer themselves to be taxed, or the machinery of their Government to be employed, for the building and support of denominational school-houses, any more than for denominational places of worship and clergy.

Public school houses are equally the property of all classes of the school Municipality in which they are erected; and there is the best assurance that schools will be perpetuated in them according to law. But there is no guarantee that a Separate School will be continued six months, as it ceases to exist legally, (at least so far as it relates to any claim upon the Public School Fund,) the moment the Public School Trustees employ in the same school division, a teacher of the same religious faith with that of the supporters of the separate school.* Should the advocates of a separate school be able to claim exemption from the payment of a property-rate for the erection of a public school house, they, or any one of them at his pleasure, might, on the completion of such house, legally claim admission to it for his or their children upon the very same condition as the children of those who had been taxed to build the house. A man may send his children to a separate school to-day; but he has the *legal right* to send them to the public school to-morrow, if he pleases; and, as a general rule, (judging from the nature of the case, and from the experience of several years,) he will do so, as soon as he finds that his children can be as safely and more cheaply educated in the public school than in the separate one. I make these remarks in reference to an objection which has been made by some of the supporters of a separate school in Chatham, and in one or two other places, against being taxed for the erection of public school houses.

I herewith enclose you a copy of my reply to the trustees of the separate school in Chatham, and which I had also made to a similar communication from Belleville.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your obedient humble servant,

(Signed) E. RYERSON.

The Right Rev. Dr. De Charbonnel,
Roman Catholic Bishop of Toronto.

"Provided fourthly, that no Protestant Separate School shall be allowed in any school division, except where the teacher of the Common School is a Roman Catholic; nor shall any Roman Catholic Separate School be allowed, except where the Teacher of the Common School is a Roman Catholic."—*Fourth Provision in 10th section of the School Act.*

* See Appendix, No. 1, a.

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