

the Voluntary Schools in England, where such schools are the National Schools of the country, is that in localities where only one school exists and that a National School, namely a Voluntary School under the control and management of the Church of England, Non Conformists must send their children to it, while at the same time they conscientiously disapprove of the religious instruction imparted therein. No such objection could be made in Ontario. The present Public School system is well established so far as it goes. There would be in every district at least one Public School common to all. Voluntary Schools would only be introduced where the population is sufficient to justify such a step. Their introduction can in no way injure the efficiency and work done in the Public School, nor trample on the rights of any; while it is admitted by practical educationalists that they would vastly improve the general education of the country.

The Ontario Public School system is surely needlessly restrictive. By the affiliation of Voluntary Schools we would introduce just that flexibility that is needed to make the system thoroughly effective and national in character. Their introduction would arouse parents to a greater realization of their responsibilities in the matter of the education of their children. Besides they would promote the interest of the teachers, and induce the capable instructor to continue his devotion to so important a calling because he would know that more than average ability in the teacher might command more than an average recompense. They would also hold out to him the possibility of enlarging his sphere of usefulness beyond the restricted curriculum of the Common School.

If I am wrong in principle or practice in my advocacy of the scheme

which I have proposed I am anxious to discover the fallacy of my position; but when I find the principle of Voluntary Schools supported by "Methodists," "Presbyterians," "Anglicans," "Romans," "Undenominationalists" and others, and in fact acknowledged in Ontario to some extent in our State University with Voluntary Theological Colleges affiliated, and again in such schools as Upper Canada College, the Model and High Schools, and Collegiate Institutes I ask why cannot the principle be applied generally to our Public School system which can be done by the affiliation of Voluntary Schools.

I have referred to the religious bodies in the practical working out of the Voluntary School scheme, because they have a recognized place in our midst, and further because they already have buildings attached to their places of worship which might readily be made available for school purposes, and in fact some of these are now used as Public Schools. The fact that these buildings, many of them quite costly, now stand idle for six days of the week makes it quite plain that in them there is a considerable financial loss which might be avoided were it possible to make use of them for educational purposes.

Some fear that in Voluntary Schools we see the State undertaking to impart the religious instruction peculiar to one or other religious communion. But it is really nothing of the kind. On the contrary it is the Voluntary School which, while imparting the religious or other special instruction desired by parents, undertakes to impart for the State the elementary secular instruction of the Public Schools, and this under State inspection and by teachers authorized by the State. The cost of maintaining any special instruction outside the curriculum of the Public School will be met voluntarily by the supporters of such schools.