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## NEW GRAMMAR SCHOOL BILL.

*Circular to the Members of both Houses of the Legislature, on the Bill for the further Improvement of Grammar Schools in U. C.*

SIR,—Several members of the Legislature expressed to me lately at Quebec, and on my way thence to Toronto, a wish that I would furnish, in the form of a Circular, more extended explanatory remarks on the Grammar School Improvement Bill than those contained in the brief memorandum which accompanied its distribution.

The present state of the law, and the necessity of further legal provision for the improvement of Grammar Schools, will be better understood by reference to the origin and objects of the existing Grammar School Act. In 1850, the Hon. Robert Baldwin, after he had devoted nearly two days with me in examining and maturing the Bill, which became the Common School Act of 1850, (the charter of our school system), asked me if I could not codify and reduce to one Act the several Grammar School Acts of Upper Canada. After some reflection, I replied that, if he would furnish me with a list of these Acts, I would examine them and give him an answer in a few days. After examining and considering these Acts, I waited upon Mr. Baldwin and told him that before I could undertake the task he had proposed, it would be necessary for me to know whether he assented to principles which I considered essential to any useful amendments of the Grammar School Law; that the great desideratum in regard to the Grammar Schools was the means of support; that there was no other source to look to for that purpose than the municipalities in which the Grammar Schools were established; but that they had no hold upon the interest or sympathies of the people—being regarded as select schools for the few, and managed by the Government through trustees and masters of its own appointment, for the

alleged benefit of its own officers and special friends; that the municipalities could not be expected to contribute to their support unless they had some control over them. I also stated to Mr. Baldwin that I did not think the Grammar Schools could be made efficient and useful as they ought to be unless they were made schools of the municipalities, instead of schools of the Crown—the Crown relinquishing the appointment of trustees and masters; and further, that it was essential to the efficiency and success of these schools, that the Grammar School Grants should be apportioned upon the same principle and conditions as the Common School Grants. Mr. Baldwin concurred in these views; and the draft of a consolidated Grammar School Act was prepared accordingly, and printed by order for consideration. Mr. Baldwin retired from office, and I requested his successor the two following years not to proceed with the Grammar School Bill, as I could not then undertake any work in addition to that of maturing the organization of the Common School system. In 1853 the request was again made to me, and I prepared the draft of the present Grammar School Act. I proceeded to Quebec to submit and discuss its provisions with the Upper Canada members of the Cabinet. The Premier (Hon. Mr. Hincks) favoured the adoption of my draft of Grammar School Bill without alteration; but three other members of the Cabinet thought the *assessment* clause had better be deferred until I got the Grammar Schools organized into something like a general system. I urged that without that characteristic and essential feature of the Common School system, no material improvement could be effected in the condition and character of the Grammar Schools; but after some two hours' discussion, I consented (unwisely and unfortunately, as I have ever since thought) to omit the assessment clause from the draft of Bill, and to postpone it for future consideration. The consequence is, that the Grammar School system is essentially defective; the Grammar Schools have been hobbling on one leg and making little progress (except from the influence of the general regulations and inspection), while the Common Schools have been rapidly advancing, aided by the two-fold support of legislative appropriation and local assessment. There are, indeed, exceptions. There are cases in which the Grammar School, from peculiar circumstances of place, teacher, special resources, is worthy of the name; there are also cases in which the union of the Grammar and Common Schools of the place has operated beneficially; but these are exceptions to the general rule, as to the helpless condition and