

Public School system—an element which becomes not less, but more important with the advancement of the system and the country.

Gentlemen, I thank you most sincerely for the cordial manner in which you have received and responded to the many circulars which I have addressed to you during the last thirty years—on the duties and functions which modifications in the municipal or school laws have imposed upon you. Amongst the most pleasing recollections of my long administration of the Education Department will be the uninterrupted harmony which has existed between you and myself, and the efficient and liberal manner in which you have performed your part in the great work of our country's education—having, during every single year, provided larger sums by school assessments than the law itself required. During the year 1874—the last year for which we have complete statistical returns—the amount of the Legislative School Grant was \$244,933, the law requiring an equal sum to be provided by Municipal Councils as a condition of receiving it; but instead of limiting your school assessment to the sum required by law, you provided the noble sum of \$606,538—your own zeal and patriotism, in this one particular alone, being \$361,705 in advance of the law requirements for the year.

(*The New Minister of Education.*)—Feeling that the time had arrived for me to resign the administration of the Education Department to younger and abler hands, I submitted the best provision I could conceive for the future management of the Department, and perpetuation and further development of the School System. I am happy to say that the Government and Legislature have given effect to the plan recommended; and that an honourable gentleman, whom, in consideration of his principles, character, abilities and attainments, I had for two years pressed to assume my work, has at length been appointed Minister of Education. In his hands, I am sure, you will find no change in the administration of the Department, and of the School System, except for the better.

Your faithful friend and servant,

E. RYERSON.

Toronto, February 29th, 1876.

P.S.—(*Politics and Education.*)—Some sincere friends of the School system have expressed apprehensions lest under the new *regime* it might be brought within the pernicious influence of political party. I do not share in such apprehensions. I have every confidence that the administration of the School system will be strictly impartial and patriotic, and will accord in spirit with its inauguration and re-inauguration since 1840. Its first outlines were drawn and embodied in law by one political party led by the late Hon. R. Baldwin, in 1841 and 1843; it was revised and re-inaugurated under the auspices of the Conservative party, led by the Hon. Chief-Justice Draper, in 1846; it was revised again in 1850, under the Reform party led by Mr. Baldwin, who re-appointed the same person to the head of the Department and the same persons to the Council of Public Instruction that had been appointed in 1844 and 1846.

Immediately after the passing of our Charter School Act of 1850, I proceeded to England to make arrangements with regard to procuring maps, globes, library and prize books, and while in London, in December, 1850, I prepared my school address for that year to the inhabitants of Upper Canada. I reproduce here the following paragraph of that address for the references and facts it

contains, and in the belief that its spirit will be as fully realized in our country during the next twenty-five years as it has been during the past twenty-five years of our educational history:

"The virus of party spirit is poisonous to the interests of education in any country or neighbourhood, and the clangour and jostling of party conflicts are its funeral knell. It perishes in the social storm, but grows and blooms and bears fruit in the serenity and sunshine of social peace and harmony. It has, therefore, been the policy of the enemies of general education in any country, and of whatever party, as if prompted by a malevolent instinct, to seek to invest the agency for its extension with a party character, and then strangle it as a party monster. And even unintentionally and incidentally, the interests of education have largely suffered from the same upas influence. Among our American neighbours, I have been assured that party selfishness and contests have proved one of the most serious obstacles to the progress of their educational systems and interests. The working of their machinery of government involving countless elections and endless party conflicts, the local if not higher administration of their School systems have often been perverted and pressed into degrading service as an engine of party, to the grief of the earnest and patriotic friends of education; and it has been alleged that to the intrigues of party aspirants may be traced the origin of no inconsiderable number of their projects of School laws and School reforms. It is highly honourable to the discernment and patriotism of our neighbours that under a system of polity which to so high a degree lives and moves and breathes in an atmosphere of almost theatrical excitement, the interests of education have been so nobly sustained, and its progress has been so rapid and extensive. I regard it as an interesting incident in our Canadian history, and a brilliant sign and certain augury of educational progress, that our system of popular instruction stands forth, by common consent and suffrage, the exclusive property of no party, and the equal friend of all parties. If one party introduced legislative enactments laying the foundation and delineating the general outlines of the system in 1841 and 1843, and if another introduced a legislative measure to modify and essentially to improve it in 1846, both parties have united to mature and consolidate it in 1850.* I think there was a moral sublimity in the spectacle presented by our Legislature at its last session, when the leading minds of both parties (with only subordinate exceptions unworthy of formal notice, and reflecting just darkness enough to give stronger expression and greater majesty to the general outlines of the picture), forgetting the rivalships and alienations of party, and uniting as one man to provide the best system they could devise for the universal education of their common country—the spirit of sect being merged in the spirit of Christianity, and the spirit of partizanship absorbed in that of patriotism. I have stated the fact to several distinguished public men, as well in the United States as in England, and in every instance the comment has been one of admiration of such a spirit in the public men of Canada, congratulation on the educational and social prospects of the Canadian people under such circumstances. As a practical development of the same spirit in administration which had been thus illustrated in legislation, the same persons have been reappointed in 1850 to perpetuate and extend the work of education under the law,

*By previous arrangement a member of the Government moved the second reading of the Bill, and the leader of the Opposition seconded it.