

# Northwest Review.

"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

THE ONLY CATHOLIC PAPER PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH IN NORTH-WESTERN CANADA.

VOL. XII, No. 33.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1897.

{ \$2.00 per year.  
{ Single Copies, 5 cents.

## MANITOBA:

### "Audi Alteram Partem."

By a Catholic Canadian.  
(The Tablet.)

The fact that you last week published Mr. Laurier's speech in Montreal upon the proposed settlement of the school question in Manitoba, encourages me to ask you of your fairness to let me present the views of the present Government of the Dominion on this subject, with somewhat greater fulness than has yet been done in your columns. I am aware that I am about to tread upon delicate ground, and to run counter to the opinions of very high personages indeed; but at least it is well that the readers of The Tablet should understand what is the exact nature of the settlement which the first Catholic Prime Minister of Canada is now offering to his countrymen for their peace. And then, even if in the end The Tablet is constrained to condemn a scheme which is proposed by a Ministry which contains four Catholic members, you will be able to do so with knowledge and not from prejudice or upon mere hearsay evidence. I know all the facts, and will state them fairly—nothing exaggerating, nor setting down aught in malice.

When in 1870 Manitoba became a Province of the Dominion of Canada, its white population numbered some 12,000 souls. These were about equally divided in the matter of religion—half being Catholics and half Protestants. Such schools as existed were Denominational and Voluntary; no system of public education yet existed. The Manitoba School Act of 1871 established a system of Separate state-supported Denominational schools. It happened that the Catholic part of the population was for the most part grouped into certain districts. These districts were considered Catholic school districts, and other parts of the country in which the Protestants predominated were considered Protestant school districts. If a Catholic parent was in a Protestant district or vice versa, he was at liberty in the words of the Privy Council Judgment, "to send his child to the school of the nearest district of the other section; and in case he contributed to the school his child attended a sum equal to what he would have been bound to pay if he had belonged to that district, he was exempt from payment to the school of the district in which he lived." That system was perfectly fair to all parties, and recognized in a most practical way the right of every parent to have his children brought up in his own faith. Unfortunately, as the years went on the relative positions of the two religious bodies greatly changed. The Catholics, who twenty years before, in 1870, were half the population of the Province, in 1890 were only 20,000 out of a total of 204,000. Protestant immigration had upset the balance, and the majority used its opportunity. In 1890 the Legislature of Manitoba passed two acts which abolished the old separate or denominational schools, and established a system of free public schools from which all definite religious teaching was to be banished. The Catholics were naturally indignant, and appealed to the Canadian Courts of Justice, and finally to the Privy Council, for a restoration of their rights. I will refer in a moment to the results of this litigation, and to the subsequent attempts of the Conservative administration to give redress to the aggrieved Catholics. In the autumn of 1896 the Liberal party triumphed at the polls and the Hon. Wilfrid Laurier became Prime Minister of Canada. His first work was to open negotiations with the Government of Manitoba in the hopes of being able by some friendly settlement to get some tolerable measure of justice for his oppressed co-religionists.

Remember the difficulties of his position. He has to deal with a hostile and exasperated majority of Protestants pledged to what they like to call the unsectarian system. The Catholics of Manitoba are "bunched" mainly in the City of Winnipeg, and the county which includes St. Boniface. The rest, to the number of some 9,200 souls are scattered in small numbers over a territory about six times the size of Belgium. To hope to secure separate Catholic schools

supported at the public expense for these latter was an obvious impossibility. The terms which Mr. Laurier obtained though not such as he desired, are at any rate the best likely to be got. In districts where the parents of ten school children in a rural district, or 25 in a town, may desire it, religious instruction may be given by a priest or other authorized person for an hour every afternoon. When we remember that less than 10,000 Catholics are scattered in villages and rural districts over a country considerably bigger than England and Wales, it will be apparent that more than this could hardly be hoped for. However, if in any rural district there are 25 children attending school their parents may insist on having a duly certified Catholic teacher. Here, again, remember that a population smaller than that of Hull or Bristol is spread over a country which has an area twice the size of Portugal—and I insist upon this scantiness of population because it means that in most cases the schools would have only one teacher, and that the Catholics, being much "bunched" together in localities, would thus often secure for themselves what would be practically separate Catholic schools. In the same way, in towns where there are as many as 40 children, the parents may demand the services of a Catholic teacher. In all these schools, also, full religious instruction may be given to Catholic children during certain hours. Now that is not an ideal system, but for a country in which Catholics are in a small and dwindling minority, should it not serve as, at least, the basis for further negotiations? Both Mr. Laurier and Mr. Greenway, the Premier of Manitoba, are anxious that the question should be settled in a spirit of conciliation, and there is no reason to suppose that the latter has closed the door against further concession. I venture to say that the arrangement which I have endeavored to put before your readers would have been received in a very different spirit if it had been judged solely upon its merits.

Unfortunately its opponents cannot get out of their heads the idea that the Privy Council has decided that they are entitled not to friendly consideration, but to a full restoration of the ancient system of separate Catholic schools, wholly supported at the public expense. As Mr. Laurier said in Montreal, if that had indeed been so, if the highest tribunal in the Empire had given any such decision, the case would have been vastly simple. It would have been Mr. Laurier's highest pleasure to enforce such a decree—only it does not exist. The Privy Council decided only that the Catholics of Manitoba were entitled to appeal to the Governor-General-in-Council—that is, to the Government of the Dominion. The Judgment says: "It is certainly not essential that the statutes repealed by the Act of 1890 should be re-enacted, or that the precise provisions of these statutes should again be made law. The system of education embodied in the Acts of 1890 no doubt commends itself to, and adequately supplies the wants of, the great majority of the inhabitants of the Province. All legitimate grounds of complaint would be removed if that system were supplemented by provisions which would remove the grievance upon which the appeal is founded, and were modified so far as might be necessary to give effect to the provisions." The Privy Council then says the Catholic minority are entitled to appeal to the Governor-General, and that their grievances would be removed by some modification of the existing law.

The statement that the old system need not be restored is positive and explicit, but the recommendations as to the relief to be given are miserably vague. This is not surprising. At bottom the whole question is largely one of finance. I mean the Catholics, if they choose to go without public assistance, are perfectly free even now to carry on separate elementary schools; what they want, however, is to be allowed to do this without forfeiting their share of the public money devoted to the education of the children of the people. Unfortunately it is just upon this point of finance that the Dominion Government must fail them. It may coerce Manitoba but it cannot control a single sixpence of the

money which the Province devotes to education. Thus even if Sir Charles Tupper had been able to carry his Remedial Bill in March, 1896, it would have been of little use. The separate denominational system would have been restored, but the Catholic body, which is chiefly composed of people belonging to the working classes, would have had to support them without the least help from the public purse. But the Remedial Bill was not carried; and the last act of the Conservative Government was to send Commissioners to Manitoba, carrying proposals for a compromise. Those proposals were less favorable to the minority than those now obtained by Mr. Laurier, but coming from men who had tried to coerce the province they were peremptorily rejected. I cannot help thinking that it is this exaggerated view of what the decision of the Privy Council amounted to, and an equally exaggerated view of what the Dominion Government could do to give redress, which has caused Mr. Laurier to be kept at arm's length and treated as a foe instead of a friend.

As a loyal son of the Church he can have no wish but to obtain as favorable terms as possible from the Government of the Province; and where he fails it is safe to say none can succeed. A policy of coercion and force is doubly vain. Already, if they like, Catholics can go out into the wilderness and build and support their own schools, and the Dominion Government can give them no more. And even if that were otherwise and the Federal Government could command the application of the money of the Province, is it possible to suppose that a school system could flourish, which had been imposed by force upon those upon whose good-will it must necessarily depend for its successful working? But I have said enough to enable your readers to judge for themselves whether or not our Catholic Prime Minister has made an honest effort to bring peace to Manitoba, and to win for his co-religionists their legitimate rights.

### The Tablet's Remarks on the Above Article.

We publish in another column a detailed statement as to the terms of the settlement of the Manitoba School Question proposed by Mr. Laurier. We admit the force of much of what our correspondent says, and recognize the difficulty of supplying separate schools in the case of a community which is less than that of Bristol, and yet is scattered over an area greater than that of England and Wales. These are considerations which in the case of the rural districts might make Mr. Laurier's scheme acceptable, at least as long as existing conditions endure.

[The letter of a Priest in London (see below) reminds the Tablet that the "existing conditions" existed before 1890, when the school system then working was "perfectly fair to all parties." N.W.R.]

But the proposals, as far as the town population is concerned, are of a kind which we fear must necessarily be condemned. Take the case of a London Board school with 200 children—would the assurance that one teacher should always be a Catholic make such a school an acceptable substitute for a Catholic school? Disguise it as we may, Mr. Laurier's plan introduces that system of "mixed schools" which has been repeatedly condemned by the Holy See. And yet where there is so much good-will there ought surely to be a way out of the difficulty. Mr. Laurier has been successful in persuading the Manitoba Government to agree that when 40 Catholic children in towns, and 25 in rural districts, are in attendance at an Elementary school, they shall be entitled to have a Catholic teacher. Why not in towns, at least, let that teacher teach in a separate school? The Catholic schools already exist, are waiting to be so used. Why, instead of periodically sorting out the children for religious instruction in separate rooms, should not the educational authorities let them assemble every day with their Catholic teacher in buildings which were erected for that very purpose? With Catholic teachers and school-books approved by the Bishops the system would be as satisfactory as it would be simple. As far as the bulk of the Catholic population is concerned—

those living in Winnipeg and St. Boniface—this plan could surely be worked without serious inconvenience. The difficulty, as far as the rural districts are concerned, would be rather to safeguard the future than to deal with the present.

### The Manitoba Schools.

To the Editor of The Tablet.

Sir—"A Catholic Canadian" speaks in a tone which gives him every right to be heard. But his special plea for the Canadian Government (in the Tablet of January 23) will make little impression upon those who, like himself, "know all the facts," but who are in no way bound to defend everything that may be done or proposed by the Dominion Government. Let me say frankly for myself that I would if I could take the side opposed to any Tory or Conservative party, whether in or out of office. But, at the present moment, I cannot help being hostile to the Canadian Liberal party, although it is in power.

The "Catholic Canadian" does not give us enough of "all the facts." He speaks of "a Prime Minister who is a loyal son of the Church" and a "Ministry which consists of four Catholic members." It seems to me a pity to go into a detail of that kind, because Catholic is that Catholic does, and because the Government is acting as a whole, and as a Liberal Cabinet. But, in face of the statement made in The Tablet, it is only right now for me to say that some of Mr. Laurier's speeches about encroachments of the civil power, or what Parisian politicians call the lay state, have not by any means a Catholic ring. And if the papers spoke truth, Mr. Laurier about a year ago attended Divine worship in a Methodist church in Manitoba, when he was making a political tour in that province in view of the General Election. One of his three Catholic colleagues is Mr. Tarte, who lately told a Protestant audience in Winnipeg that "he was a Catholic by accident as they were Protestants by accident." It is only just to suppose that two members of the Ministry are Catholics by the grace of God and by conviction. But that gives no presumption that the "settlement" which the Ministry offers to the Catholics of Manitoba is not a violation of their moral and legal rights, or even contains "the best terms likely to be got."

And here I would ask "Catholic Canadian" if he ought not to withdraw a phrase in his article. Who is it that has treated Mr. Laurier as a foe instead of a friend, and kept him at arm's length? The accusation must be meant either for the Archbishop of St. Boniface, or for the Bishops of Canada in general. Now we are not going to believe without proof that any Catholic Bishop keeps at arm's length a man who has been placed in authority by the votes of his fellow-countrymen. And what we know is that the Archbishops of Toronto, Halifax (who calls the so-called settlement "cynical injustice"), and Kingston bear Irish names, and are not likely to be hostile to a Liberal Premier as such; and that the French-Canadian Archbishops of Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa and St. Boniface are not likely to be hostile to a French-Canadian Premier, if he will allow them to be friendly. Mr. Laurier's apologist reminds me of the wolf and lamb story. The Canadian ministers have ostentatiously avoided all conference with the Archbishop of St. Boniface, or other representative of the Catholics. They have simply made a political deal with Mr. Greenway and his colleagues. They have admitted Mr. Sifton, one of these colleagues, into the Cabinet of the Dominion. They have accepted certain terms from him and Mr. Greenway, and have thrown those terms to the Catholics as a "settlement," along with the option of "going out into the wilderness." The Catholics reject such terms, declaring them to be a mockery of their moral and legal rights. And immediately they are accused of keeping the friendly Mr. Laurier at arm's length, and treating him as a foe.

But let us come to the merits of the case, and come to the point. What are the merits of the "settlement," and what are the difficulties in the way of the true settlement which

the Catholics demand? Mr. Laurier's apologist speaks of a "hostile and exasperated Protestant majority." Now we are obliged, of course, to take elected officials as representatives of their electors. And the provincial electors in Manitoba and the Northwest are certainly hostile to the Catholics on the School Question. Nevertheless, it is worth while to remember that at the last general election (more recent than the provincial election) the people of Manitoba sent to Ottawa a majority of members in favor of the Remedial Bill which would have satisfied the Manitoba Catholics. And why should the Protestants be exasperated? Is it because their government has inflicted hardships upon the Catholics by abolishing a system of schools which the apologist declares to have been "perfectly fair to all parties"? Or is it because the school taxes paid by Catholics have been, since 1890, used for the sole benefit of the non-Catholic schools? But suppose we consider only the officials. How far is Mr. Greenway really "hostile" to any arrangement which will leave him in office? Here we come to a serious question, and the word coercion. I do not for a moment admit that Mr. Greenway can be allowed to treat DE PUISSANCE A PUISSANCE with the Dominion or Imperial authorities. Still, if his Government be seriously hostile, if there be any bona fide prospect of coercion being needed, there cannot be too much caution and prudence. But we want a little more light. What is it that the "Catholic Canadian" tells us? He assures us that Mr. Greenway is in a mood for "conciliation," and "concession." I conclude then that, as concessions have not been obtained, they have not been asked for by Mr. Laurier, who had doubly and trebly pledged himself to obtain them. What further does the "Catholic Canadian" tell us? He says that if the total repeal of the School Law of 1890 had been called for by the Imperial Privy Council, "it would have been Mr. Laurier's highest pleasure to enforce such a decree." What! "A policy of coercion and force" for his Liberal friends in Manitoba! Evidently Mr. Laurier understands as well as Mr. Greenway himself the real meaning of all the talk about provincial rights. Why should he not "enforce" the actual and less far-reaching decree of "the highest tribunal in the Empire"?

This question leads me to another passage of the "Catholic Canadian's" apology. He says that other Catholic Canadians do not understand the meaning of the decision given in their favor by the Privy Council. This is not perhaps a childish statement, but it must be meant for childlike readers. The Archbishop of St. Boniface has had the legal assistance all through of distinguished lawyers. Mr. Blake, M. P. for Longford, and Mr. Ewart, Q. C., Winnipeg, presented the Catholic case in Whitehall. Besides, it requires no special training to understand the judgment, which is quoted at sufficient length by a "Catholic Canadian." In it we find that the Privy Council did not, it is true, declare, like the Supreme Court of Canada, that the School Act of 1890 was null and void. But it declared that the act inflicted a grievance upon Catholics, for which the remedy was to be sought at the hands of the Governor-General-in-Council. And it was pointed out that this remedy would be found if the existing law were "supplemented" and "modified." Where is the room for misunderstanding or exaggerating the meaning of this judgment? The Remedial Bill of the late government would have done what was needed in supplementing and modifying. There was nothing "miserably vague" about it. Mr. Laurier obstructed it, saying he would do far better for the Catholics if placed in power.

But it is said the Dominion can provide no funds for education in Manitoba. This statement has been questioned in Canadian papers, but one may really let it pass after the other statement about the "greatest pleasure" in totally nullifying the School Law of the Province. What sane man would try to set up the old system once more, if he did not know that funds would be available, whether from the old source or from the new?

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