

and encouragement, afforded them by the Government and Legislature, for the education of their children, and the great advances which have been made in a few years toward the establishment of a general System of Common Schools. It is likewise very clear, from these facts, that the attacks made upon the present School System and Law are but the expression of the feelings of individual writers, and no indication of the sentiments and spirit of the Country.

2. Condition of the Schools in Cities and Towns.

In this Report I have not specially referred to Common Schools in Cities and Incorporated Towns, as the Act of 1847, under which they are to be organized, did not come into operation until the commencement of the current year, 1848.

3. Provision for Denominational, or Mixed, Schools.

I addressed a Circular to the Heads of City and Town Corporations on the provisions of this Act, and the best means of efficiently and economically organizing Common Schools in Cities and Towns. There is one provision of this Act, of 1847, on which I desire to offer a few words of explanation. I refer to the power which it gives to the School Authorities of each City and Town to establish Denominational, or mixed, Schools, as they may judge expedient. It has not perhaps occurred to those who have commented on this feature of the law, that a similar provision, under a much more objectionable form, has been incorporated into each of the three Common School Acts for Upper Canada, which have been passed since 1840: (in 1841, 1843 and 1846). It has been provided in each of these Acts that any ten householders of any School Section can demand a Separate School, and a portion of the School Fund to support it. I have never seen the necessity for such a provision, in connection with any section of the Common School Law, which provides that no child shall be compelled to read any religious book, or attend any religious exercise contrary to the wishes of his parents or guardians; and, besides the apparent inexpediency of this provision of the law, it has been seriously objected to as inequitable, permitting the Roman Catholic Persuasion to have a Denominational School, but not granting a similar right, or privilege, to any one Protestant Persuasion. It has been maintained that all Religious Persuasions should be placed upon an equal footing before the law; that, although several Protestant Persuasions may be agreed as to the translation of the Scriptures which should be used, they are not agreed as to the kind and extent of the Religious Instruction which should be given in a School,—the very object contemplated in the establishment of a Separate School; and, therefore, each Protestant Persuasion should be placed upon the same footing with the Roman Catholic Persuasion. This is the case, under the provisions of the City and Town School Act, and, therefore, the Authorities of no Religious Persuasion have opposed, or petitioned against, it, as some of them did against the previous School Act. But the City and Town Common School Act of 1847 does not give the power of any one Religious Persuasion, much less to any ten householders of it, to demand a Separate School: that power is taken from all Religious Persuasions, and given to the Public School Authorities, appointed by the elected representatives of each Town, or City.

Under this Act, the efficiency of an existing Common School cannot be destroyed, and the interests of such Section divided, at the pleasure of any ten sectarian householders. The Authorities, who are responsible for all the Schools in each City, or Town, and for the means necessary to support them, are to judge whether any Denominational School at all is expedient—where it may be established, if permitted, and what amount of support it shall receive; nor does this Act of 1847 permit the election of any sectarian School Trustees, nor the appointment of a Teacher of any Religious Persuasion, or such, even for a Denominational School. Every Teacher of such School must be approved of by the Town, or City, School Authorities. There are, therefore, guards and restrictions connected with the establishment of a Denominational School