

Nor upon the public platform was he unequal to any assailant. But to the adverse criticism of the Legislature he could make no reply, against attacks from that quarter he was unarmed, and to meet the apathy or the hostility of the Government, if perchance such existed, he could bring to bear no other influence than his credit with the people, and the confidence of the country in his work. Should he venture to reply to attacks made by politicians upon the school law, or the school system, or himself, he was accused of "interfering with politics." He himself thus states it: "They would assail me without stint in hopes of crushing me, and then gag me against all defence or reply. So deeply did I feel the disadvantage and growing evil of this state of things to the Department, that in 1868 I proposed to retire, but my resignation was not accepted. . . . Nor was a recommendation to obviate this disadvantage, submitted in January 1869, adopted either, and I was left responsible in the estimation of legislators and every body else for the Department—the target of every attack in the Legislative Assembly, yet without any access to it or its members except through the press, and with no other support than the character of my work and the general confidence of the public." But there was always a greater danger to be feared than mere criticism or attack. Should the Government be engrossed with other affairs, and especially were it indifferent or hostile, a Bill might be passed through Parliament, prepared even with the best intentions, but which for want of that knowledge on the part of its promoters which only a practical experience in the working of the school system, and a profound study of the principles of school legislation can give, might contain provisions or omissions which would either impair the efficiency of the system, or be subversive of it altogether. This might be done, and the Chief Superintendent be impotent to resist, since a Government might, by listening to the would-be educational reformer in the Legislature, rather than to the executive head of the system out of it, thus grasp a majority necessary to their power. I do not believe that any Government or any Legislature would sanction a Bill which would be ruinous to popular education. But our school system is now so complex, it affects so many interests, and embraces so many principles, that I think it the easiest thing possible for legislation which proceeds without the advice of a Commission representing every interest, and made up largely of experienced educators and administrators of the school law, to impair the efficiency of the system very much indeed. So thought Dr. Ryerson when in 1849 a Bill was hurriedly passed through the Legislature without his advice, and which, although it embraced some popular and good provisions, was still so objectionable from its indifference to past experience and to the needs of the people, as he had found them to be, that rather than administer the Act he tendered his resignation. Very soon, however, Cabinet dissensions and party complications removed from office the promoters of the Bill, the Premier advised the suspension of its operation, and Dr. Ryerson was commissioned to prepare a new Bill which should embody with the popular provisions of the abandoned Act the result of his more mature knowledge and his experience gained from the working of the