



**THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS
OF ONTARIO**



A REVIEW OF THE REPORT

OF

Dr. MERCHANT

BY

**THE FRENCH CANADIAN EDUCATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO**

[A Translation from the French Original]



OTTAWA

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THE OTTAWA PRINTING COMPANY, LIMITED

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A REVIEW OF DR. MERCHANT'S REPORT ON THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO

PREFACE.

In February last, after an enquiry extending over several months (November 2, 1911 to February 8, 1912) Dr. Merchant issued to the public his "**Report on the Bilingual Schools of Ontario,**" in compliance with the instructions of the Provincial Government. The events which gave rise to this enquiry and report are too well known to be recorded here. The bilingual schools having been made the object of the most serious accusations in respect of their efficiency in the work of public instruction, the civil authority deemed it advisable to order this official and conclusive enquiry. It never occurred to any French-Canadian that an impartially conducted enquiry could possibly have any other issue than that of throwing light on the worth of our schools. Apart from the fact that certain conclusions contained in Dr. Merchant's report are open to material corrections, and that the general successes of our pupils might well have been more strongly dwelt upon, it remains clear, on the showing of the report itself, that, (1) our bilingual schools do not deserve the charges of inefficiency so lightly and so inconsistently levelled against

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them; (2) that they are worthy of the Government's attention; (3) that they deserve special consideration on its part; and (4) that the **French Canadians of Ontario** may be justly proud of their schools.

It may, possibly, seem a little late to make these remarks: **three** months have passed since the results of the enquiry were made public. But, in addition to the fact that we wished to study the tenor of the **Report** as carefully as possible, we deemed it well to allow time for the abatement of the first outcries raised on its appearance in the newspapers and in certain suspicious and sectarian quarters. It is now possible to estimate, more calmly, the value and the wisdom of the various interpretations put upon it, in the Provincial press and elsewhere.

We are sure that our fellow-citizens will both read and study all the details of this pamphlet, in order to arrive at a clear understanding of the value of the bilingual teaching given in our schools.

Bilingual teaching will, moreover, henceforth count among its strongest champions as many enlightened minds and warm hearts as there are French-Canadians in the Province of Ontario.

**L'Association Canadienne-Française
d'Education d'Ontario.**

INTRODUCTION.

In order to form a just estimate of the value of our **ONTARIO BILINGUAL SCHOOLS**, we must ascertain to what degree they educate, or are fitted to educate, when given full liberty of action, the faculties of the child entrusted to them. Their educative result may be considered from a physical, an intellectual, and a moral standpoint, each in its due proportion. In respect, however, of physical education, since **Dr. Merchant's Report on the Bilingual Schools of Ontario** has not deemed it necessary to refer to it, we may also omit any allusion to it. Our task will, therefore, consist of two parts: 1. **A general review** of the education given in these bilingual schools; 2. **A more detailed examination** of the education in question.

A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE EDUCATION
GIVEN IN THE
BILINGUAL SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO

An impartial examination of the results recorded by Dr. Merchant must convince any one that bilingual education in Ontario is far from being a failure. Notwithstanding certain reservations in the Report, the bearing of which will be discussed in due course, there remains the fact that the official admissions of the Commissioner appointed to make this enquiry are of much value to us, and rightly to be considered favourable.

Education, rationally considered, does not consist merely in supplying a child with ideas, but, above all things, in training **his mind**, in teaching him to acquire various forms of knowledge for himself, by **means of observation and reflection**. It is plain, however, that the primary school cannot perform this formative task to any very high degree, the child being still too impressionable and changeable—but it can, at least labour at it. The child must, therefore, even at this stage, be taught not merely to adorn, but to **cultivate** his understanding, to **exercise** his memory, to **discipline** his will, and to acquire **social manners** which shall be, not simply an **external polish**, but **the outcome of real, and deep-rooted feelings**.

Dr. Merchant will admit—his Report, indeed constrains him to do so—that the general results attained by our schools are, in all these respects, decidedly satisfactory, considering all the circumstances and conditions under which they exist. Before going into particulars, it may be well to draw attention to some of the chief statements of the author of the Report.

(a) INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION.

The Report bears witness to the fact that our children learn all the subjects of the educational schedule. And, in so saying, we mean that they are studied and learned as thoroughly as in the public schools. Our children have, moreover, the advantage of learning their beautiful French tongue, with as much of English as their circumstances demand—and no one will dispute the efficacy of this principle of mental training. It is established, beyond question, not only by the experience of European countries, but by that of our own as well. The particulars to be referred to presently will, moreover, lend additional force to our contention.

The memory of our children is daily cultivated in the bilingual schools. In addition to class lessons, there is the study of prayers, of the commandments of God and of Holy Church, and of the Catechism, which they are bound to learn by heart when they can read well enough to do so for themselves. The parents insist on this study, and rightly so; the child's mind, not less than his heart, draws healthy nourishment from it. There is, moreover, besides this daily exercise, a task of memorizing certain passages selected for recitation.

(b) MORAL EDUCATION.

The mere development and cultivation of the child's mind and memory will, however, be, for him, only sources of error and of regrettable lapses from virtue, if they be not guided by a firm and well-disciplined will, fitted to govern, and to pursue the accomplishment of duty to the very end. But, in order rightly to govern others, still more, rightly to govern himself, he must know how to obey and to submit to **discipline** from his earliest years. The strength of a body social is in exact proportion to its spirit of unity, which rests on **discipline**; the same holds true of the due subordination of a man's faculties: the measure of their strength is that of the will which governs them.

Now, discipline obtains in our schools. Dr. Merchant records the fact with marked satisfaction, and almost with surprise: "**The discipline in the English-French school is, as a rule, excellent. The teachers have good control and the pupils are well behaved.**"

Let it be here noted that discipline is not only an element of moral training, but also a guarantee of success in study. All teachers of experience assure us that the work and application of pupils are in proportion to the discipline of the class and the attention of the scholars. The work done in our schools must, therefore, be excellent. And that, be it added, is no insignificant result.

Discipline, however, degenerates, all too easily, into servility, and destroys, in a measure, both personality and initiative, if it be not based on the

¹Report, p. 36.

noble feeling of duty, on formal respect for authority, and on true religious piety. It follows, then, that the will must be accustomed, from an early age, to submit itself to duty, and must thenceforth have, as the motive, of this obedience, so far as may be possible, the knowledge of God, from whom all power is derived: "**There is no power but of God**"², as the Apostle St. Paul teaches us. The children in our schools are taught to acknowledge a Sovereign Master, God, a Master higher than their own desires, stronger than the powers of gold or of success, more powerful than the sum of all human forces; such is the rule of their obedience. They are taught that to submit to the authority of the teacher in school, as to that of their parents in the home, is to submit to the authority of God Himself. This is neither self-abasement nor weakness; rather, it is to understand that God is the Sovereign Master and the supreme good of every one of His creatures.

Above the control of the master, therefore, which governs the child externally, is the control of God, which governs the conscience. Above the reward or punishment of the teacher is the account every man must give to God of his thoughts, his words, and his actions. This is a yoke of discipline which is as noble as it is effectual. Such lessons as these, our children learn from a study of the catechism, and read constantly in the images of their crucified Lord, and in those of the Saints, wherewith our class rooms are adorned. It is, surely, easy to see how powerful a factor in moral education is derived from the religious character of our schools.

²Romans XIII. 1.

(c) SOCIAL EDUCATION.

It is owing to this same religious education that the children in the bilingual schools are naturally trained in a respect and love for their neighbours, the perfect development of which expands into the fine flower of politeness. Dr. Merchant, indeed, bears witness to the fact that this virtue is cultivated in our schools. "One of the most noticeable features of the schools is the politeness of the children. This is manifest, not only in the formal reception of visitors by the classes, but especially in conversation and in acts of courtesy in the school and on the playground."³

Social training, however, involves sacrifices, and is not without its difficulty for human nature. This is why the masters and mistress in bilingual schools endeavour, earnestly, to bring their pupils up to this level, by making them love their schools. This is why, also, they decorate their class rooms with taste, and render them as attractive as possible. "Excellent taste has been shown in most of the schools under the charge of the Religious communities in decorating class rooms with flowers, pictures, specimens of work, etc."

A reasoned and experienced psychology proves, beyond cavil, how great an influence is exercised on the individual temperament, on the social character, no less than on the health and progress of our children, by this good order in the class rooms. The school, therefore, is for our children, neither a bug-

³Report, p. 36.

⁴Report, p. 36.

bear, nor a kind of prison, but rather an attraction and a place of active endeavour. The air they breathe in it is the air of the Christian family and of the home. How unwise, then, would it be, as well as unjust and contrary to the true progress of education, to attempt to close classes so zealous in endeavour, so inspired with the desire of instruction and of training, so fitted to attain to notable successes! Shall these schools, so deserving of praise, be condemned to become empty? They would soon become so, were an attempt ever made to proscribe the teaching of French in them, to forbid the use of the children's mother tongue, the tongue they love, which has formed their minds, and their heart.

A more detailed Examination of the Education given in the Bilingual Schools of Ontario

It now becomes necessary to pursue in detail the analysis of Dr. Merchant's Report, in order to grasp its full significance. We shall consider, in the first place, the comparative result of our schools in the various subjects of the course, in order to set forth the successes recognized in the Report itself. We shall then proceed to examine certain objections and reservations formulated by the Commissioner entrusted with this enquiry, in order to reduce them to their true proportions.

(a) **RESULTS ATTAINED BY THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN THE VARIOUS SUBJECTS, ACCORDING TO THE REPORT.**

The following are the various subjects entered in the statistics of Dr. Merchant's Report on the Bilingual Schools of Ontario: **"THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: CONVERSATION, READING, SPELLING, COMPOSITION; ARITHMETIC, GEOGRAPHY, WRITING, DRAWING, AND THE FRENCH LANGUAGE."**

Let us examine a little more closely into the results attained in our schools and, incidentally, compare them with those of the public schools of the Province.

I. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

“English is a subject of study in all the schools visited,” so Dr. Merchant himself assures us.⁵ It is an admission which should be made much of. It may be used, with effect, against those who accuse our schools of not cultivating the English language, or of not understanding the public and private interests of our people in this part of the Dominion. What must we now think of those who asserted that English formed no part of our teaching? **“ENGLISH IS A SUBJECT OF STUDY IN ALL THE SCHOOLS VISITED,”** we repeat, with Dr. Merchant. Let us proceed with further particulars.

(a) English Conversation.

“English conversation as distinguished from the English reading finds a place in most of the schools in Eastern Ontario and in the Districts, but is seldom regarded as a separate subject of study in the schools of Essex and Kent. Where the subject is introduced, a fair beginning is being made in its development.”⁶

These results are made clearer by the following table, made up of figures borrowed from Dr. Merchant.⁷

In the 1st Form, out of

254 schools visited, 229 are marked **Passable** (from excellent to bad exclusively) or 90.15 per cent.

⁵Report, p. 22.

⁶Report, p. 50.

⁷Report, pp. 51-52.

In the 2nd Form, out of

252 schools visited, 192 are marked **Passable**, or 76.20 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

230 schools visited, 174 are marked **Passable**, or 75.65 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

163 schools visited, 143 are marked **Passable**, or 87.73 per cent.

These schools, it should be noted, are to be found in all the different French Canadian centres of the Province, that is to say, in Russell, Prescott, Carleton, Nipissing, Algoma, Simcoe and Kent. The French Canadian population of these districts being chiefly agricultural, it is evident that their children have not all the facilities for attending school which could be wished for. The parents have, moreover, difficulty in obtaining male or female teachers. We must, however, admit that the results are far from being as contemptible as certain unimportant newspapers or short-sighted politicians might be inclined to suppose. Dr. Merchant, himself, bears witness to this fact of the success of our schools, since he attributes their failure in certain cases, to a lack of educational zeal alone. "**The backwardness of the older children in the small isolated communities in the districts is frequently accounted for by the fact that these children had no opportunity of attending school when they were younger. The children who grew up to school age before the organization of these schools (by the activity of the inspectors and the missionary efforts of some of the clergy) were without the advantage of training in their earliest years.**"

“As a rule,” Dr. Merchant states elsewhere, “pupils recognize words readily and read without hesitation, but with a more or less distinctly marked French accent.

“The reading is usually expressionless, but exceptions are found in a few schools where the training is exceptionally good.”

We may note, in passing, this witness to the fact that English reading, in our schools is, “as a rule” done without hesitation, which is no small result. In respect of the “French accent,” laid to the charge of the pupils and their teachers when they speak English, we shall see, presently, in a special paragraph, how much importance is to be attached to it. The following figures will, in the meantime, lend strong support to the general assertion of the Report, above referred to¹⁹:

In the 1st Form, out of

207 schools visited, 156 are marked **Passable**, or 75.36 per cent.

In the 2nd Form, out of

252 schools visited, 178 are marked **Passable**, or 70.63 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

230 schools visited, 171 are marked **Passable**, or 74.35 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

163 schools visited, 145 are marked **Passable**, or 88.94 per cent.

¹⁹Report, p. 71.

²⁰*Ibid*, p. 53.

²¹Report, pp. 54, 55.

Do the public schools, it may fairly be asked, obtain more wonderful results in the matter of English reading? Does the merit of not having a "**French accent**" confer a certificate of honour? It does not seem to be so, if we may judge by the official reports on the **public schools** and even on the **Collegiates** and **High Schools**.

(a) Mr. H. B. Spotton, after a tour of inspection in 13 **Collegiates** and 40 **High Schools**, reports as follows:¹¹

"As in former years, special attention has been given by the Inspectors to the examination of pupils in certain Lower School subjects, including Reading and Spelling. I examined 2,142 pupils in Reading, and of these I grade, 44 per cent. as good, 43 per cent. as fair, 13 per cent. as poor. The corresponding percentages of the previous year, in a different set of schools, were 48, 40, and 12. The pupils examined in Reading belonged exclusively to the Lower School. Those tested in Spelling were of all grades. I examined 3,396 pupils in the latter subject, and of these I grade 30 per cent. as good, 38 per cent. as fair, and 32 per cent. as poor or bad. The corresponding percentages of the previous year, in the other set of schools, were 35, 34, and 35. The results of the tests made by me in the course of the year are not quite so favourable in either of these subjects, as those of the year before. The schools examined, however, are not the same, so that the comparison must not be unduly pressed."

A careful examination of these figures shows that our schools are far from being exposed to

¹¹Report of Minister of Education, Ontario, for 1911, pp. 356 and 359.

blame. We must not forget that it was towards this very matter of the study of English that the examination of our institutions was specially directed.

If, however, the evil is so marked in the public institutions of secondary instruction, the **Collegiates** and **High Schools**, what must we look for in the case of the public primary schools? We shall no longer wonder at the exceedingly forcible criticisms directed by the **Ontario Educational Association** against the **primary** and **secondary** education of the public schools of the Province. This body of teachers, at their recent meeting in Toronto, in taking note of this lowering of the standard of school teaching, were not without just cause for disquiet, if we may believe the public sheets.¹² "**Ontario Educational System was subjected to criticism by several speakers at today's session of the Ontario Educational Association.**" Professor G. H. Weedler, of Toronto University, declared it "**a crime against the nation.**" **He proposed the lengthening of the public schools course. Inspector J. H. Putman, of Ottawa, asserted that the rural school system was breaking down for want of teachers and for want of school population.**"

It is no part of our task to trace the genesis of this weakness in the teaching of the public schools nor to apportion the responsibility where it severally belongs, but it ill becomes anyone, in the face of these facts, to raise an outcry over the alleged "**fiasco**" of our bilingual schools. Dr. Merchant's evidence assumes, in the light of this comparison, a singular value which we should be remiss in not emphasizing. No one, at all events, has thought of

¹²*Evening Citizen*, Ottawa, April 12, 1912.

asserting that our schools are "a crime against the nation." Should there be any who are disposed to think so, it may fairly be presumed that they have something to gain in placing them on a level with the others.

Are we to infer, then, that it is the desire of this worthy body of professors to bring the bilingual schools under public control?

(c) English Spelling.

To return, however, to Dr. Merchant's Report.¹³ "I found that a fair proportion of the words assigned were well prepared. When the assignment is taken from the speller sufficient attention is seldom given to the meaning of the words as used in sentences."

These results, it must be admitted, are more than encouraging. Let the reader be good enough to examine the following figures of the Report:

In the 2nd Form, out of

235 schools visited, 154 are marked **Satisfactory**, or
65.53 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

227 schools visited, 119 are marked **Satisfactory**, or
78.84 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

157 schools visited, 144 are marked **Satisfactory**, or
91.71 per cent.

Here, again, we may fairly draw an optimistic conclusion as to the happy results of such teaching.

¹³Report, p. 56.

Nor does the showing of the public schools tend to lessen this feeling. The remarks of Mr. Inspector Spotton,¹⁴ annexed to the report of Mr. J. A. Houston,¹⁵ Inspector of **Collegiates** and **High Schools**, are significant in this connection.

The failure, moreover, of education in certain public schools of Ontario is not so exclusively confined to them that it cannot be found in other countries, where education is organized on very similar lines. Not long ago, the **Wall Street Journal**, of **New York**, the President of the **National Bank** of Chicago, and a hundred other enquiries, developed the inroads of ignorance in the United States. "It is heart-rending," say they, "to pay such large salaries, and to put up such fine buildings for children who learn neither to count nor to spell."

The balance sheet of the successes of our schools, according to Dr. Merchant himself, is far from showing such a deplorable an appearance; their activities are not, therefore wholly futile.

(d) English Composition.

Many of our French Canadian children make a good showing in English composition even in the primary bilingual school. "Many pupils whose attainments in conversation are satisfactory have but little power of expressing themselves in written form. On the other hand, in a few schools, the pupils' ability in writing was found to be in advance of their power of conversation. This was notably

¹⁴Report of Minister of Education Ontario, 1912, pp. 356 and 359.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 363.

the case in the senior fourth class in the R.C.S.S. No. 10, Alfred (village of Alfred), and the R.C.S.S. No. 6, Russell, (village of Embrun) where I received some unusually good exercises in composition.'"¹⁰

It may be well to note that these very special praises are given to schools situated in the most French districts of Ontario. Is that sufficiently significant?

One may at least, fairly infer therefrom that English is capable of being taught, and well taught, in bilingual school where French is not neglected: "I received some unusually good exercises in composition." Pray note, "Unusually good exercises in English Composition."!!!

The following table gives the results for English composition, according to Dr. Merchant. It proves, without circumlocution, how a suitable standard of English composition may be attained by degrees, in proportion to the progress made in the scholastic programme: attention in first given to composition in French, the language in which the pupils think; thence they proceed to English composition, in the higher classes, the 3rd and 4th Forms. It is the method which succeeds because it is natural and normal.

In the 2nd Form, out of

212 schools visited, 87 are marked **Satisfactory**, or 41.04 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

230 schols visited, 132 are marked **Satisfactory**, or 57.39 per cent.

¹⁰Report, p. 58.

In the 4th Form, out of

163 schools visited, 128 are marked **Satisfactory**, or 78.53 per cent.

Such successes, in this last subjects, are, in effect, nothing short of "**Excellent.**" The same holds true of other forms of the study of the English language. Thus, the author of the Report himself is constrained to admit: **One can say that the children who leave the third and fourth forms of certain schools are acquiring the power to speak, to read, and to write (English.)**"

Really? It is interesting to hear such assertions put forth by one who is certainly impartial. A child can, therefore, leave certain of our schools after having learned to speak, to read, and to write English. This has long been our own view of the matter, and one which we have even expressed to those who had a right to hear it.

We are by no means sorry to see our assertion borne out by the official inspector of the Government. We feel confident that the Province of Ontario will believe him, at all events, nor should we object, were it to prove to be the case. We could wish for nothing better than that the Province of Ontario, the whole of Canada, indeed, should repeat, with one voice, in unison, Dr. Merchant's words: "**One can say that the children who leave the third and fourth forms of certain schools (bilingual) are acquiring the power to speak, to read, and to write English.**"

Our own opinion, Sir, is that the result would be the same wherever our schools find their perfect

"Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 60.

development without hindrance from external obstacles.

II. ARITHMETIC.

Our examination of the report of the enquiry has been more searching in respect of the English language, since that is, evidently, the crucial point at issue. It would, however, be unjust to infer that the other subjects of the scholastic programme are neglected. Dr. Merchant asserts that it is not so, and produces proof in support of his assertions. In respect of arithmetic, he says: "**As in English schools, arithmetic receives a great deal of attention.**"¹⁸ In proof whereof: ¹⁹

In the 1st Form, out of

248 schools visited, 241 are marked **Passable**, or 99.14 per cent.

In the 2nd Form, out of

245 schools visited, 224 are marked **Passable**, or 91.83 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

227 schools visited, 145 are marked **Passable**, or 63.88 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

162 schools visited, 104 are marked **Passable**, or 64.19 per cent.

The above is sufficiently plain to need no comment. We ask whether the public schools can make

¹⁸Report, p. 62.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 63, 64.

as good a showing. The public reports do not lead one to suppose so. However, we may proceed, without insisting on the point.

III. GEOGRAPHY.

"Some of the teachers who have had training are making efforts to carry out the course as outlined for the different grades in the public school course of study, and some good work is found in their classes."²¹ The figures are significant. It will be noted that this "good work" is to be found in a respectable number of our schools.

In the 3rd Form, out of

168 schools visited, 141 are marked **Satisfactory**, or 63.92 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

152 schools visited, 111 are marked **Satisfactory**, or 73.02 per cent.

IV. WRITING.

"The hand-writing of pupils on the average is the same as that of the same standing in English schools," says Dr. Merchant.²²

As a matter of fact, this is faint praise since Mr. J. A. Houston, in the report above referred to, makes the following statement:²³

"The writing of the majority of the schools (Collegiates and High Schools) is still lamentably

²¹Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 56.

²²Report, p. 65.

²³Report of the Dept. of Education, 1911, p. 363.

weak. It is quite a common occurrence to find a whole first form in which there are not more than one or two good writers." Dr. Merchant's statement, indeed, appears to say little in order to convey more, inasmuch as he adds: "Some of the teachers, especially those belonging to religious communities, have given the subject special attention, and the proficiency of their pupils is very creditable."²³ In testimony whereof:

In the 2nd Form, out of

245 schools visited, 242 are marked Passable, or 98.78 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

227 schools visited, 226 are marked Passable, or 99.56 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

164 schools visited, 164 are marked Passable, or 99.39 per cent.

The comments of the authors of the Report, indeed, and it is well to repeat it, are not more emphatic than the figures warrant; there are those who would have spoken of such a result as "marvellous and most encouraging."

V. DRAWING.

"In a few schools I found exceptionally good work in object drawing, both in white and black colours. Several of the teachers had taken special courses of study in art, and a good beginning in the subject is being made in the schools under their charge."²⁴

²⁴Report, p. 67.

Results of the enquiry :

In the 2nd Form, out of

134 schools visited, 128 are marked **Passable**, or 95.52 per cent.

In the 3rd Form, out of

138 schools visited, 133 are marked **Passable**, or 96.40 per cent.

In the 4th Form, out of

113 schools visited, 108 are marked **Passable**, or 95.54 per cent.

What better could be asked for? Our children learn English as well in our schools as in the public schools, and they show results, besides, which place them in honourable competition with the latter, to say the least. And yet these are schools which are spoken of as having failed in their task, as schools which ought to be made into public schools! What possible motive can there be for such assertions save prejudice and an incomprehensible desire to babble about unknown facts, or facts that it is not advisable to admit. The game is a stale one, but, though carried on for many hundreds of years, it has not become endowed with the prudence and justice which indicate greatness of soul and the feeling of honour.

It now remains for us to deal with certain reservations and complaints made by Dr. Merchant, either in the course of his Report, or in his conclusions. This will be our task in the following chapter.

²²Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 68.

(D) REMARKS AND REPLIES IN RESPECT OF THE
COMPLAINTS OF THE REPORT AGAINST
THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS
OF ONTARIO

I. DR. MERCHANT'S CONCLUSION.

After reading the preceding pages, there can be no doubt that our schools are entitled to a diploma of honour, but, as a matter of fact, it is not so. What, one may ask, is the conclusion arrived at by the author of the Report? It is as follows, and is worthy of careful attention:

"It is evident from an examination of the results of all the tests applied that the English-French schools are on the whole lacking in efficiency. The tests combine to show that a large proportion of the children in the communities concerned leave school to meet the demands of life with an inadequate equipment in education."²⁶

The "evident," in this case, is hardly borne out by the tables of statistics given above. Is not Dr. Merchant's conclusion far less generous than the tables that precede it? Let us look at matters a little more closely. Let us put our bilingual schools into direct comparison with the public primary schools in respect of the study of the English lang-

²⁶Report, p. 69.

uage, religious instruction, the development of artistic taste, discipline, politeness, and other class subjects, to all of which points the Report makes reference, and see what we may find.

In regard to **English**, we have already seen the startling statements of the **Inspectors of Collegiates and High Schools**, which indicate, plainly enough, what may be expected, in an even greater degree, in the case of public primary schools: **A serious want of success** is admitted. In regard to our bilingual schools, Dr. Merchant acknowledges that, on leaving the third and fourth forms of certain schools, the pupils have learned to speak, to read, and to write English, and that, if certain pupils have been marked "**passable**" or "**poor**," it is on account of their too-restricted vocabulary, notwithstanding the ease with which they express themselves in English; others, on account of their difficulty in making a good use of a fuller vocabulary. And he continues: "**Were the pupils of either class (forms 3 and 4) to reside for a few months in an English-speaking community, they would soon begin to find themselves at home among the people.**"²⁷ How does this bear out the general conclusion of the Report? Is this what is called a "**failure**" in the matter of elementary schools?

Other subjects of study: The remarks of the author of the Report, given and studied above, show that the average results are "**GOOD**" and even "**EXCELLENT**" in respect of reading and drawing, whereas, in the case of the public schools, "**writing in the case of the public schools is still lamentably weak.**"²⁸ And yet, in the face of this,

²⁷Report, p. 60.

²⁸Report of the Dept. of Education, 1911, p. 363.

we are to be pitied, and brought under the control of public authority!

IN RESPECT OF DISCIPLINE: "The discipline in the English-French schools is, as a rule, excellent."²⁹ We trust it may be possible to say as much of all the schools of the Province.

IN RESPECT OF GOOD MANNERS: "One of the most noticeable features of the schools (English-French) is the politeness of the children."³⁰ They can hardly fail to foster the spirit of work and consequently, ensure a certain measure of success. Could the public schools make a better showing in this matter? "Excellent taste has been shown in most of the schools in decorating class rooms with flowers, pictures, specimens of work, etc."³¹ This proves, at least, that we have teachers who are conscious of their obligations.

And, in spite of all this, Dr. Merchant thinks that the bilingual pupils are destined to leave their schools "with an inadequate equipment in education." Yet they know drawing, geography, arithmetic, English composition, reading, and orthography; they even possess all these acquirements in a very high degree, but it is, none the less "an inadequate equipment in education" on leaving an elementary school! Let those understand who can.

Or is it that our **PRIMARY** bilingual schools must compete with the public **SUPERIOR** institutions, in order to obtain certificate of efficiency?

Unless, indeed, it is because our schools add the study of **FRENCH AND OF RELIGIOUS KNOWL-**

²⁹Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 36.

³⁰Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 36.

EDGE to the ordinary course, that they give an **INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT** for the journey of life. In that respect, they most assuredly do not resemble the public schools.

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE. In the **public primary schools**, French is omitted, that to say, despised and treated as a foreign language! In the **public secondary schools**, when it is found it undergoes a perfect **martyrdom** of syntax and pronunciation. Net results: None.

In the **primary bilingual schools**: "Pupils are improving their forms of speech, learning to read and write French, and are laying the foundations for the higher study of the French language and literature in the **High Schools or University.**"²¹

Does it not follow that our schools can be successful in the two languages?

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. The **public schools** in which lessons are given on religious subjects were reduced from **1396** in **1909** to **1164** in **1910**, out of a total of **5934** public schools in the Province.²² A noble progress, truly!

It is important, however, to note that we must deduct from this number **121** bilingual schools, Catholic in fact, though officially catalogued as public, and a certain number of public schools where, the Catholics of English speech forming the majority, religious instruction must be given. One may easily infer, from these figures, what kind of moral and religious training must be given in the

²¹Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 36.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 69.

²³Report of the Dept. of Education, 1911, p. 31.

majority of public schools, which become, by that very fact, absolutely **neutral**.

Thank God, our separate and public bilingual schools give a thorough religious education.

That, on the strength of this report, the commissioner's conclusion should indicate an educational **quasi-disaster** in our schools, is really a little too strong. It is worth while to take Dr. Merchant's somewhat pessimistic allegations one by one, in order to subject them to a close and minute examination.

II. REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL.

Dr. Merchant's statement: (a) "It became evident shortly after I began the inspection of the English-French schools of Essex, that I was likely to find unusual irregularities in the attendance of pupils, in both urban and rural schools, which might seriously affect their efficiency."²⁴ (b) "The regularity of attendance in the rural schools of Eastern Ontario is about the same as in rural schools in other parts of the Province, but in certain urban industrial centres, the attendance is unusually irregular."²⁵

The following extenuating circumstances are noted by Dr. Merchant:

(a) "Labour conditions in Essex and Kent are somewhat exceptional. A large proportion of the land in the French-Canadian settlements is given up to market gardening, or to the raising of crops such as tomatoes, corn and sugar-beets, which

²⁴Report, p. 20.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 21.

require a great amount of individual labour in planting, care and harvesting. Children are required to do a considerable share of this work.¹²⁶

(b) "The attendance in the rural schools of the districts is also irregular, especially during the winter season. Many of the pupils live at long distances from the schools, and it is impossible for them to attend regularly in stormy weather. (Ibid).

These abstentions, indeed, depend on circumstances which in no way reflect on our system of schools, nor on the devotion which the pupils should have to them.

The following comparison, moreover, is enlightening:

1. In the **separate schools**, which amounted, in 1910, to 484 for the whole Province, the number of children enrolled being 57,263, the average daily attendances were 36,381, or a percentage of 63.53 per cent.

2. The **public schools**, which numbered 5,924 in 1910, with an enrollment of 401,882, the average attendances were 242,977, or an annual percentage of 60.45. In 1911, our separate bilingual schools amounted, in numbers to 226, and we may fairly infer that they kept their due share of this average of 1910.¹²⁷ Are our schools really more to be pitied than the public schools?

The following more detailed table will show how the separate schools, which include ours, yield in no way to the public schools in the matter of better attendance:¹²⁸

¹²⁶Report, p. 21.

¹²⁷Report of the Dept. of Education, pp. 19 and 20.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 46, 50, 54.

SEPARATE SCHOOLS,

	Total Attendance.	Average Attendance.	p.c.
Toronto	6,703	4,165	62%
Windsor	1,962	720	68%
Amherstburg	367	224	61%
Ottawa	8,713	5,770	66%
Prescott & Russell ..	5,200	3,186	61%
Hawkesbury	1,044	648	62%
Essex	2,016	1,154	57%
Walkerville	111	82	73%
Blind River.	270	213	79%
Sturgeon Falls	439	256	58%
Mattawa	304	198	65%
Steelton	313	193	61%
Rockland	793	532	67%
Kent	393	203	51%
Haileybury	270	181	67%

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

	Total Attendance.	Average Attendance.	p.c.
Toronto	43,373	32,300	74%
Windsor	1,836	1,404	72%
Amherstburg	304	178	59%
Ottawa	7,306	4,921	67%
Prescott & Russell..	4,119	2,232	64%
Hawkesbury	188	199	58%
Essex	5,656	8,042	54%
Walkerville	425	288	67%
Blind River	207	153	74%
Sturgeon Falls	258	148	57%
Mattawa	70	36	57%
Steelton	592	319	52%
Rockland	76	45	49%
Kent	6,587	3,582	54%
Haileybury	527	316	60%

If the public will examine this comparative table, drawn from the official Report presented to the Government for 1911, they will see how much weight should be attached to the acrimonious complaints of individuals who are Francophobes to the very tips of their fingers.

III. COMPETENCE OF THE TEACHERS.

(a) Teaching Certificates.

“There can be no doubt whatever but that the efficiency of the English-French schools is seriously lowered by the employment of teachers holding certificates of the lower grades.”²⁰

We are entirely in agreement with Dr. Merchant on this point. It is a serious drawback to our schools that they should have so few teachers, and still fewer **legally qualified**. This does not imply that those who have not their **official rank** are by any means unfit to teach, since it is on record that circumstances wholly unconnected to their worth as teachers often prevent their obtaining certificates known as “**first class** or “**second class**.” Let the Government of Ontario, and the Department of Education make it possible for our male and female teachers to obtain these certificates, and not only will the majority of them be deserving of them, but the staff of our bilingual schools will be increased in number without losing anything of its quality. The members of our religious orders would soon become capable and meritorious teachers, were they once relieved of the necessity of leaving their convents to undergo courses incompatible with their condition and the dignity of their calling.

Moreover, are we the only ones who have teachers not legally qualified? Let us see how matters stand in the public schools! The following table is not a little suggestive, and leaves the teaching staff of our bilingual schools in a very favourable position alongside of that of the public schools, which have all privileges and all favours.

²⁰Report, p. 71.

(1.) PRIMARY EDUCATION.

BILINGUAL SCHOOLS. Out of 538 teachers, 151 possess third class certificates (as they are called), 6 have a "district" certificate, and 141 have "temporary certificates."

PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Out of 9369 teachers, 1942 have third class certificates, 298 have a "district" certificate, and 1148 have the "temporary."

In 1911, out of 2280 temporary certificates granted, only 125 were for the bilingual schools.

(2.) SECONDARY EDUCATION.

BILINGUAL SCHOOLS. There are two schools that have the right to grant what are known as "third class" certificates, which are available for five years. These two are the school at Ottawa, of which Mr. L. E. C. Payment, M. A. L. L. M., is the principal, and the one at Sturgeon Falls, of which Mr. H. A. Jacques, B. A., a graduate of the Toronto Faculty of Education, is the principal.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS. There are the Collegiates and the High Schools, with 646 graduates in 1911, and 252 non graduates, and a percentage of 59.35 specialists and 40.64 non-specialists.

"Continuation Schools." There are 39 graduate teachers against 179 non-graduate, giving a result of 17.88% graduate, against 82.11 non-graduate, with an addition of 4 specialists."

*Report of the Dept. of Education, 1911, pp. 379, 463, 474, 22, 25.

Is it not evident that the public schools "must be **seriously lowered by the employment of such a large proportion of teachers holding certificates of the lower grades?**" Yet no one thinks of abolishing them!

These figures, moreover, do not, probably, reveal their full significance to any one not familiar with the Ontario school system. There is, nevertheless, a fact which the whole Dominion can and should know, namely that the Province of Ontario has **never** been willing to grant to Catholics either a **Collegiate** or a **High School**, or a **Normal School**, in other words, any place of secondary education where our Catholic teachers can **qualify** as such.

And yet the French Canadians of Ontario **alone**, pay **one-tenth** of the Government revenues from school taxes! Do they receive anything in return for this outlay? Does the trifling grant assigned them for their primary schools exhaust the whole sum? We shall see, presently what the subsidies granted them really come to.

If it be answered that the institutions of pedagogical training existing in the Province are open to every one and that our teachers have only to go there, we reply, with all the strength of our faith and of our proud patriotism, that our **conscience** forbids us to attend these schools, and, thank God, **conscience** is still a principle which weighs with us.

Our unalterable conviction that education penetrates to the most secret fibres of the individual is too deeply rooted to allow us to believe that attendance at neutral normal schools and other institutions can be anything but a danger to our faith and to our speech, those two sacred treasures bequeathed

to us by ancestors whom we revere, and which we therefore desire to keep always gloriously alive in our own souls. Certain unfortunate facts, moreover, exist which forbids our setting foot on a soil which affords no sure resting-place for our beliefs. If, under the stress of unavoidable necessity, we have been obliged, in some cases, to tolerate such a course, God knows with hom much unwillingness, and much anxiety, we have given way. Yet it remains true that such a state of affairs says very little for British "broadmindedness and fair play."

(b) Teacher's Mastery of English.

A serious fault found by Dr. Merchant with our teachers, is the unfitness of a certain number to teach English on account of their imperfect pronunciation of that language. They have a "French accent" which offends the Doctor's ear.

"Of the teachers (588) in English-French Schools (269), 22 have not sufficient command of English to speak the language with any degree of freedom, 18 others, whose attainments are somewhat higher than those mentioned are yet so lacking in ability or confidence in the use of the language that they are unfitted to be teachers of English. Many of the remaining teachers speak English with a French accent which is more or less marked. Otherwise they use the language with a fair degree of ease and correctness."⁴¹

Let us sum up. 22 teachers know too little English, 18 have a better grasp of it, although still an imperfect one, and many of the rest pronounce it in a French fashion.

⁴¹Report, p. 16.

There are, therefore, 40 teachers out of 588 who do not know English well enough, making an average of 8%. And, if that be still a large number, too large, as we think, we may fairly draw attention to the scanty assistance given by the Provincial Government to the recruitment of the staff of bilingual schools. On the one hand, that number of children in French Canadian families, on the other, the difficulty of access to public examinations, at which our teachers would have to present themselves after a year's course in a normal school not made for them, without, moreover, obtaining the special training which would make them peculiarly fitted for work in our **Catholic** and **bilingual** schools. All this is a sufficient explanation of the relative weakness of a small number of our teachers in respect of a knowledge of English. And justice compels us to add that these teachers are, as a rule, put in charge of the lower forms, where the young children, according to Dr. Merchant himself, ought to be taught in their mother tongue. "The best results," he says, "are obtained when the medium of instruction is in the beginning the mother tongue. Life, in the ordinary school, is so different from the life of the home, that the child, on the entrance to school, finds himself in a strange and perplexing environment. He is bewildered if the language he hears in his lessons has no meaning for him, and for a long time he makes but little progress."⁴²

"Many of the remaining teachers speak English with a French accent although with a fair degree of ease and correctness."⁴³ Indeed! Is that a

⁴²Report, p. 72.

crime of high treason? Have Irish, Scots, Welsh Cockneys, (the English of London itself), Yankees, each and all a mouth which forms the Saxon syllables with an equal harmony? We know perfectly well that each has his own accent, his trick of the jaw, even his **brogue**. Do Ontarians who visit England lose their "**Colonial accent**" all of a sudden. Happy the Germans of Ontario who have not to undergo a commission of enquiry as to their English accent at school! Gauls, Irish, Scots, even English and Yankees, beware of betraying your descent by your speech, lest you fall under censure.

But, to return to a more serious mood, let us gladly admit that there are many who, leaving our bilingual institutions, have given to their use of a language other than their own, all the perfection of accent that can be desired, and, the occasion arising, no one has ever found fault with the savour of raciness with which they adorned this alien product. Let us mention only a few examples; such names as those of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Messrs. Monk, Lemieux, Belcourt, Champagne, Mageau, a number of French Canadian members of the House of Commons, or of the Provincial Legislature; His Honour, Mr. Justice Constantineau, a large number of French Canadians in business and manufacture, etc., etc.

From whence we may infer that the "**French accent**" of our bilingual teachers is not a fault to be seriously quarrelled with, so long as they strive after the correctness and the finish needed for such an accentuation of the English language as shall serve

*Report, p. 16.

for the understanding and the harmony of their speech.

V. THE STUDY OF FRENCH.

Our children's teachers have a **French accent**.

This may be due to the fact that they studyFrench! As a matter of fact, while devoting themselves to the other subjects of the course, which they manage to master in what is, after all, a satisfactory fashion, they devote themselves to **French** since, moreover, this is the most beautiful of modern languages, the richest and most exact, the most harmonious and most flexible, the most susceptible of delicate atticisms and fine shades of meaning, the language of Kings and diplomatists, has a man to be pitied because it **is his**; because he must learn it, and would rather die than ever forget it? But why strive to express the excellences of the French language? A whole volume of praises might be compiled from what foreigners alone have said of it. It would, indeed, be a golden book! Only recently, on the judicial bench, an honourable English magistrate of Ottawa,[†] complained of the "**inaccuracy of the English language, which uses one word to express so many different ideas, whereas French is one of the best languages in this respect.**"¹⁴

It would be interesting, in this connection, to accumulate evidence of this nature. If will, however suffice for our purpose to recall the fact that our Sovereign, George V., sends the Princes of the Royal Blood across the Channel to learn the lang-

[†]Judge Liddell of the High Court see the *Citizen*, Ottawa; April 24, 1912.

uage of Louis XIV.; and that His Excellency, Earl Grey, recommended the study of French to the pupils of an English college in Winnipeg, at the same time that the **News** of Toronto proclaimed its in-prescriptible rights.⁴⁵

At the risk of offending certain shortsighted and restricted minds, our children will continue to learn their French language, they will be encouraged thereto by the principles of an enlightened pedagogy, no less than by the ineradicable feelings of a faithful and wise patriotism. Nor is it the English of good race, heirs of the true British nobility and largeness of mind, of whom, thank God, there are still some left; it is not the Irish who have the true feeling of national strength, such as those who lately congratulated M. Bourassa on his stand on the question of races in Canada, and were not afraid to assert "that which is just in Ireland is equally just in Canada;"⁴⁶ nor, finally, will any man who has a real sense of justice and dignity, ever blame us for so unalterable an attachment to our language. If others are offended at it, that is no concern of ours.

Our pupils learn French because their parents wish them to learn French, and the first school masters are not the teachers, nor the state, but the parents, in virtue of a natural right. The parents wish the children to learn their language because it is their duty no less than their right, a right and a duty which have their roots in natural morality it-

⁴⁵*Le Devoir*, March 18, 1912.

⁴⁶See, also, what Lord Mudley said on this subject in April, 1909 (*Bilingualism in Ontario*) Ottawa French Canadian Educational Association of Ontario, 1911, p. 10.

self, and which no positive law can obliterate or cancel on any pretext whatsoever. The French language is also taught in our schools because it is one of the only two official languages of the country; and the older. Nor did it sue for this place; rather, it was one that justice recognized. As His Grace the Archbishop of Montreal so well asserted lately: "**Our language is at home in our country. To say that it is merely tolerated is a great mistake. It is no more tolerated here than it is tolerated on the great and glorious coat of arms on which every subject of the British Empire looks with so much pride, and which bears, for all to read the motto: DIEU ET MON DROIT.**"

The province of Ontario, therefore, instead of demanding, with hue and cry, the suppression of the French language, or of only granting it a *modus vivendi* which is intended gradually to bring about its disappearance or its death,—an event not likely to happen soon, be it said—would better serve the interests of the whole country and its own, by respecting and causing to be respected the mother tongue of several hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants, the most attached to its soil, the most strongly united social element, and the surest pledge of loyalty to England on which Canada can ever rely.

Whatever may be the case in respect of the social interests of our English-speaking fellow subjects, in this Province which will fatally condemn itself to an evident inferiority so long as it fails seriously to undertake the task of familiarizing its subjects with the two languages officially used in the Parliament of the country, we, at least, will

continue to learn French, without in any way discriminating against English. And, in so doing, we shall labour at the development of our pupils' minds at widening the horizon of their ideas, at the quickening of their mentality, at giving them that undeniable, incisive penetration which is derived from the genius of the Latin tongues, and which characterizes, to a greater or less degree, the nations who speak more than one language. The ancient States of Europe are, indeed, still wise enough to understand this. People in France learn English or German. In England, in Italy, and in Germany, French forms part of the official course of studies. In Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland, bilingualism has its acknowledged place in the political, no less than in the scholastic world. Learned men of high rank, and aristocrats of good birth would be far from wishing to banish from a community so effectual a leaven of vitality and of growth. What is needed for such a purpose is the utter narrowness of these individuals whose bat-like blindness is their great misfortune.

Let it be well understood, however, that it is by no means our idea that English shall not receive its due meed of attention in our schools. Our aim is, rather, that our pupils shall gain as perfect a knowledge of English as possible, and it is on that very account, quite as much as for all the reasons above cited, that we insist on French in our schools.

Are we to be threatened with the petty vengeance of being deprived of public grants? Who, as a matter of fact, really keeps up our schools? Let us see. The Provincial Government grants, according to the Report of 1911, are distributed as

Essex	\$17,059 59
Kent	3,882 23
Prescott and Russell	42,475 06
Dundas, Stormont and Glengarry	5,989 59
Ottawa	108,235 52
Windsor	11,775 65
Blind River	3,837 45
Bonfield	813 64
Chelmsford	1,475 00
Cobalt	7,097 82
Haileybury	2,700 00
Hawkesbury	4,310 55
Rockland	4,508 75
Sandwich	2,065 10
Sturgeon Falls	3,542 15
Steeltown	3,389 00
Walkerville	684 94
	<hr/>
	\$226,942 07

On this showing, it would be for the \$15,000.00 granted by the Government to the separate schools, both English and French, in districts inhabited by French Canadians, that these latter would give up the teaching of their language in school. Apart from the fact that the withdrawal of their share of the school funds would merely tend to increase the school rate by about 25 cents per family, it is not for gold or silver that they will part with the treasure of their language, a treasure which they feel coursing in their veins, and vibrating in their souls.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find, in this connection, that Dr. Merchant should have found French taught everywhere, with about three excep-

tions, those of schools situated in the diocese of London: "French is a subject of study in all schools visited except P.S.S. No. 9, Tilbury North, P.S.S. No. 1, Tilbury East, and St. Alphonse R. C. Separate School, Windsor."⁴⁷

The author of the Report, who confesses to not being very well up in French,⁴⁸ admits, nevertheless, that the study of it produces good results. "No systematic examination of pupils in French was made during the inspection of schools, but I had many opportunities of estimating the training. As in the case of other subjects, results vary with the character of the teacher employed. Where good teachers are employed, the pupils are improving their forms of speech, learning to read and to write French, and are laying the foundation for the higher study of French language and literature in the Higher Schools or University."

Our French Canadian pupils will always have a sufficient love of their language to make their progress in this matter as brilliant as possible.

(6) TRANSITION FROM FRENCH TO ENGLISH.

The preceding paragraph lays intentional stress on the fact that, for the very study of English, a grasp of the mother tongue is indispensable. It may be well to note, here, that the English language, when reduced to its elements, contains 36,000 words, of which 21,000 are of Latin-French origin, as was stated, not long since, by Mr. Adolphe Cohu, at the

⁴⁷Report, p. 23.

⁴⁸Report, p. 69.

University of Columbia, in a lecture on the relations between the English and a French languages.[†] There is no need, however, to insist on this incontestable principle of pedagogy. The formula of advance from the known to the unknown is a very old one. In the study, therefore, of English grammar and syntax, we must take account of the fundamental grammar which lies at the root of all human speech, not less than of what may be termed "contemporary" grammar, which is the common possession of living languages, and is simply the expression of the human mind in its actual and most universal characters.

Unless we wish to teach a child a language as we should teach a parrot, we must make him use his reason in regard to it, we must show him the basis of universal grammar on which it rests, with the specific and differential notes which constitute its essential form. Difficult as this method may appear, it is the only rational one. It must be practised in proportion to the degree of instruction given, under penalty of **clothing** the child with grammatical notions, instead of **imbuing** him with them. The experience of really thoughtful teachers proves, superabundantly, that the development of the child's natural logic is the perfect and only means of really instructing him since the procedure here outlined is nothing else than that of **making the pupil reflect**, according to the powers of his mind, at every stage of his growth. There must, moreover, be deduced immediately from this principle that the true method of thus training a child, of causing him to **make use of his mind**, is not to

[†]*Le Devoir*, 27 Nov., 1911.

transport him into surroundings absolutely foreign to his thought and to his imagination. As Dr. Merchant himself has so well said recently. **“He is bewildered if the language he hears in his lessons has no meaning for him, and for a long time he makes but little progress.”**⁴⁰ The conclusion come to in regard to the so-called syllable method, and which is now being abandoned in favour of the phonetic, in the teaching of the alphabet, is here found to be of equal force: Why waste time in teaching signs which must be already known in order to be able to learn them properly? In the same way, why teach the child, by memory, a language which he does not understand, and which he would need to know already in order to grasp it? On the contrary, by the use of his own language which he speaks every day, and of which he is, in some sort, as it were, full, it will be an easy matter to make him take cognizance of it, little by little, and to lead him up to the abstractions which really form the mind.

When the child, by means of a sufficiently advanced education in his own language, shall have ripened and strengthened his power of reason, to pass to a foreign language by way of the mind, rather than by that of mere memory, by comparison with his own tongue, rather than by a sudden and violent transition into a world of strange words which convey to him no ready made ideas, we shall thereby ensure the vigour of his mental training, and give him, at the same time, the key, the genius, of the languages he is studying. These observations will, of course, be found to be of relative applica-

⁴⁰Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 72.

tion to elementary education, yet they have their place in it. One might say even more as to the psychological basis of this method, in respect of the culture which a child **must have**, according to his own life, a life made up of his language, of the words written on his brain, which are, so to speak, lodged in his ears, and are of the thoughts of his mind and the feelings of his soul. "**There is,**" says a writer, "**a national genius, a very complex temperament, an accumulated psychology, which makes it impossible for individuals to receive a real, deep, and complete training save in accordance with their national traditions, and the attempt to subject them to the rule of training of an alien nationality is to commit a grave error.**" We desire, however, to confine ourselves to the purely technical advantage of this teaching, without going any more deeply into the matter.

We are surprised, therefore, to find, under the pen of the author of the Report, and a doctor in pedagogy to boot, the assertion that the method of double instruction is the natural way of initiation into English. "**The transition from French to English is best made gradually through the method of double teaching. According to this plan, a lesson is first taught in French, and then repeated or reviewed in English.**"⁵⁰

What possible end can this repetition serve? Either the pupils will have grasped the meaning of the words, in the foreign language, in which case there is no need of making use of their own. Or else, they will not have grasped it, in which case, the repetition of the same things, in a language

⁵⁰Report, p. 73.

they do not understand, will be of no benefit to them. In addition to the time lost by this method, it is quite certain that the pupils will only retain vague ideas and some approach to the words. This, indeed, is the very admission that the Report will convey, a little farther on. The truth is, that a foreign language is learned by speaking it, and by reasoning in it. Let the minds of our children be trained by the study of their own language, and by that of the other principle subjects in the same way, and then let them be gradually initiated into English, by lessons in English, suitable to the amount of progress they have made; that is to say, with explanations in French to begin with, later on, by means of reasoned comparisons between the two languages, and, lastly, by the exclusive use of the English language for this study in the final classes of the course.

Here is one of Dr. Merchant's suggestions which is, to say the least of it, surprising: "**On the one hand, the teacher seizes every opportunity to introduce English, even when the child who is putting forth efforts comprehends but vaguely or remotely the meaning of the words.**"⁵¹

That, surely is a drastic method which can hardly make the study of a foreign idiom attractive, nor ensure a complete mastery of it: "**to comprehend,**" namely, "**but vaguely or remotely the meaning of the words.**" Dr. Merchant, indeed, being apparently conscious of the weak side of his method, immediately adds: "**On the other hand, she (the teacher) is constantly on the alert to prevent the child from learning by rote combinations of perfect-**

⁵¹Report, p. 74.

ly meaningless words." But how can a corrective of this kind be applied in the case of children unfamiliar with the language it is sought to impose on them, and who, moreover, are still infants at the age of twelve, according to the wishes of our honourable legislators.

No! Whatever may be said, it is we who maintain our schools with our money, we have the claim of natural right to the schools that we need, saving always the well-defined interests of the community of which we form part, and we will not have only one of the **two equally official languages** taught in these schools, and that language not our own. Our bilingual schools have proved their right to exist and they will go on advancing in the path of success so long as they are not starved of support, or strangled in their expansion.

VII. ENGLISH AS A CLASS SUBJECT.

The foregoing arguments show plainly **whatever are** to be understood by the study of English, according to the principles laid down. Dr. Merchant understands this, and his decision is given in the following terms:

"These teachers (who want the retention of French as the language of instruction throughout the course) would continue English as a subject of study to the end of the course. The results, in so far as the learning of English is concerned, condemn the plan. Wherever the method is followed the pupils' attainments in English are unsatisfactory. The reasons are obvious."¹⁷⁵²

¹⁷⁵²Report, p. 74.

With all possible respect to Dr. Merchant, we are constrained to reply that this assertion shows an evident ignorance of the facts. Have not all French Canadian professional men, all French Canadians of note, throughout the country, since the conquest, who have learned English in schools or colleges where English was only a class-subject, gained, generally speaking, a suitable knowledge of the English language? Of the English who have come out of public schools or **Collegiates**, out of **High Schools** or even Universities, how many are the equals, in the matter of a command of English, of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Messrs. Monk, Belcourt, Landry, etc., etc.? Is there not a nice little scheme of anglicization lurking (and not too well hidden) in all this?

VIII. AN INSULT TO OUR TEACHERS.

Doubtless teachers with exceptional training and with special gifts for teaching language can, by an extended use of the direct method of teaching, when time is at their disposal, lead pupils through a course in English which will in the end give them a sufficiently comprehensive training in conversation, composition, and reading. This work is not being done in any of the English-French schools. Teachers with the requisite qualifications are not available, nor is it likely, considering all the conditions, that it will ever be possible to secure them for this service.¹⁷⁰³

We repudiate this insult cast in the face of male and female teachers whose devotion is literally in-

¹⁷⁰³Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 75.

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conceivable, and who have enabled their pupils to obtain results which, as is shown in the statistics given above, are more than satisfactory, in **English reading, spelling, and composition**. We could produce here a long list of young people employed in Ottawa, in offices, or in the different business houses, who read, write, and speak English fully as freely and as correctly as any of the pupils who have come out of the public schools of Ottawa. And yet these young people have had for masters and mistresses those very ones who are here so unjustly disparaged by Dr. Merchant. All these young people are alive, let them be examined at first hand, if it is desired to do so. But, in that case, we shall have to ask leave to dispense with the services of Dr. Merchant, who appears to view everything through coloured spectacles.

IX. CONDEMNATION OF THE SYSTEM OF SEPARATE CLASSES.

“The system adopted in the R. C. Separate Schools at Ottawa East and Mattawa, where the classes are paralleled throughout all the grades, is wasteful of time, because two separate Form III. and Form IV. divisions are maintained in all subjects, with a small number of pupils in each. Besides, the French-speaking pupils in these schools are losing the advantage of being trained in English by teachers whose mother-tongue is English.”⁵⁴

(a) It is not a little strange that Dr. Merchant should characterize as a waste of time the fact that the mistresses are put in charge of smaller classes.

⁵⁴Dr. Merchant's Report, p. 76.

Is progress really more marked in classes where the teachers' time is most divided? What do doctors in pedagogy think about it?

(b) If the ratepayers, the parents of the children, have established this system, not less by natural logic than in a spirit of justice and sound morality, have they not a right to do so? And who, whether it be Dr. Merchant, or others of the same kidney, will dispute it? Have not parents, who pay for the education of their children, the right, at this present time, and in this Province, to have them given the education they wish for? Was that Mr. W. Scott's intention when he drew up the bilingual school law?

(c) Under this system, the children receive their teaching and their education in an atmosphere suited to each of them. Does Dr. Merchant consider that a tropical plant and a temperate-zone plant need precisely the same care and attention? He would give every possible consideration to an animal, according to the race to which it happened to belong, why, then, does he insist so strongly on treating a French-Canadian, who has his particular temperament and his national mentality, no less than a true-born Irishman or Englishman has, and ought to have his, in precisely the same way as either or both of the latter? M. Maurice Barrès, the well known and learned French writer, has truly said that "**The human plant cannot grow strong and fruitful except in so far as it remains subject to the conditions which have formed and maintained its species for centuries.**"

(d) Why, moreover should it be absolutely necessary to have English-speaking teachers in or-

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der*to speak and to write English well? That this is preferable in the case of higher education, may be admitted. But most decidedly not, when it is a question of primary education.

Experience, as a matter of fact, proves the latter contention. A number of young people, who have come out of the French section of the school referred to at Ottawa East, now hold excellent positions in the employ of important English commercial companies, such as the **Gillets, Toronto; Gamble & Murphy, Montreal; Bryson-Graham, Ltd., Ottawa,** and others. How long would they keep their positions, if they could not speak and write English properly?

(e) It may be observed, moreover, that there are very few English-Speaking masters and mistresses who know French well enough to teach it in such a way as French-Canadian parents have a right to demand. On the supposition that they do know it well enough, would the teaching of French to French Canadian children in an English class be any less a waste of time for the English-speaking children who, as a rule, know very little of English, if, indeed they may be said to know anything?

(f) In any case, this system is practically the same as in all the French schools of Ottawa or elsewhere, except that it is here put in practice in the same building, with separate classes, whereas, elsewhere, it is the school buildings that are separate. If this is permissible and effective elsewhere, why should it not be in this instance? May we suggest to the Commissioner that, according to the old proverb: "**Every man knows where his own shoe pinches him.**"

CONCLUSION.

To sum up: The following is the result of the enquiry made by Dr. Merchant, and of the study we have made of his document: Our schools have an incontestable value; their shortcomings are not due to bilingualism, but to exterior circumstances which we are the first to regret, and to desire to see removed as soon as possible. The chief cause of the deficiencies which may possibly exist is the shortage of teachers under which we suffer, and the pedagogical inexperience or lack of professional preparation of a certain number among them, relatively much smaller than in the public schools. Nor did we, by any means, have to wait for Dr. Merchant's report, in order to be conscious of these deficiencies; on the contrary, we have badgered the public authorities, in writing and by delegation, for many years past, to help us in this very matter, to give us our fair and proportional share of the school taxes, and to afford our teaching staff such conditions as shall enable our masters to attend professional courses and to obtain their pedagogical certificates. We have not been listened to, but our voice is on record, nevertheless; justice is still strong, and no mere clamour can drown its protests. That is the present state of the question.

Or, rather, it is advancing. Two currents are becoming discernible in the flood of those on which we depend for the liberty of our schools. The current of the narrow, sectarian, fanatical and intolerant minds which shouts and roars against us; the current, also growing ever stronger, of those who

think and see, who have the sense of justice no less than of honour, of those to whom the very demands of our enemies are a symptom of weakness and of fever in those who make them. As to the former, we shall allow their empty threats to wear themselves out; from the latter, we shall claim, with equal dignity and force, the recognition of our rights, and we have, thank God, still sufficient respect for, and confidence in our country, to hope to obtain them.

French Canadians of Ontario, be proud of your schools, always grateful to your devoted teachers, most of all, to those admirable religious communities who give their lives and their devotion to your children. Close up your ranks, fight bravely for victory awaits you in the near future.