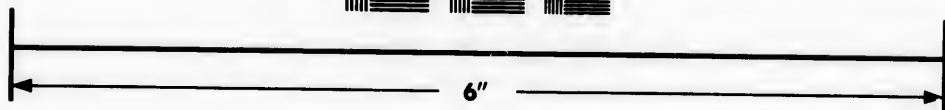
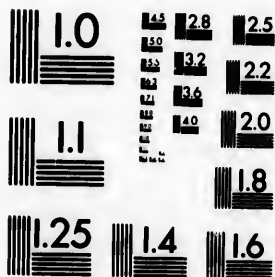


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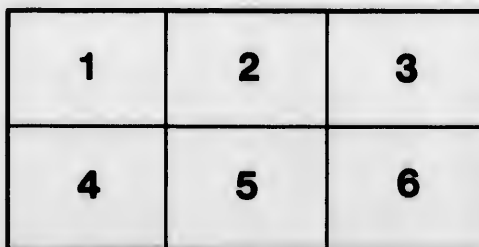
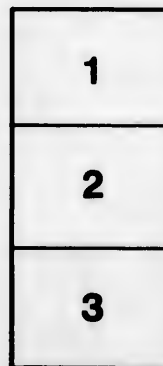
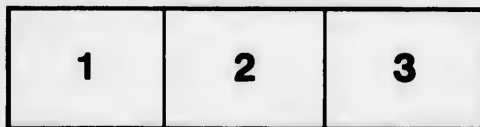
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THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

HON. GEO. W. ROSS,

MINISTER OF EDUCATION,

IN THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO.

Friday, March 8th, 1889.



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# SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

HON. GEO. W. ROSS,

MINISTER OF EDUCATION,

IN THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO,

*FRIDAY, MARCH 8th, 1889,*

On the following Resolution moved by Mr. Craig, member for the East Riding of Durham :

Order of the House for a Return showing the number and location of Public Schools in *Ontario* in which any language other than English is used in the work of teaching, either wholly or in part. A list of text books in any language other than English used in such schools. The total number of scholars attending each of such schools. The number of scholars in each of such schools using text books in any language other than English. The number of teachers in such schools who cannot use the English language in teaching.

MR. SPEAKER,—I agree with the hon. member for East Durham in the reference he has made to the excellent character of the school system of the Province of Ontario. I agree with him also as to the necessity of considering, calmly and dispassionately, any well founded objection, either to the administration of the school law or the principles upon which it is established. That both French and German are studied in our public schools, no one will dispute. The question at issue, however, appears to be, from the position taken by the hon. gentleman, that no language but English should be taught in the public schools of Ontario, and that therefore, the policy of the Government in permitting instruction to be given in French or German should be condemned.



The greater portion of my hon. friend's speech was directed against the study of French in Eastern Ontario. He seemed to have forgotten, at all events to have ignored the fact, that in the County of Essex, in Western Ontario, French has been taught for the last 30 years. Why, what is objectionable in one end of the Province should have escaped censure in the other, is something which I cannot understand. Now, it might be interesting to the House to know the early policy of the Department on this question. You are doubtless aware, Mr. Speaker, that at the time of the organization of our school system in 1846, there were large French settlements in different parts of this Province. You are also aware, no doubt, that the Education Department made provision for the examination of teachers in both French and German, and yet you may be surprised to learn that under Dr. Ryerson's administration, extending over 30 years, the study of English was not made obligatory in either French or German settlements. I do not mention this, sir, to censure the late Chief Superintendent, or to reflect upon the policy of the Department under his administration, and yet I may note that during these long years, with a Conservative administration in power, the greater part of the time, no complaint was made that English was neglected. On my accession to office, my attention was called to this state of affairs, and in 1885 I submitted for the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council a regulation, which will be found in the Statutes and Regulations of my Department, by which the study of English is made compulsory in every public school in Ontario.

So far then as the policy of the Department is concerned, it was not until 1885, and under the present administration, too, that the study of English was made imperative in all our public schools; and in order to show that this regulation was intended to be operative and effectual, it was followed up by instructions to inspectors, dated September, 1885, in which minute directions were given to teachers engaged in mixed schools as to the mode of introducing the study of English.

#### RESULT OF THIS POLICY.

Well, what has been the result of this policy? By a report brought down to the House (see sessional paper 26, '88) it appears that in

1886 there were 27 schools in eastern Ontario in which English was not taught. In his correspondence with the Department Inspector Summerby (see report 1887, p. 61), says that "at the beginning of the last year I asked my assistant, Mr. Dufort, to pay special attention to this subject (English) when making his inspectoral visit. The result is that we have reduced the number of purely French departments from 27 to 6, and I hope to be able to report, at the end of the present term, that these six have also fallen into line." In a letter from the same officer, dated Feb. 23rd, '89, he states that "last year I had to report that we had 6 schools in which English was not taught. Mr. Dufort has made a verbal report to me that these six fell into line during 1888, so that we can now say that English is taught in *every public school in the counties.*" This is corroborated by Mr. Dufort, who under date of 25th Feb., '89, writes: "Last year according as I made my first visits, I insisted on all the teachers that they *had to teach English*, and also explained to trustees and parents the necessity of *having it taught*. The result is that I now have the pleasure of stating that *English is taught in all the schools, more or less.*" From this it will be seen that my hon. friend has nothing to complain of. It is not to be assumed that English is as well taught in the schools of Eastern Ontario as in some of the older counties. Due allowance must be made for local conditions in considering a matter of this kind. In fact in a province extending over an area so great no fair comparison can be made, at least between counties remote from each other. There are poor schools even in the older counties; there are poor schools in the northern parts of the counties of Frontenac, Hastings, Haliburton, etc., etc., and to say that some of the schools in Prescott and Russell are in a backward condition is merely to assert what perhaps may be said of many schools in the county of York, or Middlesex, or Oxford. If the hon. gentleman means to condemn *in toto* the standing of the schools in Prescott and Russell, then I must take issue with him. If he refers to the report of Inspector Summerley, contained in the return already quoted, he will find a complete answer to his charge on p. 28 of that report, as follows:

"To give you an idea of the character of the work done in English, in some of our French schools, I may here draw your attention

to the fact I mentioned to you when I was in Toronto last month ; four pupils from one of these schools passed the entrance examination to the High School during the year 1886, one in July, and three in December. All four of these pupils speak and write both languages ; two of them are the children of French-speaking parents, and two of English-speaking parents, and one of them is but 11 years of age. One of the French pupils made a perfect paper in dictation, spelling every word correctly, and beating all the English-speaking pupils."

#### ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS.

Moreover, if the hon. gentleman will refer to the entrance examinations held during the last few years within these counties, he will find that the percentage of those who passed, compared with the number of applicants was as great as in many of the older counties of the province, and as this test is of universal application, there can be no better for purposes of comparison. My hon. friend has laid down the proposition, as I have already observed, that English and English only should be taught in the public schools of this province. Let us examine this proposition in the light of the practice of other countries. What is the practice in Great Britain ? And when I take the example of Great Britain, hon. gentlemen who are accustomed to indulge in expressions of perfervid loyalty, will certainly admit the force of the comparison. Does my hon. friend not know that Gaelic is taught in the Highlands of Scotland, that Gaelic inspectors are employed for the inspection of these schools, and that proficiency in Gaelic is accepted by the government for the payment of the grant for educational purposes.

#### WHAT IS THE POLICY IN WALES ?

Does my hon. friend not know that a similar rule applies to the Welsh in Wales ? Are we to assume—following the arguments of my hon. friend—that because these foreign languages are taught that the safety of Great Britain is imperilled ; that the government is endangering the existence of the Empire ; that the national language has been insulted ; that the national honor has been sac-

rificed? Surely my hon. friend will not take this ground, and yet it is the logical outcome of his argument. Then what is the policy of the other Provinces in regard to this matter? Does my hon. friend not know that French is taught in many of the schools aided by the governments in all the Provinces of the Dominion? Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have schools in a position exactly similar to those in Eastern Ontario. In Nova Scotia even greater liberty is allowed, for French may be the exclusive language of the Acadian schools, as the following note from the School Manual of 1887 shows:

"In sections where French is the vernacular language and the Trustees desire that English should also be taught, the French-English Readers of the Royal Series will be found very serviceable."

In Nova Scotia also, a course of instruction is provided for French teachers in the Provincial Normal Schools. Everybody knows the practice in Quebec in Manitoba, and in the Northwest Territories, and if anything were wanted to satisfy my hon. friend and to place beyond doubt the equivocal character of the position he has taken, it is to be found in the fact that the Indian language is taught in many of the Indian schools under the Dominion government.

#### THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.

In the United States similar liberality prevails. From the Report of the United States Commissioner, 1885-6, it will be seen that in Ohio "the Board of any district shall cause the German language to be taught, when a demand is made in writing by 75 resident freeholders, representing not less than 40 pupils."

In the State of Oregon, "the directors of districts containing 10,000 inhabitants or more, may provide that one or more schools shall be taught in the German language."

The School Law of Indiana provides for instruction in German. See Report 1886-7.

In Milwaukee a Superintendent of German has been appointed.

Cincinnati Normal School has a course in German and separate teachers' meetings are held for German and English teachers.

In the State of Louisiana "the general exercises of the Public

Schools are carried on exclusively in the English language, as required by the State Constitution, but in certain southwestern portions of the State, where the French language predominates, assistant teachers give instruction in that tongue."

In Colorado "Instruction must be given in English, though German or Spanish may be taught when demanded by the parents or guardians of 20 or more pupils attending any school."

In the State of Indiana "German may be taught at the request of the parents or guardians of 25 or more children attending a public school."

In the State of Oregon "in districts containing 10,000 inhabitants, upon petition of 100 residents, one or more of the common schools are to be taught in the German language."

Superintendent Peaslee, of the Cincinnati schools, says in his annual report for 1883: "Two languages can be taught to children without detriment to either, but rather with advantage to both. The experience in Cincinnati, and all other places where it has been tried, proves this beyond question. I assert that the pupils of our schools who study German, learn just as much in the English branches; in some—as for instance, composition—even more than they would learn by studying English only."

#### LIBERALITY REQUIRED.

The question is, then, shall we be less liberal than the people of the States just named towards those whose necessities for years to come may render the use of French or German imperative. The American Republic is rapidly increasing in population. Just the other day four States were added to a Federation already the greatest in the world's history. This expansion has arisen not from any peculiar virtue in Republican Institutions *per se*, but from the generous treatment by the different Legislatures, and by Congress, of every citizen who sought refuge and protection under the American flag. Had the Americans by any act of theirs—by any narrow-sectional legislation, interdicted any nation of Europe, or impeached the utility of any language in Europe, would their population have grown so rapidly? Or had they shown a want of faith in their own institutions, a want of confidence in the assimilating power of the

dominant race, namely the Anglo Saxon, would they have maintained so successfully their national dignity and influence? Instead of being ranked to-day as one of the most independent nations of the world because of the confidence in their own powers, they would have been stigmatized for their cowardice and timidity. We, too, have large territories to possess. From the natural increase of our population, centuries must elapse before we can fully possess and occupy this great heritage which a beneficent Providence has committed to our keeping. Were we to say to the French and German population of Europe, or, what is worse still, were we to say to the native born descendants of these nationalities, that they bear in the use of a foreign tongue a stigma which precludes them from the full privileges of citizenship and from an unequivocal status as British Canadians, we would be proclaiming to the world that we were narrow and exclusive—that we have not those generous impulses which make a country attractive to those who, in choosing a home, are anxious to find a kindly refuge from the restraints of institutions which have become rigid with the lapse of years, and which they are glad to exchange for the more elastic and democratic institutions of the New World.

The next question on which information is sought by my hon. friend is in regard to the text books in use in the public schools of Eastern Ontario. The House is no doubt aware that he has special reference to text books in the French language. By a regulation of the Council of Public Instruction adopted in 1869, the text books authorized for use in the mixed schools of the Province of Quebec were authorized for the like schools in the Province of Ontario, and these are the only authorized books at the present date. I need not say that these books, now over 20 years old, are not quite satisfactory to the department; indeed some of them are out of print, and the others were authorized at a time when the ideas of authors in regard to methods of instruction were not as far advanced as at the present day. Besides, the Department discovered somewhat recently that in some cases Separate school text books were used, not because the trustees were disposed to disregard the regulations of the department, but because the books were more modern, and far better adapted for school-room purposes, than those formerly authorized by the Council of Public Instruction.

Under these circumstances I felt it to be my duty to secure for the pupils of these schools, text books equal in every respect to those used in other public schools. As the papers when brought down to the House will show, I communicated, with the Inspectors in French districts in regard to this matter. I also obtained from the Superintendents of the Maritime Provinces copies of the text books used in French settlements under the control of their respective departments, and have referred them to the Central Committee in order to get a report as to their suitability for schools in which both languages are spoken. This report I expect to have in a few days, and long before the House meets again I trust I shall be able to authorize text books in the French language to which no objection can be taken. I may here observe, Mr. Speaker, that it is not my intention to authorize a series of text books in all the subjects on the curriculum. If the French pupil acquires a knowledge of reading and of the grammar of the French language he will have learned all that I think should be done for him in a Public school. Instruction in geography, arithmetic, history, and composition will be given in the English language. While my

#### PRUDENCE REQUIRED.

hon. friend is somewhat free in his animadversions as to the state of education in the so-called French schools, he has directed his observations more to the past than to the present. It seems not to have occurred to him that we are moving much more rapidly now than ever we did before, and in common fairness he should have recognized the earnest effort which is being made to place all our schools, irrespective of national distinctions, upon a higher plane. Had I with a stronger but a less prudent hand excluded from the schools in which the French language is used, every text book except such as were authorized by the old Council of Public Instruction, it is more than probable that many a school now recognized as a public school would have been changed into a separate school, and the Protestants distributed through the counties of Prescott and Russell, who have now all the rights and privileges of public school supporters, would, in the face of separate schools, have been obliged to provide for the

education of their children under very adverse circumstances. Probably it is not known to my hon. friend that although the actual population of these two counties is over 30,000, they have but eighteen separate schools in all; and in the county of Essex, with a population of over 19,000, there are but 6 separate schools. The irritation which would arise from an aggressive policy in regard to text books or any other matter affecting the majority, might lead to disastrous results to a minority, who could only provide for their children (I fear inadequately) by means of Protestant separate schools.

#### FRENCH TEACHERS.

The hon. member (Mr. Craig) objects in the third place to the employment of teachers who cannot teach English. Had he been as studious in examining the reports of my department as he appears to have been in considering how to criticise its administration, he might have seen from the statistics of last year that there were only six schools in which English was not taught; therefore even at that date every teacher, excepting six, must have been qualified to teach English. From what I have already stated, namely, that English is taught in every school in the Province of Ontario, my hon. friend can see how complete an answer I have to the objection he has made. And here let me again refresh his memory by a reference to the regulations of the old Council of Public Instruction. As far back as 1858, teachers of French or German were not required to be examined in English grammar in order to obtain a certificate. In 1871 this regulation was repeated in the following terms: "In regard to teachers in French or German settlements, a knowledge of the French or German grammar respectively may be substituted for a knowledge of the English grammar, and the certificates to the teachers expressly limited accordingly;" and in 1872 county councils were authorized to appoint examiners who, in their judgment, were competent to examine candidates in the French or German language at the semi-annual examination. In the Act of 1871 it was provided that county councils could appoint inspectors in districts where the French and German languages prevailed. Now what is the policy of the Department



at the present time? Simply this: That no teacher can receive even a permit to teach a public or separate school unless he is able to pass an examination in English in every subject on the curriculum. Moreover, Mr. Summerby says in his report, that at the last examination for district certificates, every teacher who did not show a competent knowledge of the English language was rejected. Now while I have endeavored, and I think the House will admit honestly endeavored, to secure the requisite qualification for teaching English, it must not be forgotten, as Mr. Summebry points out, that in French settlements the position of a teacher who is unable to teach French would be "unbearable." Every educator will admit that in order to communicate knowledge to a child, both teacher and child must speak a common language. What object would be served by the employment of a teacher who could not make himself understood by his pupils? Does the hon. gentleman mean, when he says that French must be absolutely excluded from certain schools, that parents are to be taxed for the payment of a teacher's salary, even although the language of the school room is foreign to the child? Does he know of a single instance where such a course is followed in any school or university in the country? Is it not the invariable practice to communicate a knowledge of one language by means of another understood by both parties? If to promote intelligence and to impart information is in any sense the work of the teacher, it is our bounden duty to see, that those entrusted with the education of French and German pupils, are qualified to explain to them the difficulties of their ordinary studies in their native tongue.

#### THE CATECHISM.

My hon. friend has quoted from a little book which he calls a *catechism*, and which he says is used as a text book in the public schools. The quotations which he has read clearly show that the book referred to was prepared for purposes of religious instruction. Its use for that purpose is therefore quite legitimate within the time prescribed by the regulations of the Department. Now does my hon. friend say that this book is used as a text book during ordinary school hours? If he is not able to say it is so

used, then his objections fall to the ground. Is he not aware that religious instruction may be given to the pupils of any public school in any way that commends itself to the denomination concerned—that the catechism of the Presbyterian, or Methodist, or any other church may be used as the law now stands. The Department does not interfere with the liberty of those who conduct religious instruction within proper hours, and the complaint of my hon. friend has not been shown to have any foundation whatever.

#### THE BROAD QUESTION AT ISSUE.

Having answered now in detail the main charges of my hon. friend, so far as the Department is concerned, the House will, I trust, permit me to offer a few observations on the general principle involved in this discussion. The hon. member for Durham has distinctly declared that English and English alone should be taught in our public schools, on the ground that this is a British colony, and that English is the language of the British Empire. I have already shown from British precedents that even in Great Britain itself, within a few hours' ride of St. Stephen's, the British Government, by permitting the study of Welsh in the elementary schools under the Education Department, ignores the principles laid down by my hon. friend. I admit that it is the duty of my Department, and I think I have satisfied the House that I have not been derelict in this respect, to give to every child within the Province of Ontario a knowledge of the English language, and place at its disposal, so far as that knowledge can do so, the literature and civilization of England. It must be remembered, however, that as the dominant race in this province, we can best discharge our duty to the country by a prudent exercise of our power, and that we can better assimilate the people and the languages of other nationalities by generosity than by coercion. Shall it be said, for instance, that in the County of Waterloo and in certain portions of the County of Bruce where the early settlers spoke the German language, no instruction shall be given except in English? Is this House prepared to say to those whose love for their "father-land" is proverbial—whose loyalty to their adopted land no man will question—whose habits of industry,

thrift and morality have won for them the respect of all our people; I say, shall they be told that one of the most distinctive links by which they are bound to their friends beyond the Rhine shall be arbitrarily broken, and the language of their childhood or their home excluded from the public schools of Ontario? Is it not natural, is it not human, is it not reasonable, that they should be allowed one generation at least in which to make the transition from the forms and habits of the Germany of Frederick the Great to those of the Dominion of Her Gracious Majesty? While I would yield to no one in the desire to maintain in their fullest integrity those features which distinguish between British and foreign institutions, I am at the same time prepared to permit our fellow subjects, of whatever nationality, to accept our form of government without imposing unnecessary restraints upon them as to national habits and preferences; and in taking this position I am amply justified by the past policy of the British Empire.

Does my hon. friend not know that the English language is spoken to-day by less than one-fourth of Her Majesty's loyal subjects? Does he not know that she has colonies just as loyal as Canada—colonies far more populous and perhaps of equal importance to the British Crown—colonies in Asia and Africa which are calculated to bring to her as much influence in the courts of Europe as her American possessions, where the native tongue has not yet been superseded by the English language. Were his objections taken to the use of some barbaric dialect without a history, or without a literature, it might have some force. The very language which he now desires to proscribe has made for itself a place in British history, which even in this nineteenth century we should not forget. For four centuries French was the language of England itself, the language of its nobility, of its court, and of its judicature. The Norman barons who extorted from King John the Great Charter of British liberties, spoke this proscribed tongue; and in the days of the earlier Henries the most trusted defenders of the British crown were the descendants of Norman conquerors.

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## A DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGE

is no proof of national weakness. The Scottish Highlanders, who at Quebec, at Waterloo, and at Alma vindicated their loyalty and their prowess knew not, perhaps, a word of English. Patriotism with them was not a matter of words, but a reality, and when their country was endangered, and her honour assailed, the loyalty which they had learned on their native heath in the Gælic of her kilted clansmen was a sufficient inspiration in every national emergency. So long, Sir, as history shows that the highlands of Scotland or the romantic hillsides of Carnarvon can produce a race of heroes, we who reap the fruits of their victories need not quarrel over the language in which they have learned to love their country. As a Canadian, I cannot understand why we should raise the question of nationality or creed at all. While it is true that Ontario is a Saxon province, we must still remember that Canada, of which Ontario forms a part, was discovered by the French; that it was first occupied by the French, and its early settlement was entirely owing to the enterprise of its French citizens, and that it was not until 200 years after its occupation by what is now called an alien race that the supremacy of England was established. Are we to say to those who possessed this land years before it felt the touch of Anglo-Saxon civilization—to those who had subjugated its forests and the Indian tribes who made it their happy hunting ground—to those who had explored its rivers and lakes—shall we tell the descendants of these intrepid explorers and pioneers that they are an alien race—that we are the lords paramount of the soil? Even if we were disposed to assume towards them an imperious and haughty attitude, surely we are not so ungenerous as to forget the services they rendered us in more than one crisis in our history. Do not hon. gentlemen know that when the Americans declared their independence in 1776 that an attempt was made to wrest Canada from the British Crown. When Generals Montgomery and Arnold swooped down upon Quebec, who came to the rescue? Was it not the French habitant—the alien of to-day—who was then the trusted champion and defender of the British flag a hundred years ago.

## THE WAR OF 1812.

Again, during the war of 1812, when along an unguarded frontier of nearly one thousand miles, attempts were made at various points to enter the country—when Montreal and Toronto were laid in ashes, to whom were we largely indebted for the defence of the country, and for the defeat of the American invader? Perhaps the most brilliant victory in the whole campaign was that achieved by Col. de Salaberry, at Chateauguay. And if you will read the addresses of the Governors of Canada at that time you will see how strongly they appreciated the loyalty of the French Canadian volunteers. And so history has kept repeating itself all through the century. In 1866 more than one French Canadian regiment was on duty to repel the Fenian invaders; in 1886 they assisted in suppressing the rebellion in the North-west, and in the following year Lord Wolseley was glad to avail himself of their skill and enterprise in piercing into the heart of Africa to defend the honor of England beyond the deserts of the Soudan. With such a record, the honor of which we were proud to share, is it generous of us, to say the least of it, to speak of our French Canadian fellow citizens as an alien race? But this is not all.

## SYMPATHY WITH LIBERTY.

In the administration of public affairs they have shown the deepest sympathy with the progress of human liberty. Nearly sixty years before slavery was abolished in the United States it had ceased to exist entirely in the Province of Quebec, not so much from any legislative enactment as from the growth of a public sentiment favorable to personal liberty. Thirty years before the English had relieved her Jewish fellow subjects from political disability, the Province of Quebec had accorded them all the rights of citizenship. When we were engaged during the agitation of 1837 in asserting our rights to responsible government, our fellow citizens in the Eastern Province were carrying on a similar agitation. Every argument that the leaders of public opinion then used in Ontario to enforce the rights of the people met with a ready response in Quebec, and were it not for that

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response it is doubtful whether the people of Upper Canada, as it was then called, would have obtained responsible government as early as they did. Nay more, when the people of this country began to realize their manifest destiny; when, instead of a few isolated provinces without any common form of Government, without any commercial intercourse or fraternal exchange of opinion, the statesman of twenty years ago endeavoured to unite the whole of British America into one confederation, under whom did all parties, Liberal and Conservative, unite to carry out this great consummation? Was it under a Saxon premier? No. Sir E. P. Taché—the alien—he whose language must be proscribed in the schools of this Province—he it was under whom that confederation was ratified, and the foundation of a “greater Britain” laid on this side of the Atlantic.

#### THE FATHERS OF CONFEDERATION.

Shall we be forgetful of the spirit which animated the fathers of confederation? Shall we repudiate the racial truce then agreed upon? Shall we in Ontario, representing nearly two-thirds of the Anglo-Saxon population of the Dominion, be the first to appeal to prejudices which the British North America Act was designed to destroy? Shall we lend ourselves to the invidious task of fanning into activity the dying embers of race and creed? Do we so far misunderstand the spirit in which nations are founded and consolidated as to incur the risk of disintegration by appeals to passion and prejudice. The United States have not so builded their Republic. From every quarter of the globe they have invited immigration, trusting in the assimilating powers of their own institutions to make out of these immigrants, American citizens. If Canada is to be the home of the hardy, pushing, enterprising population of Europe we must show in the strongest and most unmistakable manner that the public sentiment of this country is broad enough to include every nationality, and its religious sentiments are liberal enough to respect the conscientious convictions of every creed.

