

The British oligarchy was not content with confiscating the Jesuits' estate as well as those of the Franciscans, all of which had for their object the promotion of education among French Canadian children. They were not content with turning into military barracks the Jesuit college, where had been formed the minds of the most distinguished Canadians of that early period of our history; not only did they attempt to rivet on our people such an unpopular school system as that of the Royal Institution, which, during a period of forty years maintained only 84 schools, but they permitted the school system established by our legislature to go to ruin. They petitioned Her Majesty, complaining that the Quebec seminary was opening classes for the education of young Canadians and that only Catholic teachers were admitted therein; they interfered in every way with the school legislation, through their hold on the legislative council of our province, they rejected the Bill passed at the session of 1835-36, which provided for the establishment of normal schools for the purpose of forming teachers, who were sadly wanting at the time. Not only that, the oligarchy wished to take possession of the estates of the Sulpicians. However, Lord Durham and Mr. Poulett Thompson realized the importance of that institution, and the latter, by a special Order in Council, confirmed the Sulpicians in their rights. We have reason to believe with Mr. Chauveau that the decisive influence which the 'church authorities and the Quebec hierarchy,' to use the words of the Toronto 'News' and the Toronto 'World,' were in a position to exert at that critical period, did not escape the mind of that statesman.

Dr. Meilleur in his book 'Memorial de l'éducation,' published in 1876, makes the following answer to our detractors:

The Canadians, after having been deprived of a great part of their means of instruction which had been so liberally conceded to them by the Church and by Catholic France were, no doubt, greatly discouraged, and rather anxious as regards the educational institutions which remained to them, considering that the Seminary of Quebec, and especially that of St. Sulpice in Montreal, were threatened similarly with confiscation. For a long time the rural parts of the country suffered from this painful state of things, and children were in great numbers deprived of the benefits of education.

In 1815, there were only 19 schools actually opened, and in 1822, 32 in Lower Canada. Besides, the war of 1812 had greatly contributed to delay the progress of education, and 12 to 15 years were hardly enough to relieve the straitened circumstances in which that costly rather than useful war had thrown us. However, previous to the establishment of the present system of primary education, the large cities of Lower Canada were fairly well provided with schools, besides the seminaries, of which there was one at Quebec and two in Montreal, where young men of good disposition received a classical instruction entirely adapted to their needs, and to the pecuniary

means of families, of those, at any rate, which were well-to-do.

The clergy and the heads of families have not relented for one moment in their endeavours to remedy the inadequacy of these institutions; however, it was an easy matter for them to do it effectually without a standing law, and especially without any assurance that our educational establishments would be respected and spared in the future.

That assurance was given to us by the special Order in Council passed, in 1839, confirming the seminary of St. Sulpice of Montreal in the full possession of the estates which they hold since 1667, from the King of France for religious and educational purposes; and permanent assistance has been offered to us for educational purposes, by the primary schools Act passed in September, 1841. Although burdensome and inadequate to meet our requirements, that assistance has nevertheless been of great encouragement to the friends of the good cause. It came into force in May, 1842 only; and unfortunately under very unfavourable auspices. That law was very defective, and, besides, was made dependent on and subservient to another new Act establishing rural municipalities in Lower Canada. This last Act, which was very unpopular in this country, took effect at the same time, but its provisions, which were distasteful to the people, were of a nature to delay the putting in force of the educational Act. The putting in force of this Act was a very quiet affair.

However, this encouragement and this assurance were sufficient to ensure the building of educational establishments all over the country. In fact, it would be difficult to point to a country wherein more zeal has been shown for education and wherein greater efforts and sacrifices have been made generally for its promotion from that time in Canada. It is wrongfully, therefore, that the Canadian people and its venerable clergy have been accused of being opposed to education; and the more so, when such a charge, unjust and offensive as it is, is being unblushingly made against us by the very people whose masters have deprived us of the estates destined to the education of our children.

However, in spite of these disadvantages, we are in a position to answer proudly to those who brand us as ignorant, bigoted and slow: Compare what our position has been, what it is to-day in politics, agriculture, arts, literature and sciences, industry and commerce. In politics, Papineau, Lafontaine, Morin, Dorion, Cartier, Taché, Mercier, Chapleau, and the last but not least, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, compare favourably with any English-speaking statesman of this country. The French Canadians were the first in America, to claim, as early as 1773, responsible government. To them is due the granting of the constitution of 1791. They, it is who, from that day until 1841, fought and suffered the capital penalty for the sake of political franchises which we now enjoy and which some are to-day trying to use against us. Listen on this point to the testimony of a statesman who, as Governor General of this country has left in our history a name which never will be forgotten. Lord Dufferin, speaking in beautiful French

Mr. BRUNEAU.