

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

THIRD PARLIAMENT—FOURTH SESSION.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,
TORONTO, Feb. 18.

The Speaker took the chair at 3 o'clock.

Prayers were read by Rev. J. C. Antill.

PETITIONS.

The following petitions were presented:—

By Mr. Bell—The petition of Thos. White and others, of Toronto, praying for certain amendments to the Municipal Act relating to the property qualification of aldermen and mayor, and on other matters.

By Mr. Long—The petition of the County Council of Simcoe respecting the construction of the Huron and Ontario Ship Canal.

By Mr. Tooley—The petition of the County Council of Middlesex, praying for certain amendments to the Assessment Act; also, from the same, respecting the sale of lands for arrears of taxes.

By Messrs. Tooley and Merrick—Seven Orange petitions.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. FRASER presented the 11th Report of the Committee on Private Bills, which was adopted.

Mr. DEROCHE presented the 3rd Report of the Committee on Printing, which was adopted.

M. WOOD presented the 9th report of the Committee on Railways, which was adopted.

RAILWAY CROSSINGS.

Mr. FRASER introduced a Bill to amend the Railway Act. He explained that it was intended to apply in cases where a railway under the jurisdiction of the Province desired to cross or join one under that of the Dominion, and it provided that authority in such cases should be left entirely with the Railway Committee of the Dominion House. In cases where only two Ontario Province railways were concerned the jurisdiction should remain with the Commissioner of Public Works of Ontario, as at present.

The Bill was read a first time.

AGRICULTURE AND ARTS.

Mr. WATTERWORTH introduced an Act to amend the Agriculture and Arts Act, which was read a first time.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

Mr. CROOKS, in moving the second reading of the Bill respecting Public, High, and Separate Schools, proposed to explain to the House a number of the distinguishing features of the educational system of Ontario which had gained for the Province so high a position amongst other communities engaged in the same work. He referred to the high honours which the Province had won at the late Paris Exposition and at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia. The school system of Ontario in its primary department possessed several distinctive features, the first and foremost of which was that the public schools were entirely free; the second consisted in all the schools being supported by a local rate chargeable upon all the assessable property of the locality; a third was that the management of the schools was in the hands of the ratepayers themselves through their own chosen trustees; a fourth was that the School Boards were aided and strengthened by the municipal organizations; and a fifth, that the expenditure incurred in the maintenance of the system was economical. They also procured very satisfactory results in the way of attendance without a resort to those stringent compulsory enactments which prevailed under other systems; they recognized the religious principle, while at the same time preserving the fullest liberty of conscience; they perceived fully the advantages, and in fact the necessity, of proper opportunities for training teachers—they had an element of great importance in preserving a uniform standard for the qualification of teachers; and to give coherency to the whole system, they had the central authority which existed in the Education Department. After contending that the whole merits of the school system depended mainly upon the recognition of these principles, he went on to give the results which had been secured in the way of attendance upon the Public Schools. In 1877 the total school population in Ontario, from five years of age to twenty-one inclusive, was 494,804; and the registered attendance was 490,890, and the average attendance 217,184. The per centage of the attendance of the whole school population was thus 44½ per cent., which was a very high average and one which very few countries surpassed. Of the total number of children attending school scarcely a fraction were under five years of age, 51 per cent. were between five and ten, 43 per cent. between eleven and sixteen, and 4½ per cent. between seventeen and twenty-one. The fact that the education imparted by the Public Schools was not of an unnecessarily high character was shown by the fact that the great bulk of the children were comprised in the first, second, and third classes. Ninety-three per cent. of the entire education of the Province was carried on in the Public Schools, as against two per cent. in High Schools, and two per cent. in colleges and private schools. After giving the totals of the expenditure upon Public Schools for current maintenance and capital account since 1865, he showed that the cost per pupil for maintenance only since that year had risen from \$3 34 to \$5 29 in 1877. He pointed out that the system of local management in school affairs was carried even further than in municipal government, and possessed great advantages in that respect compared with the English and some of the colonial systems. One effect of the schools being managed by the people themselves was that the ratepayers felt that the only way in which they can obtain a return for their expenditure was to send their children regularly to school. He showed that this principle conducted more to regular attendance than the penal compulsory clauses in other systems. It would be seen that the Bill before the House provided for even larger powers of control over the expenditure being given to the people as represented in their municipal Boards. There was just as much necessity for economy in the management of the school system as there was for efficiency, and the people were entitled to fair value for their money in the benefits which they received from their schools. A comparison of the cost per capita of maintaining public schools in

Ontario with that of some of the American States was much in favour of the former. The cost per pupil in Ontario was \$5 29; in Massachusetts it was \$24 48; in Michigan, \$7 47; in New York, \$6 12; in Ohio, \$8 30; and in Pennsylvania, \$7 60. An examination of the amounts per pupil paid for current expenditure in 1877 in the various cities of Ontario showed that in Toronto it was \$6 44, in Hamilton \$6 90, in London \$5, in Kingston \$3 83, and in Ottawa \$8 38. As compared with these amounts the cost in Boston was \$25 94, in Lowell \$17 79, in New York \$21 99, in Cincinnati \$20 80, in Detroit \$13 74, in Rochester \$16 63, and in other cities of the United States similar sums. The best results of the free school system would doubtless be found in such cities as Boston and New York, but those were not fair specimens of the American public schools. In the rural districts of the Union a very different state of things existed, contrary to the case in Ontario, in which the rural schools were doing the work of elementary education as satisfactorily as in Toronto and other cities. The cost per pupil in New Brunswick was \$1 15, which was no doubt extremely cheap, but which was partially accounted for by the fact that as the system of the Province was at present in a transition state there was no provision made for a regular course of training teachers. In Nova Scotia the cost per pupil was \$6 57. It was generally conceded that the management of school as well as of other affairs was carried on with great economy in England. In England there was always obtained value for expenditure, yet the cost there per pupil in the Board schools was £2 1s 4½d, and in Scotland £1 19s 7½d. In the voluntary schools the cost was £1 13s 6½d, and in Scotland £1 14s 1½d. Such figures, he thought, showed conclusively that the cost of the school system in Ontario was not at all extravagant. Then as to the result in attendance he thought the figures he had already given were quite satisfactory, and he argued that those results were obtained with nothing more severe than a compulsory clause which was more formidable in sound than in reality. The penal clauses of the Scottish Act, it had been thought, would not be acceptable to the people of Ontario, nor would they conduce to more regular attendance than was now obtained. There might, however, be occasion at some future time to consider whether in regard to the question of attendance there were not some obstacles which the Legislature could deal with. The question of the employment of children of tender years in manufactories, to the detriment of their health and the neglect of their education, was one which might at some future time be passed upon by the House. It had often been remarked that there was a danger in educating children of making them only clever scoundrels if moral training were not given them at the same time. But it could not be said that the schools of the Province were entirely secular, and the statutes and regulations that had been framed were framed with a view of recognizing the great principles of Christianity, while at the same time providing for the fullest liberty of conscience. An illustration of this principle was found in the existence of Separate Schools, which bore testimony to the liberty of our educational system. He pointed out the benefits that were conferred upon the denomination supporting the Separate Schools by their maintenance, and after alluding to some of the difficulties that obstructed them in their work, pointed out that some of these difficulties, as to the mode of holding trustee elections and the manner of levying the assessments, were proposed to be remedied in the Bill he had submitted to the House. The true economy in any school system was the securing of efficient teachers. It required just as much special training to fit a teacher for his profession as it did any skilled mechanic or any professional man. He entered into a detailed account of the method of training teachers in England, which though an expensive one was one which was attended with the best results. The training colleges alone entailed upon the country a cost of about 258 per male and 237 per female student. During the period between 1871 and 1877 there applied for first-class certificates in the Province 312, for second-class 5,065, and for third-class 23,160, or a total of 28,537, or at the rate of about 4,000 a year. The result of the examination was that only 99 out of the 312 passed for first-class, 1,554 out of the 5,065 for second-class, and 10,614 for third-class, making in all a total of 12,467. The average then for the seven years of successful candidates was 14 of first-class, 222 of second-class, and 1,545 of third-class certificated teachers. At that rate it would only take about four years to supply each of the 6,400 public schools of the Province with a teacher. The problem of providing a proper course of training to all the teachers of the Province, since the Normal School at Toronto could only qualify a very limited number, was a very important one, and to meet the difficulty the establishment of County Model Schools had been decided upon. The Legislature granted the sum of \$100 towards the founding of a Model School in every county in the Province, and invited the counties to contribute each to their own school a like amount. The suggestions of the Government had been pretty generally acted upon in that regard, and at a very small expense, though he was sorry to say that the ignorant parsimony which prevailed in some portions of the country had prevented some County Councils in contributing their share towards the maintenance of a Model School. The number of Model Schools in operation in 1878 was fifty, and the attendance during the two terms amounted to 1,391, being an increase of 154 over 1877. Of that number, not less than 1,339 passed a successful examination, only fifty-two being rejected. The expense per capita for each successful teacher, as far as the Legislature was concerned, was \$3 81, and an equal amount paid by the counties made the entire expense \$7 62. These Model Schools, besides being economical in the matter of expense, supplemented very valuably the work of the High Schools, and effected the best results upon teachers and schools. The end for which they were established, and which they served in conjunction with the Normal Schools at Ottawa and Toronto, was the supplying of a sufficient number of trained teachers to meet the requirements of the Province. He then went into the matter of the jurisdiction exercisable by the Department, and showed that while the responsibility of framing laws and regulations rested with it, the power of carrying them into force was vested entirely in the local organizations. He was anxious that it should be thoroughly understood that there was this division of responsibility, as mistakes sometimes occurred which a fuller knowledge of the distribution of authority would have prevented. He alluded to the change that had taken place in the supervision of the educational system of the Province when a responsible Minister was appointed to con-