

# THE LEGISLATURE.

## A Great Speech by Hon. G. W. Ross.

### FRENCH IN THE SCHOOLS.

#### Its Teaching in the French Sections Defended.

#### THE OPPOSITION LEADER'S REPLY

The Conditions Under Which it is Taught—A Frank Statement of all the Facts and Circumstances—Some Significant Statements by the Leader of the Opposition—His Policy Revealed—The Debate Adjourned.

The proceedings in the House yesterday were the most interesting for many sessions, the old crusade against the French schools in Eastern Ontario having come up for consideration. Perhaps in the history of the Legislature a more liberal, eloquent or finished address was never delivered than that given by the Minister of Education. It will be talked of for many years to come by the occupants of the galleries and by members on both sides of the House.

#### FIRST READINGS.

The following bills were introduced and read a first time:—

Respecting the amendment of the Voters' List Act—Mr. Guthrie.

To amend the Ontario Insurance Act—Mr. Guthrie.

In connection with the setting out of bush fires.—Mr. Meacham.

#### THIRD READINGS.

The following bills were read a third time:—

To amend the Act incorporating the Township of Pelee.

The Act regulating certain matters under the Land Titles Act.

To incorporate the Waterloo Junction Railway Company.

To enable the Town of Brockville to issue certain debentures.

### FRENCH IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS.

A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT DEAL LIBERALLY WITH ALL RACES.

Mr. Craig moved for an 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.

The hon. gentleman commented upon the importance to the country generally of the education now given to the young. The Provincial educational system, as a whole, was one to be admired; but there were some blemishes in it. Now, Ontario was distinctively an English-speaking Province, and he thought the will of the people of Ontario was that it should remain an English-speaking Province. If this were actually so, the extensive teaching of French in the Public schools of certain counties was a practice to be severely condemned. He was aware that in calling public attention to this matter he might be charged with

#### STIRRING UP STRIFE.

This he denied, contending he was acting only for the general good. He then quoted at some length from the reports of inspectors in Prescott and Russell, to prove his contention that the study of the French language was encouraged rather than discouraged in those schools that were attended principally by French Canadians; and that the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church was also taught. In some cases, he urged, the English-speaking people had had to withdraw, although they had paid more than their proportionate quota to the maintenance of the same. The hon. gentle-

man produced a small French book which he said was used in the Public school of L'Original, in Prescott County. It was in very simple French, he said, and taught certain tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, including those of confession and purgatory. The hon. gentleman spoke in English, translating as he went along, sometimes rather too literally, but this he excused by remarking that it was a long time since he had had occasion to study it. Mr. Evanturel, at last, from the other side of the House, suggested that Mr. Craig's translation was open to exception, and asked him to read it in French. Mr. Craig replied that he would rather not attempt it. The House would not understand, he modestly suggested. Mr. Evanturel asked him to give the title of the book, but Mr. Craig confessed himself unable to do this, verbally, at least, and declined to accept the suggestion of spelling out the words, preferring to send the book over to Mr. Evanturel and his side of the House generally when he had finished with it. The hon. gentleman then, continuing with his argument, said it might be urged in reply to his contention that the English language was allowed in Quebec Province.

He would say, rather, that the French language is allowed in Quebec. It must be in mind by everybody—he thought neither English-speaking nor French-speaking Canadians would wish to forget—that this was a British and not a French country, an English-speaking country and not a French-speaking country. He contended that it would be better for the country, for the Province and for the children themselves attending the schools in the counties he had referred to were there but one language taught in the Public schools. He quoted Mr. Laurier to the effect that the English language was destined to be the common language of the country, and he predicted disasters and troubles if the teaching of French was continued in the Public schools of Ontario. Mr. Craig sat down amid considerable Opposition applause. He had made a very creditable speech, moderate and fair, from his point of view, and one that left a favorable impression on the House.

#### MR. ROSS' REPLY.

A BRILLIANT AND EFFECTIVE REPLY TO MR. CRAIG.

The hon. Minister of Education rose to reply as soon as the Speaker had read the motion. He was greeted with a round of applause, and then he proceeded to deliver what proved undoubtedly the finest speech of the session. Mr. Craig's facts and arguments were taken one by one, robbed of their weight and rendered valueless. He proceeded to the attack right away. Mr. Craig had directed his observations, he said, exclusively to Prescott and Russell, being apparently ignorant of the fact that French was taught in other counties than the two named, in Essex, for instance. In that county there were several French schools, all of them Public schools, and in all of them the English language was taught.

Mr. Meredith—Taught in what sense?

Mr. Ross—English reading and English composition.

Mr. Meredith—In the French language?

Mr. Ross—No; the teaching of these subjects is in English. The child is taught to speak English as well as French, and when he leaves school can speak and write it as well as French. Continuing, Mr. Ross said that, looking through the archives of his department since its organization in 1846, he failed to find any regulation of the old Council of Public Instruction making it obligatory that the English language should be taught in every school under its supervision. There was no trace of any obligation of this kind being imposed upon the eastern counties. From the absence of this obligation, no doubt, grew the multiplication of schools in which the French language was taught exclusively. Had the policy finally adopted been adopted at an earlier period there would have been fewer schools in Prescott and Russell in which English was not taught than was the case when he assumed office in 1883. In that year, as soon as he was relieved from the pressure of the session of the Legislature, he proceeded to inquire into the extent to which the schools of Eastern Ontario were exclusively French, and somewhat to his surprise he found them to be quite numerous, namely, twenty-seven. Consequently in framing the regulations for 1885 he provided that English must be taught in every school within the jurisdiction of the Education Department. Now, while Mr. Craig was disposed to be censorious, because, as he contended, the

English language was not properly taught in every school in the Province,

#### HE SHOWED NO DISPOSITION

to give the department credit for having a few years ago insisted, for the first time in the history of the Province, that the English language should be taught in every Public school in Ontario. That advance had been made, however, and had been made under the present Administration. (Applause.) Now, in 1887 a report was brought down showing that there were 27 schools in Eastern Ontario in which the English language was not taught. By the report brought down last year it would be seen from the report of Inspector Somerby that the number of those schools had been reduced to only six. Thus in January, 1887, there were 27 schools in which English was not taught. In November of the same year, the date of Mr. Somerby's report, there were but six. This had been done through the pressure of the department and through the willingness of his fellow-subjects in Eastern Ontario to fall in with the change in the law. But how about the remaining six French schools? On the 23rd of February of the present year, but a few weeks ago, he had received a letter from Mr. Somerby in which he reported that during the year these schools, too, had fallen into line. He had verified the statement by writing for further information and had had it confirmed entirely, so that now in every Public school under the jurisdiction of the Education Department the English language was taught. Of course, there were difficulties in the way, and the pupils did not always adapt themselves readily to the English tongue. The French were very dense in some places, and they, with the pertinacity of all nationalities, loved their own tongue. Perfection would come in time; but he was able now unhesitatingly to announce that English was

#### TAUGHT IN EVERY PUBLIC SCHOOL.

And now, as to the question whether or not the French language should be tolerated in these schools. Mr. Craig insisted that the English language, and the English language only, should be taught in the Public schools of the Province. He (the hon. speaker) did not take that ground himself, and he said so unhesitatingly. In doing so, he was sustained by the practice in Great Britain and in the United States. What was the practice in Great Britain, for instance, in that land to which they were all so much attached, and which they all loved and respected so deeply, to which hon. gentlemen opposite, in particular, were in the habit of declaring themselves peculiarly loyal? What was the practice there? Did Great Britain refuse to allow Gaelic to be taught in Scotland? No; the Gaelic tongue was taught amid the Highlands fastnesses of Scotland, side by side with the English tongue; and the Constitution of England remained unimpaired. Was the educational grant refused to the schools of the Scottish Highlands because the Gaelic tongue was taught there? No. It was given as freely as to the schools of the Midland counties of England. (Applause.) And if England were not afraid of Gaelic being taught in the Highlands of Scotland, surely Ontario need not be afraid of French being taught to a few thousand French people at one end of the Province. (Applause.) As it was in Scotland so it was in Wales. As Gaelic was taught amid the fastnesses of the Scottish Highlands, so Welsh was taught amid the mountains of Carnarvon, and a Welshman had the privilege of seeing his little boy learning the language that was to him the language of bravery and heroism. (Applause.) And yet, in spite of all this, England stood as firm as ever

#### UPON HER EVERLASTING HILLS,

although she did not wear upon her escutcheon the blot the hon. gentleman opposite would have her wear, had she acted as he would have Ontario act now. (Loud applause.) Then the hon. gentleman referred to Prince Edward Island, to New Brunswick and to Nova Scotia. In all these Provinces, he pointed out, the French language was taught. In Nova Scotia, moreover, in some of the old Acadian schools, the French language was taught exclusively. French was allowed also in Manitoba and in the Northwest Territories, wherever the local necessities of the people required, and was taught side by side with English, and peace and prosperity prevailed there nevertheless. It was not considered a crime to teach Indian to the Indian children under the care of the Dominion Government. The Indian tongue was taught them side by side with the English and no harm resulted. Then the hon. gentleman touched upon the practice in the United States. He showed the liberal provisions made for the teaching of German in Ohio, Indiana and