

**THE MANITOBA  
SCHOOL QUESTION A  
REPLY TO MR. WADE**

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The Manitoba School Question a Reply to Mr. Wade by John Skirving Ewart

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**JOHN SKIRVING EWART**

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# THE MANITOBA SCHOOL QUESTION

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## A REPLY TO MR. WADE

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*"Numbers of persons HAVE INVENTED WHAT I MAY CALL A PATENT COMPRESSIBLE RELIGION, WHICH CAN BE FORCED INTO ALL CONSCIENCES WITH A VERY LITTLE SQUEEZING; and they wish to insist that this should be the only religion taught throughout the schools of the nation. What I want to impress upon you is that, if you admit this conception, you are entering upon a religious war of which you will not see the end. THERE IS ONLY ONE SOUND PRINCIPLE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION to which you should cling, which you should relentlessly enforce against all the conveniences and experiences of official men, and that is, THAT A PARENT, UNLESS HE HAS FORFEITED THE RIGHT by criminal acts, HAS THE INALIENABLE RIGHT TO DETERMINE THE TEACHING WHICH THE CHILD SHALL RECEIVE UPON THE HOLIEST AND MOST MOMENTOUS OF SUBJECTS. This is a right which no expediency can negative, which no state necessity ought to allow you to sweep away; and, therefore, I ask you to give your attention to this question of denominational education. It is full of danger and of difficulty; but you will only meet the danger by marching straight up to it and declaring that THE PREROGATIVE OF THE PARENT, unless he be convicted of criminality, MUST NOT BE TAKEN AWAY BY THE STATE."*—LORD SALISBURY.

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BY  
JOHN S. EWART, Q.C.

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## A REPLY TO MR. WADE.

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Mr. Wade's pamphlet is long; but it is not too long. It is an advantage to the Catholic minority that all the arguments which can be urged against them should be brought together—that all the heads should be placed on one neck—for it facilitates the definition of the issues, and presents fine opportunity for reply.

The pamphlet is all the more welcome that it is understood to have been written at the request of the Manitoba Government, and by a gentleman well qualified by professional attainments, literary qualifications, and keen love of the work. It may therefore be taken as exhibiting not only Mr. Wade's views, but those of his clients; and as containing the reasons they desire to urge against the removal of the grievances under which the Catholics in Manitoba are laboring.

It is to deal with those reasons—to show their absurdity and futility—that I make this reply. I do not pretend to include in it the arguments so often already advanced in support of the Catholic side of the case, further than may be necessary to answer the positions taken by Mr. Wade. For such arguments I must content myself with referring readers to the speeches of many able men in Parliament; to the debate before the Governor-General-in-Council in March last; to Mr. Fisher's excellent pamphlets; to the pages of my book upon "The Manitoba School Question"; and to other sources.

I shall take up Mr. Wade's pamphlet chapter by chapter and endeavor to answer definitely and clearly every statement in it which is not too apparently irrelevant.

## CHAPTER I.

### History of the Question.

Being a short recapitulation of the history of the case this chapter ought to be, and is, fairly accurate; but when Mr. Wade says that the Remedial Order required "that the system of education embodied in the Act of 1890 . . . should be annihilated," it is difficult to imagine that he even thought that to be the fact. Everyone knows that it is not. The language of the document is

"that the system of education, embodied in the two Acts of 1890, aforesaid, shall be *supplemented*,"

not shall be annihilated. The word "supplemented" is taken from a passage in the Privy Council decision. It is as follows :

"All legitimate ground of complaint would be removed, if that system (the system of 1890) were *supplemented* by provisions which would remove the grievance upon which the appeal is founded."

## CHAPTERS II. AND III.

### Catholic Education a Farce.

These chapters are written

"to show that the education alleged to be furnished in the Schools of the Roman Catholic section was farcical to the last degree, a wretched travesty of what education ought to be, and a disgrace to the Province of Manitoba."

And what is the evidence produced? Inspection reports? Legislative inquiries? Royal commissions? No, nothing of the kind. Not a word as to the schools, their equipment, their work—*not a single word*. What then? (1) Some old examination questions put to candidates for teaching certificates; these, and (2) alleged illiteracy of those who, for all that Mr. Wade says, never were near the schools—that is all the evidence! Let me say a few words as to each of these points.

### Teachers' Examinations.

In the early days of the Province, the law examinations were a complete farce, as Mr. Wade and I well know, for we

had to pass them. But Mr. Wade does not propose now to abolish the Law Society on that account; and the examinations now are well up to the mark. In the history of teachers' examinations (both Catholic and Protestant) in Manitoba the same progress may be noted, by anyone desiring to do so. In the earlier years there were hardly any Roman Catholic teachers to be examined (two or three in a class, sometimes none); and the qualifications of those who presented themselves were better known to the examiners by personal intercourse, than by any possible examination. The questions put, therefore, were not such as would be set to a large class of applicants wholly unknown to the examiners. This much is admitted, and Mr. Wade makes the most of it. But it is altogether irrelevant. The Catholic schools were abolished in 1890; and the question is, What were they like then? Mr. Wade sets out in his appendix examination papers of the years 1881 and 1882. Why did he not rather give those of later dates? In the body of his pamphlet, too, he gives some questions "taken at random" (18), but by no random error does he ever wander into the two years just prior to the Act.

### Examinations Since 1890.

If a few questions, moreover, picked out of examination papers "at random" would condemn a school system, it would not be difficult to denounce the present system—it would not be difficult, I mean, to pick out "at random" very ludicrous or childish questions from the examination papers set to candidates *since 1890*. I do not pretend that they prove anything as against the present schools (that is really too absurd); although if they had been given to Catholic candidates, they would, of course, have been most damning evidence of inefficiency—not of the examiners only, but of the schools which the candidates were *going to teach*. Here are a few specimens from examination papers since 1890:

Q. "Describe the common lifting pump. If water has to be raised from a well 80 feet deep, how high must it be lifted?"

How much water was in the well, whether it was full, or nearly empty, and how high you wanted to raise the water, seem to be immaterial!

Q. "Describe the following from a hygienic standpoint:—

(a) Exercise, (b) Sleep, (c) Bathing, (d) Clothing, (e) Food."

Q. "Define latent heat. Why are vessels for boiling furnished with lids?"

Q. "Tell *what you know* of the works of Virgil, Horace and Ovid."



Q. "I wish to deposit \$50 in a bank ; state fully the steps to be taken."

First get your \$50, no doubt; then take steps—to the bank!

In the arithmetic paper for third class certificates in 1895, three questions out of ten are the merest sums in addition, and the most difficult problems are one in multiplication and one in division. For fear that no third class candidate could solve these brain searchers, precisely the same sums, figure for figure, are repeated in the paper for the second class certificates! I wonder if anyone passed?

If it be absurd, as Mr. Wade seems to think it is, to ask in agriculture:

"How are cabbages and melons cultivated?" (15)

then I ask him why are questions put, under the present system, like this :

Q. " Describe the nature of mushrooms."

Mr. Wade makes light of questions relating to Bible history. The history of David, of Joseph, of Job, of Abraham, of Noah, of Solomon, are all objected to (15, 16). The following questions, however (set under the present system), are, I presume quite justifiable.

Q. " Write an essay on the manor house of Tully Veolan."

Q. " Write an essay on the character of Flora MacIvor."

Q. " Write an essay on Hayraddin the Herald."

Q. " Sketch briefly the character of Mr. Ephraim Jenkinson ; or give a short account of the travels of Mr. George Primrose."

Q. " Write an essay on the Unwin Household."

Q. " Describe Christmas Eve at Scroog's office, using the following topics :—(a) the weather, (b) the cold office," &c.

Q. " Write an essay on Frank Lavender's Aunt."

Mr. Wade would select as subjects for study, not David, but Mr. Ephraim Jenkinson ; not Joseph, but Mr. George Primrose ; not Job, but the Unwin Household ; not Abraham, but Scroog, and his cold office ; not Solomon, but Frank Lavender's Aunt ; not Jesus, but Barabas ! Well, to some extent, it is a matter of taste.

### Challenge to Mr. Armour, Q.C.

Some time ago, in reply to Mr. E. D. Armour, Q.C., who cited some of the old questions that Mr. Wade has reprinted, I wrote to *The Week* as follows :

"In order that the public may be satisfied upon the question of examination of teachers under the old system, I make Mr. Armour a proposal. I have placed in the hands of the Editor of *The Week* an envelope, in which there are two sets of examination papers, for first-class certificates; one of which was given to Roman Catholic, and one to Protestant, applicants. Mr. Armour may open the envelope, if he will agree that, after reading the papers, he will give his opinions on two points: (1) Which is the hardest set of papers? and (2) Were they, or was either of them, sufficient for an examination for first-class certificate? In order to remove the operation of Mr. Armour's bias, I have eliminated such questions as would enable him to detect the authorship of the papers. There are plenty left whereby to estimate merit."

Needless to say my challenge was not taken up. A few questions taken "at random" were, no doubt, a very much more satisfactory test of excellence, than fair comparison of the papers themselves.

### Resulting Illiteracy.

After having dealt with the character of the earlier examination papers, Mr. Wade proceeds under the heading "Resulting Illiteracy." He seems to argue that, inasmuch as many of the half-breeds are illiterate, therefore the Catholic schools were inefficient. But why does he not argue that, therefore the Protestant schools were inefficient? Doubtless he will say because those half-breeds never went to the Protestant schools. But if that relieves the Protestant schools, then why will not the statement, that they never went to the Catholic schools, relieve those schools also? If Mr. Wade can select a single half-breed who attended a Catholic school, and nevertheless remained illiterate he will have some argument for his charge of inefficiency. I challenge him to do it. If he cannot then his charge must be, not that the schools were inefficient, but that the Catholics while pretending to provide schools for the young, in reality induced the young not to attend them. This would be plainly absurd. Nevertheless Mr. Wade says:

"The difficulty is not that the Roman Catholic Church does not provide educational institutions; it is rather that the educational institutions do not educate the people under its charge." (19)

What does he mean?—that the church provides schools, and at the same time keeps people out of them? or, that although the church provides schools, the children are not taught anything? If the former, I can only express my amazement at the stupidity of the assertion; and if the latter, I ask for one half-

breed—only one, who attended a Catholic school, and cannot read and write.

### Illiteracy in Foreign Countries.

Not being satisfied by proving that the schools in Manitoba were inefficient because there are some illiterates in that country, who never went to the schools, Mr. Wade travels off to many foreign lands, and says that there are lots of illiterates there too (57). Now if it is absurd, as I think it plainly is, to try and prove the character of the Catholic schools in Manitoba, by the lack of education in Manitoba of those who never went to those schools, what better off are we, when we are told that there are illiterates in Italy also? But the argument seems to be this :

"Wherever the Roman Catholic parochial school is the medium of education, ignorance is rife, and when ignorance is at home crime is not a stranger." (52) The Roman Catholic parochial school was the medium of education in Manitoba, therefore ignorance was rife.

I deny both statements of this proposition. Until the last half century "ignorance was rife" everywhere, in comparison with the standard of to-day—Roman Catholic, and Protestant, countries alike, had not the same notions as are now prevalent. In England until 1870, "education was dependent on voluntary enterprise, or casual endowment," (Enc. Brit. vii. 679). Owing to the stimulus of state organization and assistance, the average attendance has increased there by more than 250 per cent. in the last 25 years! Was England's condition in 1870 due to the fact that "the Roman Catholic parochial school was the medium of education"? During the last twenty-five years one country after another has lent its powerful aid to the spread of education. They did not all start in the same year, and there are differences in their progress. Italy's effort came a few years later than England's; but as any one may see by the report of the United States Commissioners of Education for 1888-9, p. xiv :

"In no State of Europe has more strenuous efforts been made (than in Italy) to provide for education by public schools."

Mr. Wade gives some statistics (53). They are absolutely valueless in arguing as to the character of schools in *Manitoba*; but if anybody thinks that any help can be obtained in that way, I offer some others taken bodily from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. viii., p. 711 :