

THE CANADA
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY
AND SCHOOL CHRONICLE.

SEPTEMBER, 1881.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.*

BY DANIEL WILSON, LL.D., PRESIDENT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO.

CANADIANS are justly proud of their school system. It commends itself to approval on various grounds ; but on none more so than as a truly national system, available for all, without distinction of class or creed. But in its adaptation to the requirements of a country where no special creed or established form of religion is recognized, and to a Province in which the leading Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church are all alike largely represented, it has been indispensable to secure the exclusion of everything that could be reasonably objected to by any of them as encroaching on their province of religious instruction. But does it necessarily follow that religion is excluded from our public schools and colleges as a thing which the State, and all who are under its control, are bound to ignore? That this is a question

which you view with sensitive jealousy I may assume to be proved by the request you have made to me to discuss it at this Convention.

The profession of the teacher is not only an honourable one ; it is also a most responsible one. If you fully realize what education is, your duties are only second to those of the Christian minister. You have entrusted to you the moulding and fashioning of the rising generation ; the making in no inconsiderable degree of the future of this young country. Is it then the intellect alone with which you have to deal? Will it be the fulfilment of your high duty to send forth the boy or the girl committed to your training

“A reasoning, self-sufficient thing ;
An intellectual all-in-all !”

In other words, can that be regarded as a perfect, or even in any true sense a satisfactory, system of education which deals only with the intellect, and

* A paper read at the Ontario Teachers' Convention held in Toronto, 11th August, 1881.