

may not yet be understood by some Canadian wage-earners in no wise detracts from these conclusions. The question with us is only in its initial stages, because the conditions which have culminated in the American labour problem are not yet felt to their full intensity. Our cities are small as compared with New York and Chicago. Our unoccupied arable land is cheaper and more accessible than that remaining in the American West. Our population and industries are mainly rural. But in proportion as the country grows, and large centres are built up—in proportion as the self-employed farmer and the small tradesman of the villages become relatively smaller factors as compared with the capitalist and the wage-earner, the Labour question will become of continually increasing urgency, and what is at present little more than the skirmish line of the army of toil will swell to a formidable host.

P. T.

THE BIBLE IN THE SCHOOLS.

THE people of this Province are now in a position to consider judiciously all that has been said by ecclesiastically-minded, as well as by political partisans during the recent election campaign, on the use of the bible as a whole, or otherwise, in the schools of Ontario.

I take direct issue with most of the combatants in the many-sided squabble, and boldly avow my conviction that the bible as a mere book, whether in its complete form or as "Scripture Readings," has no right to a place in the schools of this country, on any plea that may not be urged with just as much propriety for the best thoughts of other sacred books, barring the one plea that the majority of our people are professing Christians.

Confessedly, the high and public schools are not Protestant. The Minister of Education himself has frequently affirmed this of late in his speeches. At Strathroy he informed his audience that the schools were open alike to Christian, Jew and Mahometan. Inferentially, they are equally free to Buddhist, Gueber, Agnostic and Atheist. In matters of conscience the majority argument is absolutely worthless, so that we have here the very best authority for the statement that our schools are not even distinctively Christian. But many clergymen and other people profess to hold a very different view, in the advocacy of which some of them have gained for themselves a little cheap notoriety, at the expense of more than one Christian virtue, and to the serious detriment of common sense.

With the law as it stood formerly, I and those like-minded with me were not disposed to find very serious fault. Then the reading of scripture was permissive or recommendatory. Now it is a matter of compulsion. If, as is stated, only 55 per cent. of the teachers made use of the bible last year, whereas 98 per cent. do so to-day, what is the gain? Is it 43 per cent. increase of that "righteousness which exalteth a nation," or, is it not merely 43 per cent. of compulsion, hypocrisy, and time-serving?

Questionable as are both of the departmental percentages quoted, but allowing them for argument's sake, it is a fact that a large and increasing number of Ontario (male) teachers are either supremely indifferent to the use of the bible, or are so far gone in agnosticism as to "care for none of those things." This may be deplorable, but it is true, and I humbly and reverentially submit it for the grave consideration of that ecclesiastical Bumbledom which has figured so flatulently in the press of late. And when it is borne in mind that the members composing that self-same Bumbledom are gentlemen who profess to lament another

change in the School Act, which is calculated, as they say, to place Roman Catholic laymen more completely under the thumb of the priest, we are driven to the amusing but withal serious conclusion that sauce for the Protestant goose is something very different for the Catholic gander. Bumbledom groans in spirit as it laments the possible and probable earthly fate of the poor benighted Papist who may dare to fly in the face of his "reverend father" by insisting to be assessed as a public school supporter. It declares that the amended law deprives our Catholic fellow-citizens of their liberty. But what of the many teachers and trustees whose consciences have been coerced at its instigation in connection with the Scripture Readings? How many boards of trustees, how many teachers now using the bible or the readings on compulsion, dare avow to their respective parsons that they do so only in obedience to law, their preferences being all the other way? Whatever the result might be in such a case concerning the well-to-do trustee, we have a shrewd inkling of the fate in store for the "poor but honest" teacher who would dare so to express his convictions.

A stock argument is that the demand was set up by the teachers themselves to have bible-reading in the schools made compulsory. If this were true, it would be stupid, for why should teachers ask for a law to make them do what they always had it in their power to do? But it is not true. The fact is that a few pietists brought the subject before the Provincial Teachers' Association, and worded their resolution in such a manner as almost to make any one who opposed it set the seal to his own professional death-warrant. It is on record that of all the representatives present at the Association, only one spoke out against the motion, although several voted to have it quashed. Similar resolutions were passed in a number of counties, and mainly, I venture to believe, for the same reason that Roman Catholics (as is said) will henceforth support their sectarian schools; viz., that the teachers did not care to place themselves in opposition to the clergy.

As a scheme to make the teacher do the work of the minister, the attempt has been successful, but only in so far as legal recognition and enactment are concerned; for, after all, the reading of scripture in the greater number of schools in this country will continue to be of the most perfunctory character. In the future, as in the past, the really good teacher will embrace every opportunity to enforce upon his pupils both the precept and the practice of all those maxims of Christianity and religion which experience has tested, and, having tested, has proved to embody the essentials of good citizenship. Beyond this, I claim that no state-paid teacher has any right to go; and no state-supported school has any right to demand or permit more.

But if, as is contended by Bumbledom, the reading of God's word in our schools is so imperatively necessary for the well-being of society, how is it that this country has managed to worry along so contentedly all these years, on only 50 per cent. of scripture in these institutions? And how is that in but a fraction of one per cent. of the schools have the ministers of God's word availed themselves of the law permitting them to indoctrinate the youth of their own sects and denominations? It is matter for regret that the Minister of Education betrayed so much consanguinity with the mollusk when he was bulldozed by Bumbledom on this subject, and it is a little too bad that when the pietists and their satellites got all they desired and more than they deserved, they should behave in so unchristianlike a manner as we know they have done.