

question was always a difficult one. Apart altogether from the views entertained by the different denominations as to the form which religious instruction should take, and the authority on which it should be based, there still remained the fact that the common school, as it was then called, was, as it is to-day, undenominational, and attended by the children of both Protestants and Catholics. As a *via media* out of the difficulty the old Council of Public Instruction promulgated the following regulations :

"With a view to secure the Divine blessing, and to impress upon the pupils the importance of religious duties, and their entire dependence on their Maker, the Council of Public Instruction recommend that the daily exercises of each Public school be opened and closed by reading a portion of Scripture, and by prayer. The Lord's Prayer alone, or the forms of prayer hereto annexed, may be used, or any other prayer preferred by the trustees or master of each school. But the Lord's Prayer shall form part of the opening exercise, and the Ten Commandments be taught to all the pupils, and be repeated at least once a week. Any portion of Scripture shall be read without comment or explanation, but no pupil shall be compelled to be present at these exercises against the wish of his parent or guardian, expressed in writing to the master of the school."

Provision was also made whereby the clergy of any persuasion could give religious instruction to the children of their own denomination after or before school hours.

The course agreed upon then was one which rendered optional the reading of the Bible in school. The trustees could forbid its use altogether if they saw fit. Under this regulation, however, so strong was public opinion in favour of religious instruction, that it was used in the majority of the schools. According to the report of the Education Department for 1884, 254 schools were opened with the reading of the Scriptures only ; 2,882 with the reading of Scriptures and prayer, and 1,914 with prayer alone. This state of affairs was not considered satisfactory to the religious bodies of the country, and in their church courts resolutions were moved from time to time, calling the attention of the Government to what to them appeared to be a radical defect in our system of education, their contention being that the subject of religious instruction was of paramount importance, and that the use of the Bible in school should not depend upon the will of any board of trustees. Resolutions to this effect were passed by several of the leading Protestant denominations, and in order to bring the matter to an issue, a joint deputation from the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches waited on the Attorney-General, on the 23rd of October, 1882. The deputation consisted of the following :—Bishop Hellmuth, Provost Body, Rev. G. B. Kirkpatrick, Rev. J. Middleton, Rev. J. P. Lewis, Rev. W. S. Rainsford, Rev. Canon Bell, Rev. John Langtry, Rev. Canon Dixon, Mr. W. Y. Pettit, Hon. G. W. Allan, Rev. Dr. Nelles, Rev. Dr. Sanderson, Rev. W. Williams (president of the London Conference), Dr. Withrow (in place of Dr. Sutherland, President of the Toronto Conference, who was unavoidably absent), Rev. Dr. Cochrane.