

The loss of the legislative grant to sections, because teachers neglected this particular duty, would raise such a storm as would inevitably cause a reaction and leave matters in a worse state than at present. If the Department find it difficult to prevent the use of unauthorized text books, they would find it a hopeless task to compel the use of the Bible in schools. Then it is always a matter of doubtful expediency to change an old law or system which is itself the result of compromise amongst a variety of views. For thirty years the present regulations have been in force, and, under them, the use of the Bible in schools has become very general, is it worth while to risk a change in the principle of the law to secure the recognition of the Bible in one-sixth of the schools? Since the law recognizes all clergymen of all denominations as official school visitors, it puts them in a position to wield collectively a powerful influence in favor of its still more general introduction. It may be that this could be facilitated if the practice adopted in England were followed here, namely, of preparing a series of selected Scripture lessons, which could be kept clear of burning ecclesiastical dogmas, and also of those passages which, on grounds of good taste, are quite unsuited for class reading.

One thing should be clearly borne in mind in this matter; that is, that the voluntary, or local option system, has not been in any sense a failure. The recommendation of the regulations has been for years very generally observed, though no systematic effort has been made to secure its universal observance; and there has been a general improvement in the moral tone of the public schools. Anyone who knows anything about the state of these institutions a generation ago, will endorse this assertion. Then drunken, swearing schoolmasters were far from uncommon; now they are scarcely to be found. Then the pupils naturally fell into the same bad habits; now the latter are everywhere reprobated as violations of both good taste and good morals. It may be that a still greater improvement would follow the more general use of the Scriptures in school; we believe it would, but great care must be taken not to attempt anything like making people moral by Act of Parliament. The question is full of difficulties, and can best be settled by the exercise of mutual forbearance and cooperative efforts to make the most of the privileges and sanctions contained in the school law.

FATHER STAFFORD.

It would be difficult to name any one in this Province who ever acquired, in an equally legitimate way, a higher reputation as an educationist than the late lamented Father Stafford of Lindsay. The facts of his biography are given in another part of this number, but no mere sketch could do justice to his principles, methods, and efforts for the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the common people. Fortunately for himself and the great work to which, with all the energy of a vigorous nature, he devoted himself, he was gifted with the most tolerant of dispositions. In his eyes every man's religious opinions were worthy of respect, and, as he invariably acted on this principle, he was popular with all creeds and classes.

Father Stafford's idea of education was as correct as his aims and methods were practical. He was an accomplished scholar and a well read man, but this did not prevent him from taking up, in the most common sense way, and carrying out with persistent energy, original schemes for bettering the social condition of his parishioners and of the community of which they formed a part. He made a point of ascertaining how they lived in their own homes, and of endeavoring to make the conditions of life as tolerable for them as possible. He was an earnest and enthusiastic advocate of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, and he set, in his own daily life, an example for others to imitate. No man understood better the intimate connection between sound morality and favorable physical conditions, and he deliberately set himself to improve the latter with a view to promoting the former. If all members of his sacred calling were equally impressed with this great sociological truth, and equally earnest as social reformers, they would exercise collectively on the condition of society a much more appreciable influence than they now do.

But it is in his labors in connection with scholastic education that teachers are most interested. During his long residence in Lindsay he had an opportunity of carrying out a systematic plan, and his efforts were crowned with marked success. He did his utmost to make the separate school efficient, and, under his care, it began to attract even Protestant pupils to its classes. He induced his parishioners to put up a good building and supply it with the apparatus for physical training. He always favored the employment of high grade Provincial teachers and the use of the ordinary public school text books. At his instance his people erected a convent building, in the management of which he pursued the same plan. Of late years it has become an admirable school for female teachers in training, and, as such, has been attended by candidates for public school certificates not of the Roman Catholic persuasion.

Father Stafford's life work in the cause of social reform and the education of the masses will exercise an influence long after his personality is forgotten. Though a zealous churchman, and a skilled controversialist, he was not merely respected but popular with other denominations. His latest appearance before the public was in connection with the "Marmion" controversy; and, had that vexed question been discussed by all the disputants in his spirit and manner, the public mind would have been less exercised over a problem which admitted after all of an easy solution.

EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION.

The Ontario Legislature has been summoned to meet for the despatch of business about the middle of December. As this is the last session of a parliament there is not likely to be much legislation carried through that will bear to be postponed, and, so far as education is concerned, this is matter for congratulation. What is wanted now is not relief from change for a single year, but for a term of years, if only the power of constraining municipal corporations in the matter of taxation were restored to school boards. The law as it