

Religion in the Schools.

Many clergy and a few laymen have of late been more than usually demonstrative in their denunciations of what they call godless schools. This has been going on for a long time, and were it not that an influential portion of the press has taken it up, this outcry would call for but little notice. It is creditable to the press that it has not been deceived in the matter, and almost without exception the newspapers are in harmony with the general sentiment of the people. It is somewhat astonishing to find that after so many years of railing at the absence of doctrinal teaching in the schools, that not one of its exponents has formulated any plan, let alone a feasible one, for the solution of the difficulty complained of.

It is well known to all, except those who never visit our schools, and who have never sent their children to them, and these seem to be the chief complainants, that the principle of sound Christian morality are inculcated in all our schools and that it is the teacher's privilege also to read the Bible there. It is equally well known that our teachers as a body are well qualified to give such instruction even when brought into comparison with such instructors as the clergymen themselves. The only danger of secular schools ever being established arises from these agitators for doctrinal teaching, who in their zeal to impress their own ideas of religious teaching upon them may destroy what we now enjoy. It appears somewhat like shirking a duty on the part of those clergymen, who with the aid of the Sunday school and other church influences wish notwithstanding to impose religious instruction upon the day school teacher. It is certainly a great compliment to the teachers, but implies a great want of faith on the part of the clergy in themselves, their co-workers, and their surroundings. Fortunately not by any means all the clergy voice these opinions, and most of those who do, do not voice the sentiments of their congregations. The same or similar statements will be made each year as the years go round, but doctrinal teaching will never find a place in our schools as long as they are called free schools.

Academic Education in Nova Scotia.

Not many years ago academic work in Nova Scotia was confined mainly to two or three centres. Now it is extending in all directions. Fine buildings artificially ventilated and fitted up with scientific laboratories have been built in many places. These new centres have outstripped some of the older centres, though all have increased in numbers and efficiency.

As a striking example of this advance let us trace the progress of Kentville Academy. Ten years ago it had only ten academic students. In 1886 an addition consisting of two rooms was built. The eighth grade was taken out of the academic department to form with

the seventh grade a preparatory department. Steadily the attendance increased until in '90 another grade "A" teacher had to be employed. The better pupils from the surrounding sections began to come in, thus enabling a town of only 1650 inhabitants and four common school departments to draw an academic grant of \$1,000.

As the results of the provincial examinations always showed to the advantage of the school the attendance kept on increasing. The academy received fresh impetus from the recent changes in the school law and in the course of study. To meet the requirements of the new course of study a large and well equipped laboratory was indispensable. In the summer of 1894 another addition was therefore built consisting of four rooms, two of which were finished, one for a laboratory, the other for a class room. An adjoining field containing about five acres was purchased for the benefit of the school. During the year, the number enrolled reaching 103, the attendance was inconveniently large for two teachers. Last July the spare room had to be furnished and an additional grade "A" teacher was secured for the current school year. The increase in the teaching staff made it possible to have an "A" class.

The number enrolled in the academic department has already reached 100. Of these 18 are in the "A" class, 15 in the "B," 30 in the "C," and 37 in the "D." Quite a number are expected to join the "B" class when the second quarter begins. The number of students taking the optional subjects are as follows: Latin, 96; Greek, 17; French, 70; German, 32. The probabilities are that the \$1,500 academic grant will be secured for this year.

Other equally striking examples of the advance in high school education might be given from sections in which there is not even the stimulus of a special grant. It will be noticed in the case given above that 96 out of 100 students are taking Latin, though it is an optional subject.

Drawing and Book-Keeping.

The results of the recent provincial examinations in Nova Scotia demonstrates that drawing and book-keeping are still neglected, or badly taught in the majority of the high schools of the province. The average number of marks obtained on these subjects was probably only about 30 out of a possible 100. Perhaps not more than 10 per cent of the candidates showed any ability to plot simple triangles. This is surprising when the simplicity and utility of these accomplishments are considered. It is by the drawing of angles, triangles and other figures to scale that the child's first definite ideas of geometry are obtained and his interest secured. Every pupil in the eighth grade should be perfectly familiar with the use of the compass and protractor— instruments which may be made by the pupils or purchased for a few cents.