

BISHOP'S COURT, WINNIPEG, MAN., 22nd February, 1895.

The Honourable Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Senator, Prime Minister, &c., Ottawa, Ont.

SIR,—As I understand that various representations are being made to the Government on the school question, I think it well to place before you for the information of the Government the views of the Church of England in Manitoba.

The views I am to express are held almost unanimously by the clergy and by the laity of the church elected as representatives in Synod.

They may be summed up in the following resolutions passed by the Diocesan Synod of Rupert's Land in January, 1893.

2. Resolved that while this Synod would gladly see a larger measure of religious teaching in our schools than at present prevails, it trusts that every effort will be made, both by the educational authorities and by the Christian public generally, to render existing regulations on the subject as widely operative and efficient as possible.

3. Resolved that whatever changes in the school policy of this province may in the future be required for the satisfactory solution of the educational problems with which as a province we have to deal, this Synod stands pledged to resist to the utmost any attempt to secularize our public schools. The Church of England, while acknowledging that a good secular education is a necessity of our age, considers that the inculcation of sound principles of life is of even more importance than material knowledge, and, therefore, that it is essential that education in the case of the young should be accompanied with religious instruction and that the teaching of morals should be founded on Divine sanction.

At the time of the transfer of the country to Canada the Church of England had one or more church schools in every parish. It did not seem, however, possible to maintain them in addition to the ministry, in view of the expected growth of the province, with the efficiency that was desirable. The Church of England was therefore anxious to unite in the support of common public schools, hoping that there would be in them more or less satisfactory religious instruction. But we have had to regret that circumstances have made it impossible to obtain what the Church desires.

The system established at first by the local legislature by which the Roman Catholics had separate schools entirely under their own management, and all others grouped under the name of Protestants, had common schools, never worked to our satisfaction, though we always had the hope of improvement.

That system failed to give the state a proper security for good secular instruction in the Roman Catholic schools, while it gave that body an unfair advantage over other denominations—an advantage which in this province it was not entitled to by any numerical majority. But, as we realized that like advantages could not be given to other bodies in the circumstances of the country, we submitted to the denominational disadvantage, in the hope that a fairly satisfactory system of religious instruction might be established in the so-called Protestant schools. We never thought of any instruction beyond what is recognized in England by the state as unsectarian—the opening of the school with authorized forms of prayer and the reading of the Bible—the reading and teaching and learning by heart selected portions of the Holy Scripture and the learning of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

This is not regarded by the state authorities in England as Protestant instruction, but as unsectarian, that is as giving instruction on what is believed in in common by at least all the great religious bodies, Roman Catholic and Protestant. But so many members, placed by the government on the Protestant section of the Board of Education, were favourable to simply secular instruction, that our hope was never realized. Arrangements were under consideration for giving instruction in selected passages of the Bible and the Apostles' Creed was required to be learned by heart, but neither it nor the Bible was ever taught.

Then the present system of education was established. As a church we took no part in the struggle. The new system does not satisfy us any more than the old. But I address you now, as we are anxious that the schools should not become still more unsatisfactory.