

course, on the assumption that the investigation now going on in the Committee on Privileges and Elections leaves him with unsullied reputation. His retirement will make room for an Ontario representative in the important Department of Public Works. In the meantime the Government will incur the reproach of being very partial in its distribution of offices, seeing that Ontario, the most populous and by far the richest and potentially most influential member of the Confederation, is but feebly represented in the Cabinet as now constituted. If it be true that it has been decided that Sir John Thompson shall be the nominal as well as virtual leader of the Government in the Commons, it is likely that the best arrangement possible under the circumstances has been made. Of course the test of time alone can determine the prowess of the new Administration. It is not easy to see, however, why it should not succeed in guiding the work of the session to a satisfactory ending. The severest trial of its strength will come during the recess, when its stability will be affected mainly by the results of the bye-elections, and the success or failure of the Washington conference.

THE dignity of the mover and seconder of the resolution proposed in the Anglican Synod in favour of the denominational school system, and the seriousness of the debate and division which followed, forbid, we suppose, the supposition that the motion was ironical, or that it was intended simply as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the present Separate School system. While we do not for a moment suppose that a system of denominational schools supported by public taxes, and, as a logical consequence, under the supervision and control of the Government, can ever obtain in Ontario, we are free to admit the full force of the objections urged against the present system. Apart from the grave constitutional question involved in the Roman Catholic Separate Schools, we have no doubt that the dissatisfaction of the more thoughtful and serious with the present public schools will grow rather than diminish as the years go on. The discussion in the Synod very naturally turned almost entirely upon the question of moral and religious training. Whatever may be said to the contrary by interested upholders of the present system it is, we believe, a demonstrable fact that it neither does nor can secure any adequate provision for genuine, effective moral training, to say nothing of religious instruction. While it is, to say the least, a matter of serious doubt whether the public school is, under any circumstances, the proper place for imparting distinctively religious instruction, we cannot see how any thoughtful person can deny that the training and development of the moral nature should be made not only a part, but the fundamental part of every system of national instruction. The sense of duty, the obligation of the *right* is fundamental in national as in individual character, if, indeed, it be possible to distinguish between the two. This is coming, we think, to be more and more deeply felt. The time was when it was held that ignorance alone was the parent of vice and crime, and that with universal intelligence there would be ushered in the universal reign of truth and virtue. The day of universal intelligence has not yet come, but sufficient progress in that direction has been made to prove that while the education of the intellect undoubtedly does much to diminish the propensity to certain forms of immorality, it is by no means a guarantee of honesty or purity. But how many of the public school teachers of Ontario enter the school-room day by day with the conviction that their first and highest obligation has to do with the formation of character, and that the training of intellect is but a subordinate, though a most important and indispensable, part of the duties of their high office? How large a percentage of these teachers—more than half of whom are probably under twenty-one years of age—are, in any proper sense of the word, qualified to undertake this moral training, even were they conscious of their obligation in regard to it? It is worse than useless to exaggerate the evil. Let us not be unjust to the individuals or to the system. We gladly concede the fact that there are in the ranks of the teaching profession all over Canada many teachers of a high order of character and ability, who fully recognize their primary obligations as character-builders, and are doing their whole duty day by day as ably and efficiently as any teachers could do it under the circumstances. But it is impossible to believe or hope that such are not in the minority, or that the great majority are actuated by any higher conception of duty than that they must earn their money by teaching the

boys and girls to read, write and cipher, to con by rote geographical names and historical dates, perchance to parse.

THE defect is patent to all who seriously study the subject. How to find and apply the remedy is the perplexing question. We are far from being presumptuous enough to attempt to answer it off-hand. The most we can hope to do is to emphasize it, with the hope of turning more thought and study into this channel of enquiry. The objections to the mode of solution proposed by Dr. Langtry and Professor Clark are, in our opinion, insurmountable and fatal. They have often been stated, and we need do no more than hint at one or two of the more obvious. First of all there is the political objection, which may be regarded also as a moral one, to compelling many unwilling citizens to pay for the teaching of a religious system in which they do not believe. Second, there is the politico-religious objection against the Government on the one hand appropriating public funds without directing and controlling their use, or on the other undertaking to provide and supervise religious instruction which most Christian parents regard as something utterly beyond and above its sphere. In the third place there is the great danger that the moral and religious instruction would soon degenerate into mere dead formalism—a thing utterly destitute of spiritual life or power, and so worse than no attempt at such instruction for nothing is so bad as hypocrisy. Then there is the difficulty—possibly but we fear not easily surmountable—arising from the clashing of creeds, or the multiplication of schools, either of which would be an evil of the first magnitude. By way, no doubt, of revulsion from the inefficiency of the public school there is, as the Commissioner of Education at Washington pointed out in a recent Report, a marked tendency in that country to an increase in the number of private schools. We have no doubt that, in the nature of the case, this tendency will grow both in the States and in Canada, until large numbers of children are educated in private schools. Parents who can afford it can hardly be blamed for thus attempting to promote the best interests of their own children. But this method can at best produce but partial and unsatisfactory results, and must utterly fail to meet the national want. The most feasible and hopeful plan, though it is necessarily slow in its operation, is, it seems to us, suggested by the fact above referred to, that we have already, under the present system, a considerable percentage of teachers who are doing their whole duty with ability and success. This reminds us that the difficulty resolves itself mainly into a question of teachers; that under our system the local patrons of the schools have through their trustees the selection of teachers in their own hands, and that the capable and truly religious teacher has large if not ample opportunities for bringing the great truths and principles of religion, in their practical applications, home to the hearts and consciences and lives of his pupils. Hence it follows that if the people of each section would but choose the right men as trustees, and if people and trustees were resolved to have none but teachers of the best stamp, and were willing to pay such teachers, and enough of them, with sufficient liberality to retain their services, the problem would at once be solved. Is there not a great work for clergymen and Christian laymen to do in educating their people up to the point at which they will be willing to make the necessary sacrifice to secure the grand results so much desired?

IN his brief speech on the occasion of his being presented with the freedom of the city of Glasgow, a few weeks since, Lord Salisbury pointed out in a very clear and striking manner the chief flaw in the Parliamentary system of government. Occasion was given for this remark by the assurance of the Lord Provost of the city, on presenting the Prime Minister with the certificate of his burgess-ship, that the act was by no means a party one, but a recognition of the fact that Lord Salisbury's foreign policy had promoted the interests of peace and international good fellowship. At the luncheon which followed Lord Salisbury took occasion to remark on the difficulty, if not impossibility, under the Parliamentary system, of preventing the mixing-up of party considerations with matters entirely independent of party principles. All oppositions alike, he said, find it almost too much for their virtue to pass important measures which redound to the credit of the Government, even though they involve no party principle, when it is clear to them that by finding innumerable faults, and by delaying to the last moment

all effectual legislation, they can throw discredit on a Government, or prevent its earning the respect and gratitude of a country. He referred, by way of illustration, to the alleged fact that Mr. Sexton had made three hundred speeches on the Irish Land Bill, and pointed out that if it were true that Mr. Sexton had risen so often it could only be because he felt the necessity of making the weight of his influence felt against a Government which resists Irish Home Rule, and not because he regarded his three hundred speeches as likely to improve very much the character of the Bill itself. The only remedy Lord Salisbury was able to suggest for this very serious evil was to remit, as far as possible, measures that do not involve party questions or principles, to municipal bodies which would be under no temptation to complicate their construction by tacit reference to the indirect effects of such legislation on party warfare. Thus far the Prime Minister declared himself a Home-Ruler. There can be no doubt whatever, we suppose, that the policy of extending the operations and enlarging the powers of municipal bodies is now in favour with both parties as the only available means of reducing the legislative congestion from which both Parliament and the patient people have been so long suffering. But who shall draw the line and where between the subjects of legislation which do and those which do not involve questions of political principle or national policy, in other words, party questions? Mr. Gladstone has declared that such a task transcends the "wit of man." The *Spectator* sets this difficulty in a strong light. "How would it be possible, for instance," it asks, "to determine the railway policy of the country, or the lighthouse policy of the country, without any relation to the official needs of the Government in time of war?" Many similar questions at once suggest themselves to show the impracticability of removing the difficulty, save to a very limited extent, by the local Government method, however desirable that method may be for other reasons. And even were it possible to do so, would it really be desirable to reduce the area of Parliamentary work and debate to the limit of strictly party questions? Who could conceive, without a shudder, of a Parliament or Legislature thus converted into an arena in which the din of party conflict would never cease?

EVEN were it possible to remove or materially lessen the evil by the means Lord Salisbury suggests, the remedy would be a most humiliating one. It would be tantamount to an admission that the normal condition of Parliament is that of a battle-field in which the people's representatives are to be drawn up in opposing ranks and engaged in perpetual conflicts, and that the only hope of bringing about a better state of things lies in reducing the subjects of dispute to the smallest possible number, thus clearing the field as it were, and limiting the duration of the periodical contests by increasing their intensity. A flattering conception, truly, for a people accustomed to boast of their capacity for self-rule. The *Spectator's* method is one more flattering to national self-esteem, whether less practicable or not. "The true remedy," it contends, "is not to exclude artificially as many home questions as possible from the purview of Parliamentary debate, but to raise Parliamentary debate to a level at which either party would be ashamed to find excuses for poisoning neutral questions with the virus of party feeling." "A party," it adds, "that cannot co-operate cordially with its opponents on all really neutral ground is a party that has lost all virtue, dignity, and right to national respect." Here we at once feel that we are on loftier ground. That the ideal thus set up is not wholly unattainable is, happily, sometimes seen in the conduct even of existing parties. For instance, Lord Salisbury, on the occasion referred to, frankly acknowledged, and the *Spectator* speaking for the Unionists confirms the acknowledgment, that Mr. Gladstone has refrained sedulously from making party questions of international disputes which would be seriously prejudiced by any partisan treatment. As a matter of fact most Opposition leaders have sufficient patriotism to observe the same rule so far as international questions are concerned. But when the *Spectator* urges that the same principle should be applied in all neutral questions, it loses sight, we venture to think, of certain conditions or considerations which are sure to carry great weight with all Opposition leaders. It often, perhaps we might say usually, happens that there is one main question of policy which, in the eyes of both parties, transcends all others, involving, as both aver, the well-being, if not the very existence, of the State. In such