

NATIONAL SCHOOLS SPECIALLY REQUIRED IN MANITOBA.

We have endeavored to make it clear why in a community in which the people govern themselves, a system of state education is necessary. Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy in name but is in fact a democracy and in some respects is the most advanced democracy that has ever existed. The great autonomous colonies of Britain are also virtual democracies. In the mother land itself, where the population is mostly indigenous and homogeneous, state education has been found imperative and is making vast headway in face of the enormous aggressive power and the great vis inertia of vested interests and traditional custom.

If public education has been found necessary in a country like Britain, the necessity is greatly emphasized in a new community like Manitoba, with its heterogeneous and polyglot population, and the great diversity of intelligence and ideas which characterize its yet unassimilated elements. Many of the foreign immigrants, apart from their ignorance, have had so little opportunity in their previous experience of acquiring any conceptions of the rights, the duties, or the responsibilities of the citizens of a free country, that their presence in large numbers would form a distinct menace and danger to the continued freedom and stability of the government, unless means were taken to ensure an education for their offspring.

Confronted with these conditions the legislature of Manitoba in 1890 enacted a law, or rather laws, which provided for the education of all the children of the province. The education provided for was to be entirely free from sectarian religious teaching. The curriculum in the schools is under the supervision of a department of education, which chooses the text books. The schools are placed for purposes of local administration under boards of trustees. It is optional with these trustees whether or not religious exercises shall be performed in the schools. When it is deemed advisable to introduce such exercises, their character is defined, and their scope clearly limited by the law. No scholar is bound to participate in these exercises, nor is he even bound to make any declaration as to his reason for non-participation. The exercises occupy an almost infinitesimal

portion of the entire working time, and are so arranged that the work, or the time of those not engaged in them, is not in any way encroached upon, nor interfered with. It is our view that even these exercises, short and neutral as they undoubtedly are, should, in the interest of absolute consistency, be eliminated. It is contended that they have a great ethical value, and that any doctrine involved is common to the religious creeds of the overwhelming majority. There is the soundest reason for doubting the ethical importance of the religious teaching given in the schools at present, or at any time, and, while it is true that no doctrine is taught nor involved, which is not assented to by all sects of orthodox Christians, yet there are still others who have rights in the use of the schools, who, while they may not have expressed any positive objections to the religious exercises as at present conducted, cannot certainly express any approval of them. If these latter, however, claimed the use of the schools for the instruction of their children in their own peculiar tenets, it would manifestly be very difficult to accommodate them, and perhaps even more difficult to furnish them with an adequate reason why they should thus be virtually discriminated against, on account of their religious views.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS THE OBSTACLE TO STATE EDUCATION.

As a practical fact, however, the only interest which has expressed positive dissatisfaction with, or objection to the present system, is the Catholic church. It does not object to the teaching on the score of inefficiency in regard to secular training. As has already been stated, it takes the arbitrary ground that any system of education which is not under its control, in which its doctrines are not inculcated, and in which its various claims and pretensions are not unquestioningly received, is perilous to the eternal wellbeing of the child.

Let us see what the attitude of the Church of Rome involves and on what it is founded. This church as we have already stated, contends that it is the sole authorized interpreter of revealed truth to mankind. All other forms of religious belief, it