

EDITORIAL NOTES.

DERELIGIONIZING THE NATION.

OUR readers, we doubt not, will be grateful to President Wilson, of University College, for the timely service he has done the cause of religion and morals by discussing, at the recent Provincial Teachers' Convention, the subject of "Religious Instruction in the Public Schools." In the address, which we publish elsewhere in our columns, though the distinguished lecturer was discreet and conciliatory, there is no mistaking the earnestness with which he appealed to the teaching profession to place the weight of their influence, in their contact with youth, on the side of Christianity, and to be mindful of the effect of that "best of all moral culture"—"the informal teaching which goes on in the daily and hourly intercourse of the teacher with his pupils." Of course, Dr. Wilson fully appreciates the difficulty of giving any prominence in the schools to religious instruction. Rather than that its introduction should be made a rock of offence, he would even omit the brief daily service prescribed by law for the opening and closing exercises. His great reliance seems to be on teaching by example, and on the inculcation of moral truth through the influences of a good life, each day reverently consecrated to the high duties of a teacher's calling. Beyond this, however, Dr. Wilson is seemingly fain to go, though he is extremely sensitive on the point of raising a sectarian stumbling-block, which would make the schools the theatre of unkindly strife, and undo much of the work which education is relied upon to perform. The following quotation from his address attests the reality of his religious convictions, and indicates how far removed he is from the position of the advocates of godless education, or from indifferentism in regard to the inculcation of moral truth in our

schools and colleges. He says: "If we never drop a hint of our belief in the Divine Fatherhood, of a Personal God, or our recognition of His rule and governance, but speak only of force, law, evolution, or nature, such silence, be assured, speaks volumes. *You cannot silence the teachings which such negation conveys.*" And here, we conceive, is the grand mistake we are making, in so rigidly insisting upon a purely secular school training for our youth. It is not only that we are withholding religious instruction from those who, at a critical period of life, are the wards of the nation, but that we are positively disowning the influence that, in the individual and the nation alike, "makes for righteousness," and are giving play the while to the forces which will most fatally subvert it. The matter is a serious one; and Dr. Wilson's paper will be of supreme service if it leads to the reconsideration of the whole question of the Bible in the Public Schools, from which, we are inclined to think, it has been too hastily ejected, without thought of the consequences which the act entails. However this may be viewed, we cannot but feel that, in times like these, this divorce of all religion from the schools is fearfully imperilling the future moral and religious life of the nation. If religion is to have no place in the schools, and its lessons are never to be brought before the mind of youth, at a time when habits are being formed and the mental complexion of each individual soul is taking on its colour for eternity, what chance will there be for the recognition of its obligations and claims when youth has given place to manhood, and the twigs have become the set limbs, which no influence can afterwards divert from the line of their growth? We have no desire to act the rôle of the fanatical alarmist on this question, and we need scarcely say that we do not broach