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Toronto, December 26, 1895.

Religious Instruction in the Schools.

The problem of religious instruction in the schools, though it ought to be simple enough in a Christian country like this, is so difficult practically, owing to our unhappy divisions, that one is disposed to welcome any contribution to the discussion which aims at giving relief. It is therefore in no captious spirit that we refer to a suggestion made by an anonymous correspondent in one of our city dailies to meet the difficulty by the establishment of a joint system of public and denominational schools between which the ordinary school funds whether local or provincial should be divided according to results. He would have religious instruction given in the public schools for half an hour daily, under a conscience clause exempting those who objected to it altogether, but would allow any denomination that was dissatisfied with its character to establish a school of its own and give any kind of religious instruction it pleased, provided it would furnish its own building, guarantee an average attendance of 30 scholars and maintain a certain standard of efficiency. On complying with these conditions it would be entitled to receive an equal share per pupil from the public funds collected for ordinary school purposes. In this way he supposes all parties would be satisfied, religious instruction he practically universal and yet the highest educational standard maintained.

This suggestion has considerable significance in view of the fact that various Anglican Synods in Canada, Diocesan and Provincial, have during the past few years considered and adopted resolutions looking in that direction.

But, however well meant, a little examination will suffice to show that it is utterly impracticable and can never open a way out of the difficulty. Its disastrous effects on education would be limited only by the degree in which the churches should avail themselves of its provisions.

Even the writer sees that it cannot be carried out as regards secondary education. He does not propose to allow denominational High Schools and Collegiate Institutes at the public cost. He sees very clearly that there is no room for them in that grade and that to permit them would simply mean ruin to the whole system which in Ontario has been built up by so much labor and at so great expense.

But it is equally obvious that it could never be made applicable to country school districts—the great majority of the whole—under the conditions which are suggested. There are few school districts in the country that average more than 30 pupils altogether, and if any one denomination should be in a position to take that number out of the public school, the latter would be left with a small handful

or be speedily closed altogether. At most it could only apply to towns and cities where it is least needed, because there the other facilities for religious instruction are most readily available.

Further it would never satisfy the Roman Catholics because it offers them far less than they now enjoy under the school law of Ontario, viz, the right to apply all their own taxes to their separate schools and use them for the erection of buildings as well as for the maintenance of the school. If that right was taken away they would at once clamour for its restoration and would probably succeed. Any other denomination that was sufficiently narrow to demand its own schools would be certain to claim the same right and could scarcely be expected to rest content with less. Nor is it at all likely that once the principle was conceded, the minimum of 30 pupils could be maintained. In the province of Quebec where the right of dissent is largely exercised by both, Protestants and Catholics no minimum at all is required, and it is often necessary to group together the pupils of different municipalities in order to get enough to make a decent school at all. It goes without saying that under these circumstances no system of inspection or other educational machinery that can be devised is able to keep up the standard of efficiency.

In fact to get an idea of the undesirable friction that such a joint system of public and denominational schools is sure to develop one has only to look to England at the present time. That is virtually the system which obtains there, and a perennial feud exists between the two classes of schools and their supporters, each jealous of the success of the other and neither satisfied with the operation of the law. At the present juncture the friends of voluntary denominational schools are making a dead set on the new government, which they have helped into power, in order to secure much greater advantage than they have heretofore enjoyed and if possible crowd out the public board schools altogether. Presbyterians in this country at least are too clearly convinced of the benefits of the public school system to lend any countenance to a movement that would inevitably lead to its destruction. They will look for some other solution of the problem of religious instruction and will strive patiently till they find it.

A Revered Pastor.

The ties between pastor and people are of the tenderest character. He cares for their souls. His days and nights are given up to thoughtful planning for their welfare. Their joys and sorrows he bears on his heart, and at the throne their sins and their sufferings mingle with his own. When years roll by and time strengthens and cements these ties they become most precious indeed and become a part of one's spiritual existence. In many pastors' experiences are such sacred relations, the foretaste on earth of the joys of heaven. And they were testified to manifestly at the services at St. Andrews Church Toronto, last Lord's Day when the twenty-fifth anniversary of the revered pastor's settlement in the congregation fell due. No pastor is more deeply loved by his congregation than Rev. D. J. Maedonnell, B. D., and that illness has laid him aside from active, personal duty among them has but deepened their sense of the labors of the pastorate in which his rare qualities so brightly shone. A loving and impressive message was read from him to his people, of which the following is an extract:—"May this Communion season be one of richest profit. I know of no way of celebrating this anniversary more becomingly than sitting down together at the Table of the Lord to remember His dying love—the few of you who "remain to this