

EDITORIAL NOTES.

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

THE question how best to impart moral instruction in schools has recently been under discussion by the members of the School Board of Birmingham, Eng. The decision came to by that body was to instruct the teachers to give two lessons a week, of a conversational character, on such subjects as the following: Obedience to parents, honesty, truthfulness, modesty, temperance, courage, kindness, perseverance, frugality, thrift, government of temper, courtesy, unselfishness, and kindred moral duties,—the lessons to be of half an hour each, and to be enforced by illustrations drawn from daily life. An amendment was proposed to the effect that teachers should be allowed to draw their illustrations from the Bible, but it was voted down—a member, the Rev. Mr. Dale, thus expressing the opinions of the majority. He (Mr. Dale) believed that the code would promote the moral health and vigour of the children, and that ultimately religious faith itself would be benefited by it. The manner in which morals were commonly taught, when morals were associated with religious instruction, had rather emasculated and enfeebled moral life by the exclusive appeal that had been made to the highest religious motives in order to enforce ordinary moral duties. He was prepared, he said, to maintain that there was a clear distinction between teaching morals and teaching religion. There were many men who recognized the obligation of honesty, and truthfulness, and of temperance, who rejected Divine revelation. He admitted, however, that an appeal to revelation added tremendous sanction to the ordinary moral duties, but he argued that neither morality nor religion was a gainer from an incessant appeal to religious motives. He desired his child to have a generous love

of goodness, not merely because God had commanded it, but for its own sake. There is much to be said in favour of Mr. Dale's robust yet thoughtful views on this subject. We are perhaps too apt to enforce our admonitions to the young in the jargon of Pharisaism or in the grey phrases of Sunday-school literature. A kindly, earnest talk in the phraseology of the play-ground would oftentimes be more impressive and effective. Still, where no objection is raised on conscientious grounds to the reading of the Bible in the school, the simple and pointed moral instruction of the teacher may well and profitably be enriched from the maxims of the Great Master.

THE question of Clerical *versus* State Lay Education in France is still wildly exercising the Gallican mind, and the agitation, we notice, is now spreading to Belgium. The intolerance and animosity of the Church is unhappily now being matched by the intolerance and animosity of the enemies of the Church, and what the outcome of the disturbance is to be no one can well forecast. So impassioned are the parties in the affray, and so hopeless seems the appeal to calm reason in France, that spokesmen on both sides of the quarrel are now appealing to England for a hearing on the merits of the burning question at issue. Those of our readers who may be interested in the matter will find the case best stated for the Clerics in the extracts given in the recent English newspapers from a pamphlet written by M. l' Abbé Martin, and for the Liberals in the article in the September number of the *Nineteenth Century*, by M. Edmund About. On the surface the Government Bill, introduced by M. Jules Ferry, Minister of Education, seems a commendable attempt on the part of