

DR. BRYCE ON STATE SCHOOLS.

BY REV. GEORGE SUTHERLAND.

IN the *Presbyterian Review* of March 2nd, there is published a portion of an address on the "Aim of the Public Schools," by the Rev. Dr. Bryce, of Manitoba College. The portion given to the public is that which relates to "religious instruction in the schools." The published opinions of teachers of religion in this day may well receive attention, and specially of those who are the trainers of teachers in our theological seminaries.

Dr. Bryce affirms that "the Public school has no function in the sphere of religious instruction." In plain terms, that the Public school has nothing to do with religion. It must keep outside the whole circle of religion—that is, of God, of the Bible, of sin, and of salvation. We know something of such doctrine in Australia, and we are reaping the fruits of it in a widespread irreligion, infidelity and ungodliness in the rising generation of young men and young women beyond anything ever seen in the past. When our Public school system was supplanting the denominational system, an effort was made by a Bible combination to have a lesson every day, wholly unsectarian, from the inspired oracles of heavenly wisdom, but our strongest opponents were men of Dr. Bryce's opinion. Ministers of religion, trained in antipathy to State Churches, carried their abhorrence of State connection into the school question, and voted down the Bible lesson with feelings that found vent in such expressions as these in the hearing of the writer: "I am sick of religion in the schools;" "I was choked with religion in the school when I had to repeat the 119th Psalm."

We stand up for no extravagance and no harsh measures in matters of conscience, but we do stand up for the honour of God and the welfare of the young in every part of this fallen world.

What is understood as "religious instruction" by Dr. Bryce? If only sectarian or denominational instruction I am at one with him. The Bible is not sectarian, and all the essentials of its religion may be taught without a tinge of sectarianism. Our common Christianity may form the subject of a daily lesson, as set forth in its many forms and features in that wondrous collection of writings which we designate as par excellence, The Book. But the reader will, I conceive, be forced to the conclusion that Dr. Bryce's meaning is, that religion in no form shall enter the Public school. Against that doctrine I raise the most emphatic objection which language can express. Dr. Bryce proceeds to count the number of hours in school in contrast with those out of it—as 30 to 168. The argument is of no value, one-half of the 168 might have been dropped for the hours of darkness. It is enough to say that the school hours are beyond all question the best and most important part of the whole week—and, therefore, of the life of the scholar. Another argument presented is, that his opinion is "the overwhelming opinion of the great majority of the Dominion," and draws the conclusion that it is "not allowable for the State to give religious instruction in the schools." But it requires no effort to disprove this statement from Dr. Bryce's own words. He admits that "the whole Roman Catholic Church is against