

schools under their charge, if they deem it proper to do so, that it may be reverently read in connection with devotional exercises, at the beginning of each day's work ; this permission being supplemented by a recommendation, on the part of the Educational Department, that it should be taken advantage of by trustees as far as possible. The proposed emendation makes the reading of the Holy Scripture, together with the prescribed prayers issued by the Department, an *obligatory* exercise ; the passages of Scripture to be read each day being prescribed by the Department. But both in the law as it now stands, and in the proposed measure, provision is made that "no child shall be compelled to be present at religious instruction, reading or exercise, against the wish of his parents or guardians, expressed in writing."

The two measures evidently rest upon entirely different views of the relation of the civil government to the religious interests of the community. It is affirmed that this distinction is only apparent, and that in this respect they really stand on the same level, inasmuch as, under the present permissive law, the determination of school boards, who are Government officials, are as obligatory as if they issued from the central authority. A little consideration will show that this view of the matter entirely misinterprets the significance of the law as it now stands ; failing to perceive in its form, what it was plainly designed to express, the advance of public opinion in respect to the freedom and independence and voluntary character of religion. The present law carries with it by implication, the acknowledgment, on the part of the State, that