

## CURRENT TOPICS AND EVENTS.

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### THE BIBLE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The question of popular Education is the great question of the day. In Great Britain, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in the United States and Canada, even in India and Japan, it is challenging public attention, and demanding the wisest consideration of the greatest statesmen of the age. In France, in reaction against the ultramontane and absolutist influence of the Jesuit and priest teachers, the department of Public Instruction seeks to make the teaching in the schools completely secular, one zealous functionary even going so far as to exclude "Robinson Crusoe" from the school library because it contained the name of God. In Italy from the same causes, much the same feeling obtains. But in Germany, in Scandinavia, and for the most part in Great Britain, the Bible is recognized as the foundation of morality, and is therefore taught in the Public Schools. Probably in no nation in Europe are Bible-ethics more carefully taught, than in Norway and Sweden, and to this fact DuCaillu attributes the social happiness and wellbeing of the Scandinavian communities, their thrift, industry and prosperity,—the infrequency of labour strikes and entire absence of Communism and Nihilism.

Happily in this Province of Ontario, and we think in most of the other Provinces of our Dominion, the same reverence for religion, the same recognition of the Bible as its best exponent, for the most part prevails; and in a large proportion of our Public Schools the Bible is daily read. Still in this Province this is optional with the local trustees, and through carelessness or antipathy in many cases, the wise provision for Bible reading is ignored.

The object of the influential deputation which waited on the Premier

of Ontario, was to have this option withdrawn, and to make it the rule that the Bible should be read in all the Schools. There is herein no compulsion to take part in the exercises, for any parents who object may have their children excused from being present during such reading. Yet this reasonable request is strenuously opposed by a great political organ, on the ground that the schools are not exclusively Protestant Schools. Because there may be a Roman Catholic lad in the school, who may be excused if he so desire from presence at the Bible reading, therefore, forsooth, the whole school may through the apathy or antipathy of a board of trustees be deprived of this important right. Mr. Mowat in his courteous reply to the deputation, expressed his entire sympathy with them and declared that Christianity was recognized by the law of the land. To this broad Christianity our Roman Catholic friends, as well as ourselves subscribe. We believe that comparatively few of them would object to the reading of God's Word, or to the prescribed form of prayer, of which, we understand, Archbishop Lynch himself, has approved. But if they should object, they have their remedy in the Separate Schools, or in abstention from the religious exercises. Even in a purely educational point of view, no book will so help to form a correct taste, and so fill the mind with sweet cadences and lofty thoughts as the Bible. No book is such a well of English undefiled, infinitely better than either Marmion or Burke. It was the Roman Catholic Newman, who has written one of the noblest and most touching eulogies in our language of this book.

The deputation asked also for some simple, unsectarian sections in the school-readers, or otherwise, on the narrative and historical parts of the Scriptures. The old Irish national readers, in which the present