

A PITIABLE PLIGHT!

SUCH must have been the reflection, if not the utterance of very many who last week, in Massey Hall, listened to the presentation of the case of Manitoba as regards its school legislation, laid before the meeting by the Honorable Mr. Sifton, the Attorney-General for the Province. As a manifestation of the interest of Toronto in this matter, which we believe is a correct index of the sentiment of the whole of Ontario, the meeting was remarkable. Though no special means were taken to bring it about, being indeed rather sparingly advertised, the whole auditorium was filled with men, the first gallery was filled with ladies accompanied by their escorts, and a large number of men had to be content with the second gallery, the audience numbering in all probably 3,000.

After the preliminary address and statement of the chairman for the evening, the Rev. Chancellor Burwash, D.D., an address was presented to the Hon. Mr. Sifton, which was read by Mr. J. K. McDonald, to which he replied in a speech which was the chief feature of the meeting and to give an opportunity for which the meeting was called. In the present state of affairs as regards the educational situation of Manitoba, and because the interests of all the Provinces are so closely bound up with it at present, it was most important that a full, calm and truthful account of the whole case should be given to the country by one perfectly familiar with it, and who could speak with authority. Than Attorney General Sifton no one could be better qualified to perform such a task, and that he performed it well, admirably, will be the unanimous verdict. As this is a matter of universal and vital interest to the country we give in brief the points he made.

He first gave an account of the state of matters educationally in Manitoba prior to 1890 and which had existed from 1870. During these twenty years Protestants and Roman Catholics had each full control in every way of their own schools, the whole business of the State beginning and ending with paying over so much money to each body, but the Roman Catholics receiving twice as much for their share as the Protestants. This length of time was sufficient to test the results of the method in operation. These were that, while in Protestant schools a fair measure of progress was being made, in the Roman Catholic schools and sections of the Province there was no progress at all. Such ignorance prevailed that after twenty years of so-called education, a very small proportion of those for whose education the State paid its money were able to write their own name. The instance was mentioned by the speaker of a petition, not specially selected, but which came to him in the ordinary course of the business of his department of government, signed by twenty-seven names of whom twenty-four were unable to write, and had to make their mark. This was a specimen of the condition of affairs which existed in that Province and showed what was being done with the money paid to the French Roman Catholics on behalf of education, which was all spent, in some way, for some purpose, but over which the Provincial Government had no control. School-houses, schools, teachers, everything connected with education among the French Roman Catholics was in a state of the most deplorable inefficiency, and the people were growing up in utter ignorance, notwithstanding that, considering the means the new Province had at its disposal, a large amount of money was being every year spent for education. No Government having any sense of duty or of patriotism could continue to go on in this way. It was to remedy this state of things, the speaker went on to show, that the legislation of 1890 was enacted. By this, the Government took the matter of public common school education into its own hands, and established a national system, putting all schools on the same footing, and making every provision to give a good education to every child. If Manitoba were to hold its own in the Confederation, if it was not to be left hopelessly behind, something must be done to see that, with the money spent for that object, every child should have the chance of getting a common school education. So a national common school system for the whole Province was adopted.

The great difficulties which the Government met in carrying out this plan, owing to the different nationalities which are found in Manitoba, with different ideas and prejudices, and the sparseness of the population, were very clearly pointed

out by Mr. Sifton. Doing the utmost to unite the whole population in one school system, even then the schools were in most cases so small, that the Government did not feel justified in insisting on an average attendance of above eight, in order to entitle a school to be recognized and to receive assistance. Yet progress was being made. The Mennonites, who were at first very hostile, were, with the exercise of patience and tact, falling in. So were the French Roman Catholics very generally; so much so, that, in the opinion of Mr. Sifton, had they been left alone by their priests, in four or five years more the separate school difficulty in their case would have been overcome.

This was one difficulty, another and the greatest was, the kind and amount of religious exercises to be observed in schools. As regards these it lay in the first place with the trustees of each section to say whether there should be any at all. If there were to be any they were not allowed to be sectarian, and even then should any parent object, they were to be held at the close of the school, so that his child could go home. This difficulty was being overcome even in the case of the French Roman Catholics; but the priests stepped in. The ground they take is that if any religious exercises are observed, but what they prescribe, they are called Protestant, and if none are observed, the schools are called Godless, and they will accept neither; so that the public schools, paid for out of the public funds, must, before they will be satisfied, teach the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. This is what the hierarchy really insist, upon, that the State must pay for the teaching in the schools of Roman Catholic doctrines. Not to get this is what they call a grievance. It was to obtain this, and to go back to the old state of things, that all the litigation has taken place which has led up to the now famous Remedial Order.

Things were improving so that in a few years more, if the French Roman Catholics had been left alone, the difficulty would have been overcome, when this Remedial Order came. The only construction that Manitoba can put upon it is, a command to go back to the old state of things which the whole legislature, of all parties and creeds, with four exceptions, agreed could not continue. In the best interests of the province, of the French Roman Catholic themselves, they could not go back to the old state of things. No self-respecting legislature, no one having the smallest measure of consideration for the welfare of the province, could consent to obey the Remedial Order. This is their position.

If they were to obey the Remedial Order what would be the result? In a new, thinly-settled province, comparatively poor, the French Roman Catholics would have their schools, the Mennonites theirs, the Anglicans also want them, and they would have to have theirs; and why not others. They would be put in a position that they would be forced to insist upon having them. The thing is impossible, and yet this is what, according to the understanding of the Government of Manitoba, the Remedial Order involves, and will fasten upon their people and the whole North West Territories forever. It is done in the most manifest violation of sacred provincial rights, on the ground of a claim in a clause of a bill of rights, which has been proved to be fraudulent; it is to ask the Province to consign itself to a place of insignificance in the Confederation, to perpetuate ignorance, racial and religious alienations and animosities which will prey upon its very vitals. This is the pitiable plight which Manitoba is in: either to go back to a state of things all but universally condemned, or submit to be overridden by the Federal Government. It cannot, it will not carry out the Remedial Order; and it surely ought not.

This, with much more of fulness and minuteness of detail, was the substance of the statement of the Hon. Mr. Sifton. From beginning to end there was not one word of bitterness in it, not one single appeal to passion or prejudice, it was not for one political party more than another. It was not political at all. It was simply a statement of facts, principles and necessary inferences so comprehensive, so clear, truthful, calm and dispassionate, and therefore so convincing, as to do Mr. Sifton the highest honor, to vindicate the course of Manitoba, and altogether such a speech as one but seldom hears in a lifetime. No speech could be more convincing. The result of it was a resolution unanimously passed to vote against any Government which undertakes to interfere in this matter with the Government and Province of Manitoba.

Books and Magazines.

THE BISHOP'S CONVERSION, By Ellen Blackmar Maxwell, New York. Hunt and Eaton, 1893, p.p. 384.

This is a most interesting story of mission life and work in India. A bishop, who had begun to think that there must be some foundation for the many popular representations of missionaries and their work, resolved on spending a year in one of the mission fields of his church in India, so as to see and judge for himself. He is accompanied by his wife and their little daughter. Arrived in India they set up house and try in every way to live and work as they think missionaries should and on the same allowance. Long before the year is up, the bishop is thoroughly convinced from his mistrust of missionaries, and delivered from his delusions as to ways of living and working, into which he had fallen through want of practical knowledge of the conditions of life and work in the foreign field. The story is well told, and will be read with eager interest from beginning to end, even by those not specially interested in missions. It should be read by all who have any suspicion that missionaries might live on less and do more and have better health even in India.

THOU ART THE MAN! William Briggs, Toronto. Price 25 cents.

This is a booklet, consisting of four addresses given by the late well-known and eloquent Methodist divine, Rev. Dr. Douglas. Many will remember them and be glad to have them in this shape. They need no introduction to Canadian readers, but they are introduced by the names and a few words of warm commendation from Miss Frances E. Willard, Sir William Dawson and the Rev. Hugh Johnston, D.D. This of itself is quite enough. We only add, they are dedicated to Miss Barber.

The Presbyterian College Journal, Montreal, is steadily working its way upward to a first class magazine of its kind. The April number contains excellent articles, of which we can only mention "The Power of an Endless Life," a sermon by the Rev. R. McLennan, B.A., B.D., Honan, China; "Hard Sayings of Christ," continued by Rev. Professor Scrimger; "Christian Manliness," by Rev. D. G. Fraser, M.A., B.D., Wolfville, N. S. There is also a full programme of the college convocation with the valedictory of Mr. D. Hutchinson, B.A., the address of the Rev. Dr. Crombie to the graduating class, and Rev. Principal McVicar's statement respecting the college. St. Francois D'Assisi is the subject of the French essay in this number. [Presbyterian College, Montreal.]

There comes to us from the Ladies' Home Journal a very artistically-gotten-up illustrated booklet of over 250 pages, called "5,000 Books," which serves as an easy guide to the best books in any department of reading. This guide is very well done. The best literary experts of New York, Boston and Philadelphia were engaged by the Journal to select the five thousand books which it presents as the most desirable for a home library, and their work has been admirably carried out. Although the expense of getting it up has run up into the thousands of dollars it can be had free upon application to the Ladies' Home Journal, Philadelphia Penn. U. S. [The Ladies' Home Journal, Philadelphia.]

The April number of the Presbyterian and Theological Quarterly contains a continuation of an article begun in the January number by Dr. Warfield, on "The Latest Phase of Historical Rationalism." Other leading articles are, "The Bible in the College Curriculum," "The Church's Double Commission," "Madame De Maintenon," and "The Single Tax upon Land." There are also several valuable criticisms of books, among which we may mention one by Dr. Francis Beattie on Drummond's "Ascent of Man," and one by Thornton Whaling of "Shedd's Dogmatic Theology." [Whittier and Snippey, 1,001 Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.]

The Methodist Magazine for May is a number of great interest. Besides "Our Own Country," "Everyday Life in Bible Lands," by the editor, and "Grotto of the Nine Old Men," all fully illustrated, it contains several others among which may be mentioned, "John Wesley's Relation to His Own Age," by David Allison, D.D., and "A Memorial of the late Rev. Donald G. Sutherland, D.D., LL.D., being the sermon preached on the occasion of his death" by the Rev. Chancellor Burwash, accompanied with a portrait of the deceased. [Wm. Briggs, Toronto.]

The principle articles in the Canada Educational Monthly, for April, are "Literature and Art," by Professor Wm. Clark, M.A., D.C.L. A. Purslow, LL.D., contributes "Education in France." There is also an article upon the all-important subject, "How Shall the Child Study?" Rev. Wm. M. Thayer writes on "Nature Studies." "Fundamentals in Teaching," is by G. E. White, LL.D.; "The Causes of Ignorance of the Scriptures," is from the Christian Guardian; and Thomas Lindsay supplies "Astronomical Notes." [The Canada Educational Monthly Publishing Company, Toronto.]

Harper's Magazine for May contains part II. of "Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc," with three illustrations; part VI of Hardy's "Hearts Insurgent," three short studies; and, in addition to the Editor's Study and Drawer, these special features: "True, I Talk of Dreams," by William Dean Howells; "The Story of the Lover," by Dr. Andrew Wilson; and the following three articles with very full illustrations, "In Sunny Mississippi," "Some Wanderings in Japan," "The Museum of the Prado." [Harper Bros. New York, U. S.]