

THE MANITOBA SCHOOL QUESTION.

THE decision in this case of the highest court of appeal known to the realm, which has been looked forward to with such deep interest, has at last come and been made public. As was sure to be the case, it will both please and disappoint. For ourselves we shall not have the temerity to discuss the decision in its legal aspects. nor shall we venture to assume the role of an adviser or prophet and say what will or ought to be the course in the premises for either the Dominion or the Manitoba government to pursue. The judgment furnishes another illustration of the glorious uncertainty of the law, and the long agitation over this question furnishes likewise a proof of the great difficulty and persistency of the educational problem. This problem must in the nature of things be both difficult and persistent, for society being no mere agglomeration of parts, but a living organism, as it were, the relations of its component parts are continually changing, not only among themselves, but to the outside world, and, therefore, no scheme of education can ever be final unless society becomes fossilized.

With regard to the case before us, it is exceedingly to be regretted that, by some of our French-Canadian fellow-citizens the subject cannot be discussed at all without charging those who do not think as they do, with being actuated by hostile feeling towards their race, language and religion. We are not prepared to say that in no instance is this the case, but that this feeling prevails widely in any part of the Dominion we do not believe. It surely is quite possible to be opposed to any system of separate schools on religious grounds,

to be supported in whole or in part from public funds conscientiously and rationally without any feeling of antagonism whatever to the race, language or creed of our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens whether of French or of any other nationality.

The fact is that on this education question, as regards its religious character, all classes in the Dominion have very much in common; we should say they are at one on what is really most important—namely, in being opposed to any system of common school education which is so purely secular as to keep out of sight the existence and character of God, the fact that in the holy Scriptures He has given a revelation of Himself, especially in the person of Jesus Christ, and that there we have the highest standard of morality and its supreme authority, or one which would ignore the decalogue, the Lord's prayer and the sermon on the Mount. Any system of public education which would ignore these, we feel sure would be repudiated by an overwhelming majority of the people. Why then cannot all agree upon a system of education which recognises these common grounds and brings them into practical use every day in the school-room? It is when we go back to the sources of that teaching—the agencies employed to impart it and the object of imparting religious knowledge in the common schools—that divergences arise, divergences that, in the estimation of our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens, can in no other way be overcome but by obtaining a system of schools for their own special benefit. Why should this be?

Looking at the past history of Romanism and its present attitude, it