

same as the majority of electors or trustees of a school section in Upper Canada), are Roman Catholics, then the public religious exercises of the school are more or less of that character; but Protestant children are not required to attend them; and *vice versa*.

The mover and seconder of the resolution above quoted, made some references and statements in their speeches on the occasion which I may cite in this place. In alluding to the evidence of the Rev. Dr. Cooke, [Presbyterian], of Belfast, given before a recent Committee of the House of Lords, the seconder of the resolution [Mr. Kirk] remarked: "Dr. Cook stated that he was not in favor of any system of compulsion with regard to religious instruction, and he added, in answer to questions put by the Bishop of Ossory [the acting leader of the opposition to the National Schools] that it would be a very dangerous principle, to say the least, to make the reading of the Scriptures obligatory upon children, because he held as a Protestant—that no one ought to force religion upon another contrary to his conscience. The Presbyterians in their negotiations with the National Board, had always shown an anxiety to maintain their own rights and to extend the same liberty which they enjoyed to other denominations. They were not less desirous that the Scriptures should be read than the members of the church of England; but they did not wish that others should be compelled to think as they did. He [Dr. Cooke] held that the Bible would be rendered distasteful to children by being pressed upon them against their wish as well as by being altogether kept from them. A similar opinion [continues Mr. Kirk] was expressed by Dr. Chalmers in his evidence before the Committee upon the Irish Poor Law. Dr. Chalmers said that he would have no part of education made compulsory; that a child ought no more to be compelled to attend a Bible class than a reading or arithmetic class, and that compulsion tended to limit and prevent the spread of Scriptural education, and to establish in the minds of the people a most hurtful association with the Scriptures. He entirely concurred in these opinions, clearly sanctioned the principles now embodied in the rules of the National Board. With regard to the results of mixed education, although it had not succeeded to the extent once hoped, this he thought must be attributed to the opposition of the Church Education Society. The Rev. Mr. Woodward, for sometime Secretary to the Church Education Society, has published a pamphlet in which he stated, that in the first report of the Society, he had advocated opposition to the National Board upon two main grounds—first, that the rules of the commissioners 'forbade the church to instruct her children in her own holy faith;' and, secondly, 'that they withhold the Word of God from a class of our country men.' But the Rev. Mr. Woodward, in a manly and candid manner proceeded to retract these charges: he said—'plain truth compels me to declare that I regard these two main objections as having been founded on assumption utterly unsupported by facts. Personal observation of Scriptural and Church instruction, actually given in schools connected with the Board, showed me that there was a discrepancy between my pre-conceived notions and the reality of the case. I was led to examine for myself. I found that I had wholly misconceived the truth. It seemed to me as it now does, clearer than day, that the Board is wholly guiltless of either of the charges upon which I founded my original opposition.'

Similar opposition and upon similar grounds has in past years been made to the system of public

schools in Upper Canada; but it has latterly been abandoned, the assumptions on which it was founded having been shown to be utterly unsupported by facts. Mr. Fortescue, the mover of the resolution, concluded his speech in the following words:

"The great body of the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians of Ireland were satisfied with the working of the present system; the only class which was discontented with it being a portion, and merely a portion of the adherents of the Established Church. He wished to know on what grounds an alteration in the present system was demanded? It seemed to be pretty generally avowed that the change was sought for (making the reading of the Scriptures and instruction from them compulsory on all the children attending the schools) not with reference to the religious education of children belonging to the established church, but with the view of affording religious instruction to children who did not belong to that communion. They were told that many of the clergy and members of the established church in Ireland could not conscientiously give secular education to any children unless, at the same time, they were permitted to impart religious instruction; and as they objected to any system from which the reading of the Scriptures were excluded, they disapproved the rules of the National Board. He believed the assertion that the Scriptures were excluded from the National Schools in Ireland was altogether unfounded, for the Scriptures might be used in every national school in that country, provided their study was not enforced as a necessary condition of admission. In his opinion the opposition of clergy of the established church in Ireland to the national system of education was from false pride and from a feeling of annoyance at finding themselves placed, under that system, upon a footing of fair equality with clergymen of other denominations. That opposition arose from a sincere, but, as he thought, from a mistaken sense of duty, which led clergy of the establishment to refuse their countenance to any system of education which did not enable them to instruct the children in the doctrines of their own church. It could not be supposed that the great Presbyterian body of Ireland, who almost equalled in numbers the established church, entertained less reverence for the Scriptures than any other body of Protestants; yet they had fully and frankly accepted the national system of education. He had heard it said that special advantages had been afforded to Presbyterians in order to secure their adherence to the system; but they possessed no privileges which were not equally extended to all other religious denominations. As soon as the Presbyterians were satisfied that, under the rules of the Board, they could give full religious instruction to children of their own communion, they at once adopted the national system. He did not think, however, that the conduct of clergy and members of the established church had arisen from such conscientious scruples as that house would be disposed to regard, but rather from the false position in which the established church was placed, and from the unfounded claims to religious supremacy which were put forward on its behalf. He hoped, therefore, that the house, while it would be disposed to pay the utmost respect to conscientious scruples, would not listen to the claim urged on behalf of a portion of the clergy and laity of the Irish church by the right honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Walpole.) He believed if there ever was a body of men who were able to make some sacrifices for their conscientious convictions, and to endure some privations on account of their religious scruples, it was the established church of Ireland which numbered among its