

doubt that the conscience clause permitting the withdrawal from any service of a religious character, of all children whose parents object, is ample for its purpose. It would probably be unfair to construe the proposed change, if made, as an admission on the part of the Government that the schools, as at present conducted, are Protestant schools. It is more likely that it will be the outcome of a determination to remove, so far as is practicable, every possible ground of objection on that score. We must confess that, however repugnant the method may be to all sound ideas of education as a process of character-building, pure secularism is the only logical principle for State schools. That, as purely secular, the schools will be any more acceptable to the Catholic clergy, we see no reason to hope. It presents them with a mere negation in lieu of the positive institution which they demand. Probably they will argue that secularism is Protestantism, in that it is the antithesis of the positive instruction which they deem one of the fundamental prerequisites of Catholicism. Unfortunately there seems to be nothing better to propose.

However shilly-shallying and evasive may be the party platforms put forth in some of the United States, there are others which, by their courageous enunciation of sound principles, and no less courageous denunciation of abuses, command admiration, and encourage the hope that United States politics may be entering upon a stage of purification similar to that which has transformed the British politics of sixty years ago into the far more respectable, though still imperfect shape in which we find them to-day. The declarations of the Massachusetts Democrats afford an illustration, and a grand one, of our meaning. First, on the tariff question they give no uncertain sound. They regret that the Wilson Bill was not passed and severely censure those Democratic Senators who, by their inaction or resistance, prevented its passage. They declare that it is the immediate duty of the party to 'place upon the free list all raw materials, to abolish all duties which tend to create or maintain monopolies, and to reduce all prohibitory duties. This does not sound much like the "rest-and-be-thankful" for small favours policy which many have predicted as the sequel to the struggles of last session of Congress. In regard to other reforms these New England Democrats are no less outspoken. They declare for a sound financial policy, "approve of the income tax as a return to sound principles of taxation," demand that the scope of the civil service reform already begun "be extended as fast as the Civil Service Commission deems practicable, to the end that all federal positions to which the merit system of appointment is applicable may be placed by law upon a strictly non-political basis," and they would have

some plan formulated for bringing post offices under the working of that system. On the whole, it is a brave and straightforward document, worthy of all imitation.

The letter of Chang Yen Hoon, formerly Chinese Minister at Washington, addressed to a friend in that city, and given to the press by request of the writer, adds little to our previous knowledge of the causes of the war now in progress between his country and Japan. That the immediate occasion, or pretext, for Japan's interference, was the sending of a small body of Chinese troops, at the request of Corea, to quell an insurrection in the southern part of Corea, which China had a right to do, seeing that Corea was admittedly her tributary; that China was willing to withdraw her troops as soon as the insurrection was quelled; that Japan took advantage of the incident to send a much stronger force into Corea; that she refused to withdraw them simultaneously with the withdrawal of the Chinese troops, save on the condition that certain reforms should be wrought in the constitution and administration of the Coreans; and that she precipitated the war by attacking Chinese transports and their convoys before any declaration of war had been made—all this was already matter of current history. It suffices to prove that, on the face of the affair, Japan was the aggressor. The only question touching this point, so far as we can see, is whether China failed to recognize a treaty obligation in omitting to give the Japanese Government formal notice of her intention to send a force to suppress the disorders in Ya-Shan. But whether such omission gave Japan a technical right to interfere in the affair, or not, the whole proceedings from the beginning make it very clear that the incident simply furnished the occasion and was by no means the real origin of the war. The evident preparedness of the Japanese at every point puts this beyond reasonable question. Perhaps it is only fair to add that it removes the question as to the real provocation and justification or the opposite, farther back, into a region of previous history and relations whither we cannot now follow it. It also raises the secondary question of the right of Japan, in the interests of commerce and good neighborhood, to insist upon much-needed reforms in Corea. The instructive thing about the transaction is that the fact that the war was immediately declared upon a pretext, rather than an insult or injury, is nothing new in the history of such affairs. In fact, it is the rule rather than the exception, as could easily be shown by historical reference. The moral is that the real causes of war have their roots in either long-cherished designs, or the gradual growth of bad blood between peoples.

What Christ takes, not the exchequer carries away.—*Spanish.*

DEFECTS IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

We say "systems" advisedly, because, though the remarks which follow will refer primarily to the Ontario schools, it is believed that in the main they will apply with equal force to those of the other provinces of the Dominion. We like, when possible, to take a cheerful and hopeful view of things, but we have often feared that the people are so accustomed to hear the praises of our educational system that they are in danger of overlooking its very serious defects. In calling attention for a moment to some of those defects, we hope we need not assure our readers that we are by no means blind to the excellencies which accompany them.

The first and fundamental defect in our Ontario system, as a system, is of so serious and radical a kind that it is to us a perpetual wonder that parents and citizens do not with one voice demand that a remedy be found and applied. We refer to the absence of any universal and adequate provision for ethical training. We say "ethical," in distinction from religious, for though most of our readers will probably be agreed that the ethical part of our nature has its roots so embedded in religious faith and feeling that the one could not long survive as a practical force in determining character and action without the other, yet religion is, in its very nature, so exclusively an individual, personal thing that it must always lie beyond and above the sphere within which the civil authority has the right to legislate or operate. But is it not a deplorable, a fatal mistake to assume that because the State may not set itself up as a teacher of religion, or interfere in any way with matters belonging to the spiritual realm, it cannot, therefore, provide for the moral training of those who are to become its citizens. And yet, though there are, happily, many able and competent teachers who do all that is in their power to reach the moral nature and so mould the characters of their pupils, and though it is enjoined upon all teachers to do this, it remains the fact that no time is set apart or made available in the regular programmes for definite ethical teaching, and among the numerous text-books, no one prescribed as aid for young and incompetent teachers on this subject. May we not say further, confident of being within the mark, that in a very large proportion of all our public schools there is nothing worthy of the name of ethical training, or even of training for citizenship? If this be true, can any thoughtful person regard such a fact with complacency?

A second very serious evil in connection with our Ontario Public Schools is not so much a defect as a positive fault. It is that the School Law and the Regulations of the Education Department combine to put a very large percentage of the public schools