

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, APRIL 30, 1856.

ONE of the most pleasing circumstances in connection with the moral and religious efforts in England, is the progress that is making in the increase and right working of Sunday Schools. In the metropolis in particular, we find most of the great leading religious and benevolent individuals of different sections of the church, taking a prominent part in the promotion of Sabbath School instruction. But better than all this, there is, it would appear, a more general awakening among the more zealous and active members of every evangelical communion, to the urgent need of a closer combination and the adoption of more diligent and well devised plans to bestow upon the thousands of children, bereft, by the vices and indigence of their parents, the advantages of instruction, and to bring them within the sacred precincts of the Sabbath School; and it is daily becoming a credible and honorable employment for young persons seriously inclined, in every rank in life, to devote a portion of the Sabbath to impart the blessings of Scriptural instruction to the children of the poor and destitute. Our memory forcibly recalls the time when very different feelings prevailed among the great mass of the community. When the presence of a male or female among the more wealthy and influential classes of society as a manager or teacher in a Sunday School was viewed with some degree of wonder, if not of contempt, by the great majority of their associates. The Sabbath School, however, is now most justly esteemed as one of the most effectual nurseries for implanting in the youthful heart, under the Divine blessing, the seeds of heavenly grace, and giving a wholesome moral bias to the future life and character. It is a fact that cannot be escaped by the most careless observer, that among the churches of our own Province and Denomination, zeal and activity in Sabbath School instruction have always gone hand in hand with their increase in spiritual blessings.

At our annual Associations, in listening to the returns of our numerous churches, we have ever hailed with unmingled satisfaction, the reports of large attendance and growing success in the reports of their Sunday Schools, and have with a pretty fair amount of certainty, formed our opinion of the spirituality and general character of the church in other respects. It is a gratifying reflection that so just an estimate of this great means of diffusing the pure and simple truth of the Gospel, and impressing them with efficacy on the youthful mind, is rapidly gaining ground in all parts of the world and we cannot but view the fact as one of the most certain indications that the millennial-day glory is hastening on, when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest.

The Education Bill.

OUR readers generally, we believe, understand the action taken in the House of Assembly on this measure. As, however, it is a matter of such vast importance to the future condition and interests of the country, and must be considered free from anything of a party character, we shall not hesitate to discuss the principles involved, with the greatest freedom. Any other than a fearless and straight-forward course on this subject, would render us unworthy of the confidence reposed in us, as independent journalists by a large and intelligent portion of the community.

On the first appearance of the Bill prepared by the Hon. Attorney General we expressed no dissent, but considered it generally what would commend itself to the country. Nothing appeared that would interfere with the religious sentiments of any denomination of Christians. Sufficient of local control was given by the election of Trustees and the powers invested in them to secure the internal affairs of the school from any bias likely to be injurious to any part of the community, and to enable them to carry out the wishes of the inhabitants as expressed at their annual meetings.

The appointment of Inspectors by the Government, however, we believed injudicious, as it might be supposed to render them less likely to give unbiassed reports of schools visited by them, than if they were chosen by the Sessions or some local

body. They would doubtless feel more independent if the appointment could be made free from anything having the appearance of a political character.

Soon, however, the feelings of approval we were indulging were to be changed to those of suspicion and condemnation, by the introduction of clauses to be added to the Bill providing for Separate Schools for Roman Catholics. At the first mention of them we gave an expression of disapproval in which the press generally with scarcely one exception joined, in terms not to be mistaken. Dissent was expressed by members on both sides of the House of Assembly, still a large majority voted for the original principle of the Bill, and allowed it to pass through a special committee for the purpose of embodying the separate clauses with the Bill. The House was informed after the Bill had been thus prepared, that "it had been deemed expedient to defer its further consideration to wait the expression of public opinion thereon." We shall therefore state distinctly, that we consider the adoption of the separate clauses as not only a most unwise innovation, but a most unjust method of meeting the objections which some of our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens have to a common School Bill founded on Assessment.

Legislation on the subject of education is a necessity arising from civilization. Laws are enacted which apply to the whole community and the people must have some means afforded to enable them to become acquainted with those laws and be rendered capable of obeying them. All our institutions and the very framework of society are formed on the supposition that the people are intelligent and free.

British subjects are not supposed so much to be under restraint and made to obey the mandate of their superiors as that they are the framers of their own laws and are the parties possessing the power by which all are governed. On these grounds we hold it essential that provision should be made to supply education for all, so that every child, whatever the circumstances of its parents, may be supplied with the elements of knowledge, reading, writing and arithmetic. These separate clauses, however, strike at the root of this principle by raising objections on religious grounds, and allowing ecclesiastical opinions to step in between the instructor and child, so that what was to be supplied to all and would place all on an equal footing by giving them the same advantages without respect of persons either as to age, sex, creed or station, is by these clauses to be divided, and the children of the majority in any district are to have a superior course of training and be placed in a better position than those who happen to be in the minority, thereby doing injustice to the children because of some difference in the opinions held by the parents.

Injustice is done by these clauses too, not only to the children but to the teachers of one class of schools. The following is the clause to which we refer :-

"The Teachers of separate Catholic Schools shall be licensed by the Catholic Members of the Board of Commissioners of Schools for the County or District, and the Teachers of separate Protestant Schools by the Protestant Members of the Board for the County or District, and no School Books shall be used in any such separate School which shall be objected to by the Teacher thereof."

Whatever may be the object of this provision its effect must be to lower the teacher of the minority in the estimation of the community. It would lead to the supposition that either the Roman Catholic teacher would be incompetent to pass an examination similar to that given to Protestants, and vice versa; or that the subjects on which he would be examined were of a different nature and no guarantee would be afforded by his license, that he is capable of giving instruction in the ordinary branches.

This must have the effect of placing one in an inferior position to the other, and any Teacher having respectable attainments belonging to that communion with the smaller number of families in the district would in all probability prefer to appear before all or any of the Commissioners as they might appoint; and have his license with the authority of the whole; so that he might stand on a level in his profession with those where no such separate school existed.

We are unable to give any explanation of the origin of these clauses. Surely the Roman Catholics themselves would not ask to be put into a worse position than that of

Protestants and for their teachers to be of an inferior grade to those of other denominations. If the clauses were prepared by the Protestant members of the Administration with the view of a concession to that numerous portion of the people who belong to the Roman Catholic church, we can only say that they have been most unfortunate, and whatever may appear on the face of the Bill as leniency towards them and affording that countenance to their views which is not accorded to those of other bodies would have the effect of creating a feeling of hostility which must be exceedingly painful to the better informed, and more peacefully disposed of all classes. If, however, the clauses originated with the Roman Catholics themselves they must have anticipated results very different from those we believe would follow the carrying the Bill into operation.

Another result would in all probability arise. The teacher, licensed by the Commissioners of the minority, whether Protestant or Catholic, would most likely be found less competent than the one employed by the majority. The parents of his pupils might discover this, and prefer sending their children to the general School, where their religious sentiments, although not taught, would not be interfered with, and he would be found compelling payment from those who were receiving no benefit from his labours.

These are some of the more apparent consequences we apprehend would follow the enactment of this Bill. There are, however, others of a more serious character to which we have not alluded, but may probably refer to them on some future occasion.

Since writing the above we have received by Steamer our usual files of English papers and find that the same objections we have suggested with regard to Inspectors are being urged against the Educational measures now before the Imperial Parliament, and will no doubt have the effect of either greatly modifying those measures or lead to their withdrawal.

We regret that our columns should be any further occupied with the misunderstanding which has arisen between the Witness and ourselves. The remarks of our contemporary of last week, however, call for a word of explanation, and as our silence might be misconstrued by some of our friends, we venture again to refer to the subject, and hope there may then be no further occasion to mention it.

We were glad to see that our brother "turned to the texts, and remembered how much easier it is to perceive the mote in our neighbour's eye than the beam in our own."

We think it somewhat ungenerous to attribute such unworthy motives to us as that "the grant to Horton Academy is endangered by the Dalhousie College agitation." When the editor of the Witness bears in mind what the Baptist Denomination has done in the cause of Collegiate Education, he must feel that such considerations as those to which he refers are not so likely to influence us; as that the late action with regard to Dalhousie has been for the purpose of saving other bodies from a similar outlay, for the education of their sons and ministers; and especially when we call to mind that the late conference was considered at an end when the Hon. Attorney General stated that no clergyman could be a Professor.

Our friend has made a partial quotation from our leading article of last week and tries to make it the ground of a charge against us. When the passage is fully given, it is, we think, only such a statement as every Christian should be able to make, with regard to the church with which he unites, or he cannot without hypocrisy say, what the Presbyterian Witness repeats every week from Dr. Chalmers:—"The Bible is our great Church Directory and Statute Book."

At the risk of being tiresome to our readers, and to save the necessity of turning to our last number we repeat the passage referred to. The portion quoted we have italicised. "We believe the word of God carefully examined and understood gives us the main and essential features of a gospel church as well as ample rules for its formation and management, and we humbly believe that our practice is as near an approach to the Divine word in this matter as it is permitted for human frailty to attain. Had we any

serious doubts on the subject we should not of course adhere to its communion."

The allusion of the Editor to "the memory of our past intimacy" and the expectation he founds upon it, has revived recollections of the pleasant association which has for some years existed between us, and which we had no desire to weaken. We supposed that there being more than one editor to the Witness would have prevented any of our remarks from being understood as personal. We do not hesitate to express our sorrow for any injury that may have been done to the feelings of our brother, and assure him that such was the farthest from our intention.

Christian Magnanimity and Self-Abnegation!

THE Free Church Missionary Record for the present month in giving its adherents a description of Cornwallis and the Free Church congregation there, says:—

"It is a Presbyterian oasis in the heart of a wilderness of Anabaptists and Methodists. The establishment where Anabaptist preachers are produced is within a few miles distance and the Methodist one is but just across the Bay."

We make no comment on the above. It speaks for itself.

Dalhousie College.

THE Witness informs us that the interview which lately occurred between the Presbyterian Synods and the Governors of Dalhousie College "and the discussion by which it was followed, have led to an important change in the views of the Governors. They have abandoned their ill considered determination to proscribde the ministers of religion, and now see the necessity of farther changes, in order to raise Dalhousie College to its proper position. The Congregationalists, anxious to avail themselves of it as a Seminary of instruction for their youth, have also been using their influence, and a committee has been appointed by the Governors, carefully to mature a plan, which, as we understand, is to be submitted to the Synods at their next meetings."

OUR esteemed brother, Arthur Crawley, does not seem inclined to lose a place in the prayers and affections of his native land. His letter on our first page, just received, affords a brief account of his present labours, and it is an occasion of gratitude to God that he has so far mastered the language as to be so soon enabled to engage in the actual work of the mission. Brother C. possesses one of the best inheritances of his native country, or indeed of any other, a sound and vigorous constitution—this with all else that he possesses he has most sincerely, we believe dedicated to the service of God and the salvation of his fellow-men. May he long be spared to labour with success in his Master's vineyard.

THE Notice we publish of the success which has thus far attended the commencement of the Female Seminary at Berwick, in King's County, is highly gratifying. From all we can learn of the direction and arrangement of studies and occupations allotted to the pupils, the institution merits our hearty approval both of the objects and efforts of those who have been concerned in its foundation. That such an institution may be made to confer the most lasting blessings on the community at large, cannot be doubted. Its efforts on the moral and religious character of our country can only be measured by the influence for good or evil which the female character must of necessity exercise throughout every rank of society. We have in these days become in some measure awake to the incalculable importance of placing our youth under the immediate charge and inspection of teachers who themselves appreciate the value of the vital truths of the gospel. The history of a past age may well teach us the deplorable evils which a neglect of this great duty is sure to entail on society. The prejudices against female education, the remains of ignorance and barbarism, are happily exploded, and every intelligent and right thinking person, now fully recognizes the momentous importance of that duty which belongs to the Mother, the Sister, or the Female Teacher, in the early instruction of immortal and accountable beings; a duty in the consecration and diligent performance of which, the true interests both of time and eternity are deeply involved. We trust the youthful Seminary may become a large and a lasting benefit to the community.