

Ontario Normal College Monthly.

HAMILTON, ONTARIO, APRIL, 1901.

Ontario Normal College Monthly

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It is a besetting error of enthusiastic educationists continually to overestimate the importance of the school as an educational factor. From their long consideration of the problems of the school, perhaps, and the consequent exaggeration in their minds of the importance of such matters, they have come to imagine that the perfection of the national system of popular education is the panacea for all the social and industrial ills of a people. Give us but our ideal of school efficiency, they say, as it grows with the advance of mental science and the widening experience of the teaching profession, and we will answer for the progress of your nation in commerce and in the industrial arts as well as in the realms of science, philosophy and letters.

This is a common, but, we believe, extravagant position. Its fundamental error lies, of course, in the fact that it assumes the function of common school training to be all but coincident with the whole range of application of the term education in its widest sense. Whatever these enthusiasts over the glorious mission of the common school may in theory believe as to the relative importance of informal and formal education, in practice they come

dangerously near neglecting the former altogether. That such a position should be assumed and confidently upheld by thoughtful men who have had wide experience of the child mind and its development, seems incomprehensible. The opposite view which exalts the informal in education at the expense of the formal could, with much more justice, be maintained, and only the pronounced extremist here would fall into grievous error. The true attitude towards these two great educational forces is surely that which awards unhesitatingly the palm to the influences that operate on the child outside of school training, and which regards the school as an institution which at most is but an expedient designed to supplement the other, and, to counteract at times, as far as possible, its influences, if they threaten to become baneful to the young mind.

Such a definition of the function of the school, derogatory, as it may seem at first sight to the dignity and prestige of this worthy social institution, need not be so regarded. Any set of forces organized under what name you please, that systematically operates for good upon the mind of the child, giving it increased intellectual power and moral force, is worthy of every man's respect and hearty support. The school indeed may have virtually at its disposition the destiny of the child, for the principles of true conduct or the reverse that it inculcates may permeate the whole character of the impressionable pupil and