

## *The Teaching of Morality and Patriotism.*

THE question is frequently raised ; Should not morality and patriotism be taught in the schools? Indeed, in not a few quarters specific efforts are made to give instruction in these lines, particularly with reference to patriotism or loyalty.

What, then, is the significance of this question and of these efforts? To the question, Should morality and patriotism be taught in the schools? I should answer ; Most assuredly. To the further question, Should specific periods be devoted to the teaching of these subjects? I should reply ; Most assuredly not. My reasons for these replies may be briefly stated as follows:

Morality and patriotism are not properly subjects of study at all. Ethics and politics are subjects of study, and, for more mature minds, should have considerable influence in giving direction to the sense of moral responsibility or of public duty. But the sense of moral responsibility, or of public duty, is simply a spiritual attitude towards the facts of life. Like the sense of beauty in art, it can be awakened and developed only in connection with concrete experience. Hence, the teacher who would develop in pupil or student a high sense of moral responsibility, otherwise expressed as a sensitive conscience, or a high sense of social responsibility and sensitiveness to the national honor has a very delicate but never ending duty to discharge.

Such teaching, when effective, is almost always indirect. The object is not to force upon the pupils, in an external manner, a set of definite precepts, but to draw out by sympathetic appreciation, the earnest glow of admiration for noble and honourable actions, and a corresponding scorn for coarse and ignoble deeds or sentiments. But, as everything depends upon the naturalness and reality

of this training, the occasions for stimulating this spiritual attitude must be carefully chosen. They must be selected in connection with the regular course of school-life and studies, not artificially trumped up. Any taint of sham or cant is as fatal to the true spirit of moral and social honour as is a zero blast to a delicate plant.

Since every action has a moral aspect and, likewise, though often in a less obvious measure, a social aspect, it is not difficult to find natural opportunities for the stimulating of personal and national self-respect. This applies alike to the daily conduct of the pupils, and to the incidents in literature and history as they come up in the work of the classes.

If, then, morality and patriotism in their only worthy shape are expressions of a spiritual attitude, since the human spirit is, in its moods, of endless variety and combination, and, in its expression, of the subtlest depths and shades, it is obvious that a training in moral purpose and public spirit cannot be confined within prescribed rules, or appointed for set seasons.

But if this view of the matter is at all correct, then a good many of the well-meant efforts of the present, to promote morality and patriotism in the schools are sadly astray. In the case of patriotism, for instance, there is a distinct tendency in both the United States and Canada, to wither up by arid blasts from the parched desert of jingoism the tender verdure of a richer and nobler public spirit. It is truly pathetic to witness the efforts which are frequently made, and too often with success, to stir up in the hearts of the youth of the country, under the name of patriotism, the coarsest and most unchristian feelings of which humanity is capable.

True patriotism, as I understand it, is that personal sense of the national honor which cherishes as its ideal the freest and fullest realization of the national capacities, and which is as sensitive to the national shortcomings