

Now the State has a right to interfere to protect children from being thus ruined for life by their degraded parents, because it is evident that the growth of such a class—which simply means the increase of the idle and criminal population—is a serious injury to the well-being of the community. And the only way in which, at present, it can interfere for their protection, is by enforcing, by legal penalties, their being sent to the schools which it provides. For, be it borne in mind, the sole object of enforcing school attendance is not and should not be—the mere imparting of knowledge. The moral discipline of the school-room, the degree of self control and respect for authority which, when wisely exercised, it can hardly fail to infuse, by degrees, into the wildest and rudest children, is a more important object than the learning “of the three R’s,” not to speak of a smattering of all the “ologies.” It is not an object kept in nearly such prominence as it should be, and with so many young and inexperienced teachers as we have in Canada, it is hardly to be expected that this element of moral discipline should always be wisely or fully developed. Yet even such a degree of it as must be included, in the least favourable circumstances, in the government of any ordinary school, makes a wonderful difference. The teachers of any city Mission School well know the immensely greater difficulty of keeping under any kind of control those children who have been allowed from infancy to run wild as street Arabs, when compared with even the lowest class of children accustomed to attend school. The latter have, at least, some faint idea of order and respect for authority. The untamed “Arabs” have no conception of doing anything but what is right in their own eyes. And so the most benevolent and persistent attempts to bring them under religious influences

have often ended in failure. For the root idea of religion must necessarily be *obedience to authority*. And for this reason, the discipline of the family—as it should be—has been made the first step in the religious training of our race.

Since then, it is of the greatest importance to the well-being of the community that the children most destitute of home discipline and teaching should be brought under the training and educating influences of our schools, as otherwise, they are certain to become a prolific source of evil and heavy cost to the body politic—every thoughtful and patriotic man and woman must rejoice in the passing of an Act which puts it within the power of our local authorities everywhere, to enforce the attendance of children at school for a large portion of the year, and to punish non-attendance or truancy by fining the persons responsible for enforcing attendance and the parents or guardians of the children. A distinguished English author, in visiting Canada some years ago, remarked that it was an anomaly in our school system as compared with that of Great Britain, that in Britain schools were not free and yet education was compulsory, while with us, where the schools were free, education was not compulsory. This anomaly has now been disposed of by the amendment lately introduced into our school law to secure the regular attendance of children at school during twenty-two weeks in the year.

The Act applies to all children between the ages of seven and thirteen, who are required to attend some school during the whole of the school hours in each week, for the period of eleven weeks in each of the two terms of the public school year; unless there be some sufficient reason, such as illness or too great distance from school, to excuse their non-attendance. It is not, of course, necessary that they should attend a public school, if they