

conscience, and intellectual pursuits come to be valued by the young at the expense of practical duty. This danger of attending exclusively to the intellect is the snare of our public schools. It is a danger that must be watchfully guarded against, or the schools that were meant to bless the commonwealth will minister to its worse tendencies. And the other fact, complementary and confirmatory, is that public schools have not thus far fulfilled the expectations of their friends in the promotion of public morality. Many have thought that general education was the surest road to general reformation, just as Lord Macaulay predicted, in his enthusiasm for the Government schools in India, that after they had been thirty years at work not a heathen would remain in all that land. But the thirty years have more than passed, and the idols still stand; nor have similar predictions been better fulfilled elsewhere. In the parts of the world where statistics have been most accurately kept, it has appeared that the extension and the elaboration of the public school system has been attended by a steady increase in juvenile crime. Illiteracy and crime used to be thought of as companions; but the day of such association is passing away. A larger proportion of prisoners is made up of persons under twenty-five years old than was the case when public schools were in their infancy. The fact seems to be that our schools have developed a class with quick wits but dull consciences, able to do sharp things, but indifferent to moral restraints; and this class sends an excessive proportion of its members to prison. They were taught the use of their wits, but not their duties, and the consequence is what might have been foreseen. If the schools do not wish to minister to public vice, they must begin to minister directly to

public morality by teaching the actual duties of common life.

The ordinary objection is that morality and religion are closely associated,—so closely that it is impossible to teach morals without coming over into the region of religious and sectarian strife. There is a common impression that to enter this field of instruction would be to trench upon the rights of Churches, or at least, to arouse their prejudices. But pray tell me why? Is the distinction between virtue and vice a denominational difference? Look at this list of subjects, and tell me which of them could not be taught in any public school, to Presbyterians, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Infidels, Jews and Chinamen:

“The preservation of health, temperance, honour, honesty, the knowledge of our rights and their equality, the reciprocal duties, the duties of the citizen to the State, obedience to law, justice, chastity, respect for the liberty and reputation of others, for contracts and for property, the proper definition of lying, calumny, and the like.”

All these are matters most practical, and points on which sectarian feeling can take no hold. There is no reason in the world why they should not be adopted into the curriculum of our schools.

Some of the best friends of the good cause object, however, that morality is dependent upon religion and cannot be inculcated, except in a feeble and ineffective way, apart from it. Public schools, they say, cannot be schools of religion, and hence it is vain for them to think of teaching morals. It is true that in religion, properly apprehended, is found the strongest impulse to the performance of all duty; but we must not assert that there are no motives to right action except religious motives, and it is not true that