

# The Canada School Journal.

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## The Canada School Journal

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CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL HAS RECEIVED

An Honorable Mention at Paris Exhibition, 1878.  
Recommended by the Minister of Education for Ontario.  
Recommended by the Council of Public Instruction, Quebec.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, New Brunswick.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, Nova Scotia.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, British Columbia.  
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, Manitoba.

The Publishers frequently receive letters from their friends complaining of the non-receipt of the JOURNAL. In explanation they would state, as subscriptions are necessarily payable in advance, the mailing clerks have instructions to discontinue the paper when a subscription expires. The clerks are, of course, unable to make any distinction in a list containing names from all parts of the United States and Canada.

### THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

We publish as a closing contribution to the discussion of this topic the following letter from the Rev. John Laing of Dundas:—

Sir,—Accept of thanks for the brief comment on my letter to the *Mail* of December 13, which I find in the January number of the JOURNAL. Perhaps you will allow your readers who may not see the *Mail* to peruse the following statements in regard to your article. You have, I think, succeeded in clearly stating the points at issue:—

1. You say, "it is quite clear that what the (deputation) wanted was to have the Bible placed in the hands of the pupils as an ordinary class-book, and to have the teachers required by law to explain and illustrate its text as they would that of any other text-book." I reply: We wish the Bible used as a class-book; we do not wish teachers to give any explanation beyond what is necessary for the understanding of the text. In other words we wish the children taught to read the book *intelligently*, just as they read the Third Book. This does not imply theological instruction.

2. You say, "This of necessity implies that the teachers must themselves make the Bible a subject of study, and that they must be examined as to their acquaintance with its contents." I reply: (1) Certainly a teacher must study the class-book before he can teach it intelligently; and surely no man would propose that a man or woman that will not study the Bible so far as to be able to teach the pupils should be put by Christian parents in the position of teacher of their children. (2) Examination as to acquaintance with its contents would not be necessary. No teacher is examined on the contents of the Third Book before he is required to teach it. But if a teacher had passed this in a public school in which the Bible was a class-book, he would be acquainted with it just as our teachers are now acquainted with the Third Book, and he would be quite as competent to teach the former as the latter.

3. As to a change in the law—you are right. We wish the Regulations changed, but not the text of the School Act. I mean by this simply that no legislative action is required to accomplish the change asked for, as both the spirit and letter of the law allow the change to be made without political or parliamentary interposition. Keep our school interests if possible out of the political arena.

4. You ask, "How then (that is, without a penalty being enacted) would any change in the wording of the Regulations promote the

use of the Bible in schools?" I reply: 'Possession is nine points in law.' If the use of the Bible were mandatory, it would be used unless there were opposition. As matters now stand it will *not* be used, unless some learned minister or layman (religious cranks they have been called) stir up the community, and create bad feeling by arousing the animosity of the opposing minority, if there be such. I am convinced that there is not one school section in the province in which a majority would vote the Bible out. Whereas we know that the number of schools in which the Bible is read by the pupils as a class-book is very small. Every man knows the difference between getting a disputed thing introduced, and maintaining it when so established.

5. You advise the clergy "to exert themselves a little more in their own localities." I thank you for the advice. Some of us do this; but we are of opinion that the most effectual way in which we can exert ourselves is to ask the Department, not the Legislature, to change the present Regulations—and we venture to prefer our opinion to your advice. Pardon us.

I am much pleased to see that you have given so full an abstract from Mr. McEwan's address, and most heartily do I subscribe to the closing sentiment: "It is not an open question that this Book dominates the literary work of modern life with its moral power, and what we wish to appear in national life must be taught in our schools.

I am, yours truly,

THE MANSE, DUNDAS,  
Jan. 15. 1883.

JOHN LAING.

We do not see anything in Mr. Laing's reply to our previous remarks to justify us in changing the opinion therein expressed, namely, that whatever may be shown to be the case hereafter, the time has not yet come for a change in the law relating to the use of the Bible in schools. We believe that the more general use of the Bible would be both acceptable to the masses of the people and profitable to the pupils. We believe also that there is no better way of teaching Christian ethics—the noblest system of moral philosophy the world has ever seen—than by the use of certain portions of the sacred text. On the other hand we believe that a steady improvement is taking place in the morality of our schools, and also that the improvement would be more marked and the use of the Bible more general if clergymen would only use the influence in their own localities which the law permits and invites them to exercise.

We agree with Mr. Laing and other ministers of the gospel that it is unreasonable to expect them to teach in the schools. It is not unreasonable, however, to ask them to visit the schools more frequently, and that in their official capacity. In this direction we look for the best solution of the whole difficulty. Let all the clergymen in the Province, of all denominations, unite in the movement to promote the use of the Bible as a text-book, and see what result one year will produce. If there is not a marked and decided improvement then it will be time enough to speak of changing the law—for it must never be forgotten that the Departmental Regulations are as much part of the school law as the text of the Act is. As such they cannot be lightly changed, especially in regard to points where the language of the regulations is the result of careful compromise and has been left unchanged for a generation.