

THE CANADA
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY
AND SCHOOL CHRONICLE.

OCTOBER, 1880.

THE TEACHER AS A MOULDER OF CHARACTER.*

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I.

THE most precious thing in the world is a good character. May I not go further and say it is the only possession which is really precious—the only one which has an intrinsic value, comprehensive and lasting as life itself?

The character is that which constitutes the individuality, the self-hood. It includes all that makes the man what he is in himself—all that marks him as an entity distinct from every other in the broad universe. Each personal faculty, power and habit goes to make up the character, and every accident of place and surroundings either derives a value from its relations to and effect upon character, or

shrinks into nothingness when brought into comparison with it. The day will quickly come to each of us when we shall be ready to smile or to weep at the transparent littleness of the artificial and superficial distinctions which now loom to our bedazzled eyes with dimensions so hugely unreal; when we shall feel that it was really a matter of the least possible importance, comparatively, apart from any influence it may have had in making us what we are, whether we were rich, or handsome, or famous. But the day will never come while conscious life lasts, or while the currents of influence we set in motion continue to flow down the ages; the day will never come in the life that now is, and if we are, as every deeper instinct and every higher aspiration of the soul tells us we are, something more than “merely cunning casts in clay”; the day will never come in the unending life beyond when it will cease to mat-

* [This paper was prepared by its learned author to be read at the recent annual meeting, in Toronto, of the Provincial Teachers' Association, but owing to sickness in the writer's family it was not delivered. Prof. Wells has kindly complied with our request for its publication in the pages of the C. E. M. The balance of the paper will appear in our next.—Ed.]