

schools. Many were, and still are, almost ready to complain that the moral effect has been the direct opposite. They will admit, perhaps, that the coarser kinds of vice may not prevail to the same extent among those whose intelligence has been raised and tastes refined, to some extent, by some years of study in the public schools. In the cases of some of the more fortunate, years of contact with teachers of really high intellectual and moral type has left deep and lasting impressions for good upon the forming character. But even these results are, it is argued, rather incidental than otherwise; while, on the other hand, the natural and legitimate effect of the increased keenness of perception and the strengthened intellect, not bringing necessarily any accompanying increase of moral thoughtfulness or any development of conscience, is increased power for evil as for good, as other causes may determine. In a word, it is maintained—and what thoughtful observer can gainsay it?—that the training, pure and simple, given in the ordinary routine of the public school, is just as available in making one cleverer as a forger or a burglar, as in any honest commercial or professional pursuit.

Why, one might ask in all seriousness, should it be expected to be otherwise? What is there in the nature of the regular school regime to bring about a different result? Taking our schools, in many respects excellent, in Ontario, the school hours, and, in too many cases, long instalments of the morning and evening hours of the pupils are filled, not to say over-filled with the study of principles, or oftener rules and exercises, pertaining to such studies as arithmetic, grammar, geography, literature, etc., with perhaps an admixture of one or two of the elementary sciences, such as chemistry, biology or hygiene. However effective or otherwise this may be in accomplishing, which most intelligent teachers and parents will admit to be its real purpose, the development of mind power—combined, if you please, with the acquisition of a certain amount of useful information—on what reasonable ground can it be expected to increase greatly the habit of moral thoughtfulness, or the love of the right and the good? The writer wishes to avoid all extreme statements and positions. He cheerfully recognizes that there is much in the discipline of a well-regulated school which is adapted to effect a happy improvement in what may be called the moral habits of the pupils. We may instance such matters as the formation of habits of promptness, punctuality, orderliness, the acquiring of powers of attention, concentration, perseverance, and so forth. We may also make hearty recognition of the powerful effect upon many children of the unconscious influence and example

of a high-minded man or woman as teacher, though this can be by no means assured, and in fact cannot fairly be expected in these days when the poverty or parsimoniousness of ratepayers, on the one hand, and the ruinous competition of thousands of certificated boy and girl teachers not yet out of their teens, on the other, is keeping the remuneration in what ought to be regarded as one of the very highest of professions, at an absurdly petty level.

But, premising all necessary caveats, to guard against misapprehension, we come to the point which we wish specially to emphasize. Should we ask even a tyro among present-day teachers, fresh from the normal school, what he regards as the first and highest end to be kept in view by the true teacher, in all the teaching and discipline of school life, he or she will, without hesitation, reply, "The formation of character." Of how many an essay or address at the teachers' institute, local, provincial, or national, is "Character-forming," under that or some other name, the theme? Now, is it not a strange anomaly that, notwithstanding this universally admitted principle and pedagogical truism, there is not, in the ordinary public school curriculum, so far as we are acquainted with it, even a five minute niche anywhere in the week's programme, set apart for study of or instruction in questions of right or wrong in motive and conduct. But a few months ago a clever and earnest teacher in one of the higher departments of a public school of excellent standing in the city of Toronto, was asked whether he would not find it of great advantage in the character training of the boys and girls in his classes were he at liberty to take a lesson space, once in a while for an informal talk with them on some matter of morals to which he felt the need of directing their thoughts. The answer was decided and emphatic. The teacher said that he often felt that, from the point of view of that which was admitted to be the teacher's highest duty—the character-forming—he could accomplish very much more by such a use of an occasional twenty or thirty minutes, than by the best possible drill which he could give according to the prescribed routine. But, of course, as every teacher under such a system knows, such a thing is out of the question. The demands of code and routine are imperative. The grind and cram of the curriculum takes up every available moment. Even should some brave innovator venture to appropriate an occasional interval, not only would he be in danger of rebuke from the authorities, thus putting his reputation in jeopardy, but the fact that he was attempting an innovation would bring him under suspicion and criticism, even from some of his best students, absorbed in their eager pursuit for standing and prizes,