

For such an assertion there is no good ground whatever. The reverse of it would be nearer the truth. All the most powerful motives to good conduct, all the most effective supports of morality are found within the common creed of Christendom. They are not the exclusive property of any of the churches. If the unsectarian teaching, therefore, of the public school would not be influential, and influential for good, it would be due rather to the lack of skill or of earnestness on the teacher's part, than to the poverty of the resources from which he was privileged to draw.

It is also said that the opening and closing of the school with prayer and the reading of the Bible, is too small a matter altogether, to have much importance attached to it, one way or another. It certainly does not bulk largely in the general exercises. But that settles nothing as to its importance or non-importance. Our national flag is a small thing—a piece of bunting which can be bought for a dime or two. Nevertheless, as it floats over our homes, it represents the power of England. And even so, the divine name invoked in the opening exercises, the open Bible on the desk, holds up to teacher and scholar alike the presence and the majesty of God. It is true, the exercise may be in some cases little more than a seemly form, just as the exercise of private or domestic worship may be only a form, under cover of which the worshipper dismisses himself only the more securely to a day of unrelieved worldliness. But this possibility is not supposed to constitute a valid reason for discontinuing the exercise in the latter case; nor should it be in the former. It is a reason why school trustees should have more regard to Christian character than they often have, in the choice of persons to be the moral as well as intellectual guides of our youth.

This suggests another objection which is sometimes raised. How few

public school teachers, it is said, are really fit persons to conduct the religious exercises referred to? My acquaintance with the teachers of the province is not sufficiently large to enable me to answer this question. Some of them, I know, are among the best, the most consistent and earnest members of the several churches, and if others are of a different character—if the religious principles or the habits of any of them are of such a kind as to make the conduct of public prayer by them, or even the public reading of the Bible, an incongruity, something like a farce, then in any case, whether there are religious exercises or not, they are obviously not fit persons to superintend the intellectual and moral training of the youth of this or of any other province.

It is not the least important consideration connected with this question, though it is often one lost sight of, that the mode of its settlement must have a very marked influence on the character of the public school teachers as a class. Eliminate the religious element entirely, make the relation of the teacher to his pupil, just such as that of the tradesman to his apprentice, only that the one teaches reading, writing and arithmetic, the other a trade or handicraft and the general character of those in the profession will be lowered. There will still be those engaged in it of high moral and religious principle, but the prospect of exercising the profession and the actual exercise of it will no longer furnish the same incentive to the cultivation of such principle. Almost the reverse. Religion will be a sort of disqualification, or at least inconvenience, inasmuch as the teacher's mouth must be shut within the school, not only on all which he holds most sacred, but on all which he has found most helpful to his own goodness. Now the real attainment may fall below the standard, will often fall below it in this imperfect world.