

CIVIC AND MORAL TRAINING IN SCHOOLS.

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(Continued from May Number.)

I PASS now to the teaching of the Bible, regarded as a means of moral training. All Christians confess that morality is based on the sense of brotherhood. The Bible is also confessed by all Christians to be a book in which God reveals Himself by gradual stages as the Father of man, to whom He has proclaimed that they are His children and brothers one of another. One would have supposed, then, that the Bible, when placed in the hands of a teacher who recognizes these fundamental truths, and who has also been trained to teach by gradual stages, would be confessed by all Christians to be the book above all others fittest to be a means of moral training. Yet there is a notion that in many elementary schools masters are hampered in teaching the Bible because they are forbidden to teach simultaneously disputed dogmas which they may believe to be deducible from it. "By all means," say certain people, "the Bible is *the* book for moral teaching; but only if *we* teach it"—the "we" representing always a small fraction, and often a very small fraction, of total Christendom. But do we not generally find that it is by vehement party politicians, or somewhat polemical ministers of religion, that these hampering difficulties of ours are so acutely felt for us, while we do not feel them ourselves? I venture to say, in the name of the great mass of masters of schools of the highest grade, and I believe I might go further and speak in the name of our united profession, that it is a source of strength and encouragement to us that, in giving Bible lessons, we are

not compelled to make the Bible a basis for polemical theology, but are allowed so to teach it as to make its fundamental truths intelligible and applicable to the needs of daily duty.

There is, of course, the possibility that a teacher may be unable to accept as historical certain parts of the Bible which his pupils have to read under his supervision. That difficulty I appreciate from personal experience. But what competent teacher will feel bound to tell his pupils everything that he knows, or thinks he knows, on any subject, without considering whether the information is adapted for them? If any one has a fair conception of the main spiritual truths underlying the development of humanity, and has realized how few these truths are, and yet how important for our well-being, how simple and yet how deep, and how much of varied and vivid illustration they require before they can be so impressed upon children as to influence their daily actions—he will, as it seems to me, find no more place in his Scripture lesson for disputed history than for disputed theology. "My pupils," I lately heard a teacher say, "believe anything I tell them in a Scripture lesson." And so they do, no doubt, as long as you tell them about Noah, or Moses, or Adam and Eve, or Bethlehem and Nazareth, or the length of Jordan and the number of the Herods—or anything else that does not at present conflict with the experience of the class-room, the playground, the streets, and the home. But do they believe—I will not say in the literal sense, but in any sense whatever, so as to influence action—