

MORAL TRAINING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.*

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(Continued from May)

AND that public sentiment in England of the same opinion is evident from the evidence forwarded to the Government by a Royal Commission appointed some years ago to investigate this whole question. In answer to the question, "Do parents desire moral training?" the Commission received affirmative replies from 93 per cent. of Voluntary (School) Managers, 79 per cent. of School Boards and 98 per cent. of teachers answering. "It was manifest from the investigation that the people of England by an overwhelming majority desire religious instruction in the Elementary School."

If as thorough an investigation were held now in Ontario the conclusion could not be very different. The great body of our citizens know and realize that moral instruction is of vital importance to the well-being of the home and of the State; and would give wide and liberal scope to those who in good faith would undertake, as did the two great parties in England in 1870, to furnish a national system that would bring every child under the control of an efficient intellectual and moral training.

In Ontario, to meet the demands of one denomination chiefly, a Separate School system has been granted under careful provision for thorough instruction in the secular branches of a primary education, and with the distinct understanding that the tenets of that church may also be taught during school hours. But were this system carried to its full, legitimate issues by all denominations, the efficiency of

secular education would undoubtedly be seriously impaired, if not destroyed; and a strong and growing feeling is asserting itself in favor of one and only one system of schools throughout our Province. The advocates of one system say that to unify and strengthen the brotherhood of all citizens who must work shoulder to shoulder for all that is valuable in our homes and our country in mature years, the children should be trained together. Our children, say they, cannot be brought into daily contact and mutual sympathy too soon if the conditions are what they should be. But in this case wise and ample provision must be made for their effective development in every part of their complex nature, and that in the order of awakening powers.

Why should morals be excluded or neglected? Why should the ethical nature, that asserts itself almost as early as the intellectual, be ignored or left to the haphazard teaching of a child's environment when that nature has in it far greater and graver possibilities than either of its other natures?

Many who thus speak are recognized leaders of the intelligent and religious classes. Mere secularists may trouble themselves but little with such matters; but when those who are able to take the most enlightened and patriotic view of this question keep pressing it on their own friends and on the public they would do well to take heed.

The advocates of secular (not godless) schools and those who can suggest no good working plan for common moral instruction tell us that

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