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## ERRORS IN RESPECT TO SCHOOLS CORRECTED,

(By the Rev. Dr. Sears, Secretary of the Massachusetts' Board of Education, in his last Annual Report.)

It may be improper to begin our observations with an examination of certain vague ideas which are carelessly entertained, and yet have sufficient efficacy to be highly detrimental to the schools. Many seem to suppose, if their opinions may fairly be inferred from their actions, that the whole duty of the teacher is to instruct his pupils in "the common branches," as they are usually termed, and to maintain so much discipline as is necessary to that end. But every man of reflection will perceive that this platform is altogether too narrow; that neither the individual nor the community can realize the benefits of a true education if the Public Schools are conducted simply on this plan. In order to answer its purpose, any system of popular education must embrace, in addition to those branches, the cultivation of the manners, of the private and social virtues, and of the religious sentiment. The most perfect development of the mind, no less than the order of the school and the stability of society, demands a religious education. Massachusetts may be regarded as having settled, at least for herself, the great question of the connection of religion with the Public Schools. She holds that religion is the highest and noblest possession of the mind, and is conducive to all the true interests of man and of society, and therefore she cannot do otherwise than to seek to place her schools under its beneficent influence. The constitution and laws of the Commonwealth enjoin it upon teachers to inculcate piety and Christian morals, love to God and love to man. But the Government does not in this, or in any other instance, regard religion as one of the legitimate ends of its own organization. The maintenance and

propagation of the Christian faith it very properly leaves to ecclesiastical bodies. It employs religion only as a means of its own security and prosperity, and even then only so far as it can do so without violating the rights of conscience. What it needs for its own safety and well-being is the spirit of the decalogue as expounded by the Great Teacher of mankind, while varying creeds, which are so much in controversy, are not indispensable as a means of public education, especially in a country where such ample opportunities exist for peculiar doctrinal instruction in other ways. Each family has, or may have, its religious tenets inculcated around its own fireside. It has also access to a Sabbath School of its own faith, or at least of its own choice; and may, moreover, always enjoy instruction from the pulpit in accordance with its own preferences. In the exclusion of distinctive creeds from the schools, religious persons, of almost every name, are singularly agreed, and thus we have the sentiment of the people at large in support of the law as it now stands.

The formation of a virtuous character is the natural result of a right religious training. Still, as the principles of religion and moral truth may be taught without producing a corresponding character, it is more important for the teacher to lead his pupils to the practice of virtue than it is to instruct them in the theory of it. The school furnishes peculiar facilities for cultivating all the social virtues. Though the family may be regarded as the primary society where the principles of government are first taught and exemplified, there are many important lessons to be learned preparatory to general society, for the inculcation and practice of which the school presents more frequent occasion than the family. The number of persons associated together is greater in the former than the latter; social equality is more perfect; and the application of the principles of justice in regulating the little community is made more conspicuous. The authority of the teacher is less permanent and absolute than that of the parent. As the number of persons and the variety of character and dispositions increase, the machinery of government becomes more complicated. Beside the multitude of questions of equity which arise within the organization of the school, there are others growing out of peculiar external relations, as those of the school to the family, to the trustees, to the children not belonging to the school, and to the citizens at large. Here is ample scope for the exercise of all the social virtues; and the teacher who, while governing the school, aims at training his pupils to an intelligent view and voluntary discharge of all their duties, will find that his office invests him with an almost unlimited power for expanding and ennobling the character of the young. The comprehension of all such relations as those above-named, and the application of just principles in regulating the conduct in each of them, are among the most appropriate and most important ends to be attained in the public schools. It is not enough to teach the rudiments of knowledge and to govern the school for the time being. The mind is to be educated for freedom by gradual growth in both knowledge