

for every child immunity from deteriorating influence during its most sensitive and impressionable age.

"The question of religious training is one of supreme importance and interest."—B. A. Hinsdale.

No subject connected with education bulks so largely in the mind of our most earnest thinkers as that of the moral training of the young. Utilitarians do not trouble themselves, it may be, on this question, but in the estimation of all who desire that our country shall become emphatically the home of the free, enlightened, contented, progressive, patriotic people, no one subject is half so important.

In this Province we claim one of the best educational systems to be found anywhere; but its wisest provisions deal with intellectual training. Those for physical training on scientific principles cannot be called effective; while for moral training the arrangements may be arraigned as either impracticable or out of touch with public opinion.

They are as follows:—"Every Public or High School shall be opened with the Lord's Prayer and closed with the reading of the Scripture and the Lord's Prayer, or the prayer authorized by the Department of Education. The Scripture shall be read daily and systematically, without comment or explanation; the portions used may be taken from the book of selections adopted by the Department for that purpose or from the Bible as the trustees by resolution may direct. Trustees may also order the reading of the Bible or the authorized Scripture selections by both pupils and teachers at the opening and closing of school, and the repeating of the Ten Commandments at least once a week." Following these provisions we find conscience clauses so that a teacher objecting to leading in these exercises shall be excused; and the children of parents who object to

their presence while these exercises are in progress may be excused and allowed to withdraw or remain in another room.

Another clause makes provision for religious instruction by the clergy of any denomination, or their authorized representative, after school hours, to the pupils of their own church, in each school-house, at least once a week. This clause forbids the exhibition of emblems of a denominational character during school hours in any school.

I would submit that the reading of Scripture without note or comment, and the Lord's Prayer or the prayer authorized by the Department is not religious and moral instruction. Neither, in the ordinary sense, can the memorizing of the Ten Commandments be called instruction, although, reverently conducted, these exercises are conducive to moral results.

The only provision then for religious instruction in our school law and regulations is to be found in the clause permitting clergymen to undertake this duty at the close of the school day with the children of their own church.

It is nearly forty years since by teaching or inspection I was brought into direct contact with our public schools, and I have yet to find the first school in which religious or moral instruction is regularly or even irregularly given under the authorized regulations. It may be other inspectors can report differently. If so, I have yet to hear of one who is able to do so.

The truth seems to be that systematic and thorough instruction is impracticable at the time and in the way provided for.

Another undeniable and notorious truth is that this subject bristles with difficulties of a very perplexing character. I do not need to call attention to the existence of many denomina-