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CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL HAS RECEIVED

*An Honorable Mention at Paris Exhibition, 1878.
Recommended by the Minister of Education for Ontario.
Recommended by the Council of Public Instruction, Quebec.
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, New Brunswick.
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Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, British Columbia.
Recommended by Chief Superintendent of Education, Manitoba.*

The Publishers frequently receive letters from their friends complaining of the non-receipt of the JOURNAL. In explanation they would state, as subscriptions are necessarily payable in advance, the mailing clerks have instructions to discontinue the paper when a subscription expires. The clerks are, of course, unable to make any distinction in a list containing names from all parts of the United States and Canada.

THE BIBLE AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS.

We published last month the resolutions on this vexed question adopted at a conference of delegates from the several Protestant churches and submitted by a large and influential deputation to the Premier of Ontario. These resolutions ask: (1) That scripture reading and prayer shall be made obligatory for devotional purposes in all public schools, with a reservation to each parent of the right to withdraw his children from such exercises; and (2) that, either by re-adopting the well-known series of lessons in the old Irish National Readers, or by adopting some other suitable series, provision shall be made for "scriptural and moral instruction" in the public schools. The resolutions were supported by brief addresses from prominent members of the deputation, which was undoubtedly a representative one, and Mr. Mowat gave a reply, non-committal, as a matter of course, but valuable on account of his clear exposition of the present state of the law.

We do not propose, at this stage of what promises to be a long and acrimonious discussion, to prejudge the question, or pretend that we have found out the best possible solution of the problem. Our purpose is rather to assist in securing that solution by clearing away some of the confusion in which the discussion has been involved, and bringing the latter back to the lines in which it must be conducted, if it is ever to lead to any satisfactory result.

It must be clearly borne in mind, in the first place, that the real dispute in connection with this question is not between religion and irreligion, between morality and immorality, between Christianity and agnosticism, between those who honor the Bible as an inspired Scripture, and those who regard it as of only literary and historical value. A very great majority of those who take an interest in the matter are quite agreed about certain fundamental principles. They all want moral instruc-

tion to be a regular and systematic part of the teacher's duty, and in this they are at one with agnostics on the one hand and Roman Catholics on the other. No one, whatever his speculative opinions on religious questions may be, wants his children to grow up without learning the meaning of the terms "duty," "right," "wrong," and others that are to be found in the vocabulary of morals. Every man, however careless or even criminal a life he may himself have led, would like to see his children grow up to be useful and respectable members of society, and would like to have them trained at school with that end in view. It would be just as well then if the controversy were narrowed to more reasonable dimensions at the outset, by eliminating all the points on which all the parties to it are thoroughly agreed.

In the second place, it is necessary to bear in mind that, while all are agreed as to the necessity of moral teaching in schools, there is much and legitimate diversity of opinion as to the best means of carrying it on. Some believe in using the Scriptures as a class-book of morals, and will be content with nothing else; some are willing to allow them to be used for devotional purposes, but not as a class-book; some want them excluded altogether from the schools; and, lastly, of those who are pleased to see the scriptures used in either one way or the other, some want their use to be made compulsory, while others prefer to leave the matter to the people of each school constituency. It is possible, we believe, to find amongst all these contentions what is called a *modus vivendi*, if we exclude those who, as avowed agnostics, have a positive dislike to the Scriptures on account of the supernatural element which permeates their contents. But even they do not maintain that there is anything objectionable in the purely ethical portions of the sacred text, and very few of them would find any fault even with the New Testament accounts of the miracles of Christ, who is constantly represented as working miracles not to display his power, but to relieve the sufferings of those with whom he came in contact. "He went about doing good;" and the life story of one whose constant occupation can in these words be correctly described offers little room for objection from any possible point of view.

It may safely be asserted that a more general recognition of the sacred scriptures in the public schools would be in itself desirable, and would be pleasing to the great majority, if not to the whole, of the community, independently of religious differences. How can this be most effectually and speedily brought about? Some say by a change in the law making the use of the Bible in schools compulsory, except in sections where the majority are opposed to its use. There are several grave objections to such an enactment. In the first place, it would have to be made penal, or it would lead to no better result than a recommendation, while, if left a dead letter, it would tend to bring law into contempt. Then it is doubtful whether the prescribed penalty could or would be exacted.