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MORAL CULTURE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.*

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I HAVE been invited to speak upon the question, "What can we do to help in improving the moral culture of the pupils in the public schools?" It is not strange that such a question should engage the attention of the friends of Sabbath schools. The Sabbath school exists because of its interest in the highest welfare of the young. For one hour in the week it has its pupils in its hands; but before they come to it again, a large part of them have spent from twenty to thirty hours under such influence as may have surrounded them in the public schools. There is no need to represent that evil influences are predominant there, in order to make the present question seem important. There is need of no exaggerations or harsh charges; it is enough that the public schools have so vast an opportunity to injure or to help the young, and that the life of the multitudes

that are gathered in them has its numberless temptations to evil, as well as its priceless means of improvement. In view of these facts it is no wonder that the friends of the Sabbath school make inquiry about the moral tone of the public schools, and seek to know whether by any means they can help to make it all that it ought to be.

I do not understand that I am invited to discuss the question of the Bible in the schools, or the place and value of religious exercises generally. I assume that in the schools of this land religious exercises will have their place and do their work, and I proceed to enquire what else there is need of in order to the desired improvement in the moral culture of the pupils.

First, and briefly: There is need of *general quickening* in the intensity and interest of school work. If moral tone is to be improved, listlessness must be banished, and the life of the place must be so strong and earnest that it never can return.

*The substance of an address delivered at the Convention of the Sabbath School Association of Ontario, at Hamilton, Oct. 28, 1886.