

shall have ceased to be fighting organizations, why may they not be transformed into mutual improvement societies and become a mighty agency for the spread of intelligence?

SOME of the American educational and other journals have been severely criticising the position taken by President Eliot, of Harvard, in a recent paper, to the effect that no one has ever, on a large scale, shown how to teach morality apart from religion, and hence that, in order to teach morality, we must teach religion in the schools. The details of President Eliot's scheme are certainly as impracticable as they would be undesirable on other grounds. To place religion upon the school programme; to provide for it in each of its great varieties, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish; to pay for it from the public purse; and to classify all children on the basis of the religious views or preferences of their parents and assign them to teachers accordingly, would, if it were possible, be taking a long step backward. It would not only produce a most complicated and cumbrous system, and provide, at public expense, for the intensifying and perpetuating of the spirit of sectarianism, which the progress of broader Christian ideas is now doing so much to weaken, but it would be a palpable violation of the great principle of religious voluntarism, and a denial of the rights of conscience to all those who accept either of the three forms indicated. To establish such a system by law would be to turn back the hands on the dial plate of progress two or three generations.

BUT is there not a more excellent way? Can not the sacred principle of voluntarism in religion be preserved inviolate and yet ample opportunity afforded for instruction by its accredited teachers? This is what is aimed at in Ontario, and the results in some quarters are most encouraging. Instead of the minister of each denomination separately instructing his little band of sectaries, we have, in some places, the ministers of all the leading denominations working together in perfect confidence and harmony, and each in turn giving religious instruction to the whole school, or to as many as choose to remain. This is as it should be. Let the ministers of the different denominations set aside their little distinctions and throw themselves into the grand work of expounding the Christian doctrines and precepts as they hold them in common, and the thing may be done. Very few parents, of any shade of belief or unbelief, will object to have their children taught the great principles of the Christian system. These have, in fact, an irresistible claim to a place on the programme as a part, and a most important part, of the history of civilization.

DR. McCOSH, President of Princeton College, is of opinion that children ought not to be sent to school before the age of six years, and that a boy should be ready for college at sixteen. With the first opinion all thoughtful teachers will agree, if by school we mean the organized public school, with its long hours and fixed programme. From the second we feel strongly inclined to dissent. There are, in fact, such broad diversities in the degrees of maturity of boys at the age mentioned that no

definite rule can be laid down, but our experience and observation incline us to the conclusion that, in the majority of cases, the college course will be much more profitable if not entered upon before the age of eighteen or twenty.

WE have received from Mr. D. J. McKinnon, I. P. S. for the County of Peel, a specimen of a very attractive "Certificate of Honor," to be awarded to those who have completed the course of study prescribed for the Fourth Class in the Public Schools of Ontario, and passed the examination for admission to the County High School at Brampton. The design is neatly and tastefully wrought out on paper parchment, by Alexander & Cable, Toronto, in a combination of gilt and black lettering. It is embellished on left and right with busts of Dr. Ryerson and Hon. George Brown respectively. At the bottom, in addition to spaces for date and signatures of Inspector, Principal, and P. S. Teacher, is a representation of pupils of both sexes, book in hand, on their way to school. Below these, in a single line, is Longfellow's well-known stanza, commencing "Lives of great men," etc., and the whole is surmounted at top with a scroll containing the golden motto, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

IN replying to a question, the *N. Y. School Journal* quotes the following excellent advice from Emerson: "If a pupil, in a proper manner, doubt the correctness of your statement or opinion, and a discussion follow, never attempt to silence him by your mere assertion, but hear his reasons patiently and pleasantly. Welcome the doubting spirit and the zeal in arguing that prove the thinker. Encourage his inquiries; and if he convince you that you are wrong and that he is right, acknowledge it cheerfully, and—hug him." In the case referred to by the *Journal's* contributor, the teacher had reprimanded a pupil very sharply for questioning a statement she had made, and in regard to which she afterwards confessed she was not herself certain. She had made the very common mistake of thinking it would never do to let the pupils think she was wrong. Such an idea does very little credit either to the teacher's judgment or to her moral sense. It greatly underates the average pupil's shrewdness. If she was wrong, the boy would be pretty sure to find it out and let his fellow-pupils know it, and the loss of prestige to the teacher would be vastly greater than any which could have followed a frank admission of doubt. The latter, too, would have been an excellent lesson in candor and conscientiousness. The average school-boy in these days will hardly be got to believe in the teacher's infallibility, nor is it desirable that he should.

THE foregoing incident suggests the lesson that the teacher cannot be too careful in making dogmatic assertions, unless absolutely sure of the ground. Nor is it well, in any case, to be too ready to give categorical replies to all sorts of questions. It is oftener much better to refer the questioner to some source of information, and, if the subject is worth it, to set a time when the question may be brought up again in presence of the class, and their success in solving it carefully tested. In this