

citizens, can be made purely secular, and yet discharge its most important functions aright. Religion, we believe, in its broadest and truest sense, is the binding force which binds man to man, as well as man to God, the cohesive factor of human society, and it can no more be safely ignored in the ordinary education of children than in the maturer life of men and women.

"But," say some who differ from us here, "we grant most fully the need of religious training for children, but it should be left to the Churches and Sunday schools." To this we would suggest some grave objections:

First.—The contact of the Sunday school or the Church with the actual life of the children is both too brief and too slight for anything that can properly be called *training*. The Sunday school, as a rule, holds its pupils for, on an average, one hour in the week, in which, indeed, a little teaching can be and often is done, but how much training is possible, even under the best teacher? The day school holds them for thirty hours as against the one; its training acts day by day, hour by hour. If it be purely secular in character, must it not necessarily swamp the Sunday school, which can scarcely hope to counteract, in one hour, the secular tendency of the whole week?

Secondly.—The State has no security that the teaching of the Sunday school, necessarily brief and desultory as it is, will be at all adequate to what is required for the training of good citizens. Sunday schools and Sunday school teachers are anything but uniform in their character and methods, and, of course, cannot be in any degree responsible to the State, which can send no inspector there. Sunday school teachers are at best a somewhat vague and irresponsible body. They have, it is to be supposed, been trained in the Sunday school themselves, and conscientious clergymen are, of course, careful in their selection, but it is often impossible for the latter to secure anything like ideal teachers, and they have perforce to take such as they can get. It seems only too certain that, in a large proportion of cases, Sunday school teaching is deficient in what is of the greatest practical importance—it fails to supply the missing link between the more doctrinal or theoretical teaching and the actual conduct of daily life, an omission only too common in the teaching of the pulpit, as well, with the natural results, in the lowering of the tone of our social and political life, only too visible to every thoughtful observer. In the Sunday school the brief lesson time is too often entirely occupied with more or less satisfactory "explanation" of the lesson for the day, with, at best, a little admonition as to religious duties, but without any application of the teaching to the conscience and the ordinary practices and temptations of the pupil's life. Too often what is taught falls on unheeding ears, and, whether from the fault of the teacher or that of the pupil, or both, the latter has no idea, an hour or two later, what the lesson was about. This the writer has repeatedly tested by experiment. Can such a mere smattering of religious teaching be accepted as in any wise an adequate training in the duties of Christian citizenship? It does not seem to be equal even to restraining such common juvenile delinquencies as orchard-robbing, petty street assaults, etc., offences which are far too easily condoned by unwise parents, who do not see that such "peccadilloes," as they are often styled, are all in the way of educating their boys for more serious offences against law and order as their powers and their opportunities develop. The disorderly conduct of too many boys on their way home from Sunday school, — of which we had not long ago an extreme instance in the almost fatal injuries inflicted by one young child on another, almost at the church door, — are enough to suggest the question, how much real practical Christian instruction such children have received during the hour just over. Teachers, however, may reasonably plead that, in their brief intercourse with the children of careless parents, they can do but little to counteract the utter lack of moral training at home. This is emphatically true, and makes our position all the stronger. The day school teacher has, at least, thirty chances to the Sunday school teacher's one!

Thirdly.—The large proportion of children who most need the moral training of the school, because of the carelessness or incompetency of the parents to give such training at home, are precisely the class from whom it is most difficult, if not impossible to secure any regular attendance at Sunday school, which, of course, can have no provision for

compulsory attendance. Consequently the chances of Sunday school influence, so scant, at best, are greatly lessened in regard to the very children, who, left to wretched home influences, are tolerably sure to grow up rude and lawless, anything but the good and useful citizens we require. It is just from this class of children neglected at home, irregular and inattentive at Sunday school, that the dangerous and criminal classes of the community are continually recruited. For such, the only hope of better things lies apparently in the public school. As has been already shown the church and Sunday school have, from the nature of the case, only the very slightest hold upon them. The State, however, can compel their attendance at the public schools it provides. It should do this, and also secure, as far as possible, that they there receive such a moral and religious training as may promote their development, not merely into "intelligent," but into good and useful and law-abiding citizens. If it realizes the situation, indeed, it cannot afford to do less.

But the religious teaching which is inseparable from true moral training is not necessarily doctrinal or theological teaching. The sphere in which our ecclesiastical differences separate Christians into so many apparently different, or at least not always friendly, camps are always more or less theoretical questions of system or detail. With such questions our schools need and should have nothing to do. It is for the churches to see, as they best can, that their children are established in what each for itself considers "sound doctrine." For this the Sunday school, properly used, would afford sufficient opportunity, and the higher the tone of teaching in the day school, the more likely the children will be to profit by the teaching of the Sunday school. Our public school teaching, in order to be practically religious in its character, needs simply to recognize the great Christian verities, which, with a few exceptions, we are as a people at one in accepting. The responsibility of all to "fear God, and honour the king"—to revere and obey a God of love and justice who commands love and justice in us, and to submit to constituted authority,—the duty of man "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God," the Golden Rule, and the summary of the moral law inculcating love to God and to our neighbour "as ourselves," such truths as these, forming the basis of all true ethics, our public school system has a right to take for granted and to base its practical training thereon, even though an extreme agnostic here and there may object. For such recognition is a matter of vital importance to the common weal, like our laws for Sunday observance, which have not to do with the individual duty or the individual conscience, but are necessary to preserve to our working classes, the inestimable privilege of a day of rest, which, without some legislative barriers, the press of competition in trade and the greed of employers would soon wrench from them. As it is, it is a question whether we do not need, from the merely humanitarian point of view, more stringent legislation on behalf of certain classes of the community, who are far too heavily taxed, not merely for their own physical well-being, but for the very safety of the travelling public.

And that we need more, instead of less, religious training and influence in our public schools can hardly be denied by any thoughtful observer of a growing lawlessness and insecurity of property and life which is undoubtedly too much in evidence, even in this "moral and religious" Province of Ontario. Some of our highways are beginning to acquire a character not so very unlike that of the road which ran between "Jerusalem and Jericho" of old. The criminals are in most cases young men, who, but a few years ago, were or ought to have been pupils in our public schools, at the most susceptible period of their lives. Does not this fact suggest that more might have been done, at that period, to set the boys on the right track? The reading of selections from the Scriptures (for, of course, there are necessarily many portions unsuited for this purpose) seems to appropriate, even from a purely literary point of view, that it is not easy to see on what grounds any one can object to readings which are not only so fine as literature, but which admittedly place before the children the loftiest ideals of life and thought. The repetition of the grand and comprehensive as well as simple prayer, common to the whole Christian Church in all ages, is also so distinctly appropriate, that we can afford to overlook the objection of an exceptional Christian, as we do those of the Seventh Day Adventists, in