

THE CANADA

EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY

AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

JANUARY, 1892.

THE RELATION OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL TO NATIONAL LIFE.*

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LADIES sometimes exhibit marvellous skill in making over an old dress or bonnet, and by the adroit addition of a ribband or a rose make it look just like a new one, and in it they are sweet, attractive, irresistible. Just such skill I would like to possess for the theme I have chosen. I would like to so freshen it that you would find it attractive and that it might win your approval and loving embrace. It is told of a preacher who having floundered away for half an hour with a great theme and conscious of his failure concluded: "Well, brethren, I have given you a very poor sermon but the text was grand." You will admit that my text is a grand one, my theme one of vital importance. The very *raison d'être* of our public schools is involved in it, for do they not exist because of their presumed beneficial influence on the national life?

My theme is also a timely one. We have not yet forgotten the great Parliamentary investigations of last

summer. The thunder of that storm is still re-echoing in Quebec and elsewhere. Every thoughtful Canadian was, and is, asking the question, What can be done to heal the hurt of our nation? What can be done to take the brand of shame from the brow of fair Canada? What can be done to staunch the wound through which her life blood is streaming? It is not enough that an evil has been discovered. It is not enough that the evil doers have been or shall be punished. Healing salt must be thrown into the very spring of public life.

Have the public schools and the public school teachers anything to do in this great work? We propose to answer this enquiry. A primary question is, what is the aim of education in our public schools? Is it political?

Dr. Toqueville has given us this verdict: "In the United States politics are the end and aim of education; in Europe the principal object is to fit men for private life." We presume that the severity of truth is somewhat sacrificed here to the balance of the

* Delivered before the Ottawa Teachers' Association, November, 1891.