

MORAL INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS.

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THE times loudly call for serious consideration of this great subject. This is sufficiently evident, without laboured argument, from the perennial object lesson afforded by the daily spectacle of rogues, only too keenly intelligent, flying hither and thither to escape the consequences of their offences against good morals—in other words, the consequences of their misuse of knowledge.

Since character determines the uses to which knowledge shall be put, the value of everyone's knowledge, both to himself and to society, depends on his character. Character is therefore of prime importance.

But the formation and fortification of good character, by precept, example, and systematic teaching, is the very purpose of moral instruction. Hence, bearing in mind that intelligence and virtue are the equally indispensable twin foundations of permanent free government, we may proceed to apply to our subject the favorite American idea of equal rights, in behalf both of society as a whole and of its individual members, by laying down the two following propositions.

1. The state has as good a right to protect itself against vice by teaching virtue as it has, by common consent, to protect itself against ignorance by teaching the elements of knowledge. Likewise :

2. Every child has as good a right to instruction in morals, as a means of defence against vice and its train of evils, as, by general agreement, he has to instruction in the knowledge by which he can escape the evils of ignorance.

No one questions the right of every child to learn to read, in order that

he may possess the pass key to the whole temple of printed knowledge. No one would deprive him of the right to a knowledge of the elements of arithmetic and geometry, that, being thus enabled to measure and calculate, he may be fitted to enter upon various business or industry. Then, since intelligent care can confirm and preserve health, on which the value of the body as the servant of the mind so greatly depends, every child has the right to all the instruction he can get in practical physiology. Every youth, too, having taste and opportunity for it, has a right to study history, that he may profit by the world's experience; and geography, that he may know the scenes of great events, and where the actors in them lived. Much more, then, by reason of the relation of character to knowledge, has every child an especial right to an education in morals.

If the progression of thought has thus far been natural and reasonable, the question must here immediately arise: Why, then, is not instruction in morals universally demanded, and everywhere enthusiastically given?

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to giving this most desirable instruction is that undeservedly influential, yet really most unsubstantial, of bugbears,—the cry of "sectarianism." To show how this is so, and also to point out a way of escape from the difficulty, it is necessary to turn aside to make a few explanations in answer to certain questions that arise respecting the plan and the method of moral instruction.

First, as to the plan of moral instruction. Since man, as shown by his acts, is everywhere found to be a religious being, as well as a moral