

# THE CANADA EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

MAY, 1897.

## MORAL TRAINING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.\*

By DAVID FOTHERINGHAM, B.A., I.P.S.

HAVING come into close intimacy with our schools for nearly forty years, both as teacher and inspector, I have been impressed with the vital importance of this question of morals in our schools; and while I firmly believe that our Ontario teachers, as a body, can hardly be surpassed in intelligence, rectitude and morality, I am also convinced that the character building that goes on in many schools is at the mercy of much untoward influence.

We have constant change of teachers. Few remain long in the profession, and fewer long in one school. We have a yearly increasing influx of young, inexperienced teachers whose own characters have hardly reached maturity, who have little true knowledge of human nature in its threefold being, and who must acquire the indispensable power of experience by experimenting on that most delicate of all structures, the human soul. There is a large number of children who receive little care in their homes as to moral development, and whose ideas, often expressed to myself, are that material possessions and having a good time are the chief aims of life.

Whilst there is improvement in the character and the care of their surroundings, our school children are, as

a rule, sent to buildings and grounds that have little about them to educate taste and develop thoughtful care in manners and morals. Is it too much to say that in many rural districts the character of out-door accommodation often lowers delicacy of feeling and is such sometimes as to be positively degrading? Is it not also true that, during the absence of the teacher at noon or during his attention to routine work at recess, a few rough children will seriously mar the social tone of the school community, and neither the teacher nor the parent knows that the bloom of true delicacy of feeling and intercourse is being brushed from the youthful mind, never to be fully restored? Is it not true that, in the arrangements for seating and recitation, temptation to copy or otherwise pass off the work of others for one's own, too often occurs? and the inexperienced or over-worked teacher fails to realize that indifference to delicate shades of honor and honesty is fixing itself in the conscience of the child, never to be wholly lost in after life. Questionings like these and isolated cases, few, indeed, I am glad to say, of positive wickedness, have led me earnestly and often to enquire what could be done to lift still higher the tone of school life, good, comparatively speaking, now, so as to secure

\*Paper read at O. E. A., April '97.