

be difficult to conceive why the teacher is so designated, for in his case "the whole duty of man" is held to consist in the filling up of blank class-books or blank returns, and in the unflinching use of the authorised text-books. He considered there was a repressive system of education now being attempted to be carried out in Ontario, and it is utterly out of tune with the voice of modern times. The Educational Department were conscious of the fact, and were seeking to enforce its measures by exacting from the School Inspectors, not only the public reports intended for the eye of Parliament, but secret reports also, which meet the eye of only the chief superintendent or of his deputy. It was deplorable that in Ontario they should at this stage of progress have to discuss questions of the character spoken of; that their contest should be not with ignorance, but with the official representatives of education.

A cordial vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Hunter for the paper read.

EXPLANATION.—Mr. McGann spoke of some remarks having been made respecting his conduct as Treasurer of the Association, and of his having been called on to settle up an item which was omitted from the audit. It was explained that Mr. McGann's conduct as Treasurer of the Association was irreproachable, and that he had overpaid his account by \$8. Any loose manner in the management of the accounts during Mr. McGann's treasurership only took place during his absence in the old country.

THE MORAL ELEMENT IN COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION.—Prof. Goldwin Smith, who, on rising, was given a most enthusiastic reception, then delivered the following address:—

"Among the various topics connected with Education, which might be brought before a meeting of teachers, I have chosen as one deserving of special attention, 'The Moral Element in Common School Education.' I mean the effect of the system upon character as distinguished by its effect upon intellect.

The circumstances of our age are such that, if our education is common, it cannot be religious. For my part, I think this a misfortune. Not that I think much is to be gained by teaching children, or anybody else for that matter, mere dogmas and formularies; but I think it a misfortune that we should not be able to introduce into the common education of the young whatever is highest and deepest in our motives to right conduct, and to the formation of a virtuous character. But so it is. This is a period of religious division and decomposition; of splitting up into sects, or of total eclipse of faith. The only great mass which remains united is marvellously held together by tradition and authority; whenever it is exposed to the influence of free knowledge or free discussion, it gives way like the rest. So universally is this the case that some begin to say that the end of the theological period of history is come; that religion is about to give way finally to science as the guide of life; and that spiritual motives will be finally superseded by motives having no relation to anything but the good or ill of this present world. For my own part, I am not of that opinion. I believe that the 'Sun of Righteousness,' though now hidden from many by a cloud raised mainly by Byzantine and mediæval exhalation, will shine bright again upon the eye of the soul—that the great vital truths of religion will become clear again, clearer than they have ever been before, and that we shall see more distinctly than ever the reality and the paramount importance of the spiritual life. But in the meantime we are divided and uncertain, and a religious education common to all is out of the question. Separate schools we might of course have for every sect or shade of opinion. But to say nothing of the ruinous waste of resources, the separate schools are morally, I am persuaded, no better than the rest. The dogma which these schools teach is morally ineffective. It is before us and not behind us that the land of promise lies. Clouds may surround the dawn of the day of science; but the moonlight of the Middle Ages, however romantic, will guide our feet no more. I have seen that way tried at Oxford by intellects as powerful and natures as high as are ever likely to surrender themselves to imagination and tradition; and failure, signal and decisive, was the result. Nor do I attach much value to any slight or furtive recognition of religion in the way of a deodorized prayer or Scripture reading. It seems to me better to say at once the school is secular, and does not presume to meddle with things to which it cannot do justice. The supreme value of all that which concerns our spiritual life we may teach; and we inculcate the habits which lead to such truth—openness of mind, candour, sincerity, respect for honest inquiry and for its results. We may make the child feel that life is a serious thing. Religion itself we must let alone, and leave to home and to the pastor. But there may still be in our education a valuable moral element, both in the way of teaching and of influence; and it is useful to review this element, to see whether we are making the most of it, and whether it is well adapted to our circumstances and calculated to check the special evils of the particular state of society in which we live.

First of all, however, a word must be said upon the good old text about the silk purse and the sow's ear. Before you undertake to estimate the work or to blame the shortcomings of any set of teachers, or of any educational system, you must ask with what sort of pupils the teacher or the system has to deal. To use a homely metaphor, if, when we have done our best, the potato is not peeled very clean, the fault may lie wholly in the peeler, but it may lie partly in the potato. When fond parents find fault with the goods manufactured by the teacher, they should consider, if it is possible for paternal and maternal love to consider, what sort of raw material they sent him. If a child were sent with a crooked spine, teachers would hardly be expected to set it straight. And when a child is sent with a temper spoiled, and a brain clouded through the injury done to its stomach by cramming it, or allowing it to cram itself with all kinds of trash, can it be expected that these effects of physical maltreatment will be cancelled, that the soured temper will be restored to sweetness, or the clouded brain cleared by any skill in teaching, or by any system of education you can desire? If such a child learns anything, and is trained to any sort of decency in behaviour, is it not as much as the parent can expect? The Governor-General was reported the other day to have made some remarks on the fractiousness and rudeness of the American children you meet on the cars and steamboats. The travelling American is not the best specimen; and when you come to live in American homes, you will find many of them as well governed as any you see elsewhere. Still, the general unruliness of children in the States is a fact which cannot be denied; and as the social conditions are pretty much the same, I suppose we are not safe against the contagion here. It is the excess of the democratic spirit in their raw democracies which extends to the household, and prevents the due exercise of authority there. Added to this is the premature mannishness produced among the boys in these growing commercial countries by the prospect of early independence. Early independence is a great thing in itself, but the effects on domestic relations and private character are not always pleasant. I have seen a whole party of schoolboys, mere children, waiting for a street car, go into a neighbouring tavern to get their nips, and you find cigars in the mouths of mannikins not much bigger than a monkey. The nippers and smokers, when at home, are probably not remarkable for paying respect to grey hairs. Here, again, it is only to a very limited extent that the school can be expected to contend against the general bent and bias of society. We must look mainly to other influences, which, as things settle down in these new communities, will probably come into play. It is to be hoped, among other things, that some day Government itself, the centre and pattern of all authority, will become again an object of reverence and a source of reverential feeling, though without ceasing to be based upon the national will. While it is a partisan fight, and a domination of such persons as nature selects by that mode of struggle for political existence, the evil influence will be felt in all our relations and in every home. The direct moral influence of learning to read and write has perhaps been overstated. Statistics are produced to show that the majority of criminals are ignorant. But is their crime the consequence of their ignorance, or are both the consequences of their having been brought up in the gutter? Besides, when I was a member of a Popular Education Commission in England, it came under my notice that these statistics were vitiated by another unsuspected circumstance—a strange tendency on the part of criminals to conceal the fact of their having received education. Perhaps they thought it might be deemed an aggravation of their case; at all events, the chaplain of the gaol found that prisoners set down as unable to read or write could really do both. That ability to read and write may be used for very objectionable purposes we have, unfortunately, proof enough. Education gives a man larger powers, which may be used for good or evil. It opens new avenues to his mind through which good or evil influences may find their way. There is happily, however, no doubt on which side practically the balance lies. A comparison of the educated with the uneducated nations demonstrates that in the gross education leads to virtue. Perhaps there is no nation in which the distinction between intelligence and morality is more marked than among our neighbours to the South; yet no one can have lived among the Americans without being convinced that their intelligence is on the whole a moral force. Most direct, and probably most effective, among the moral elements of the system is the discipline of the school. It is of especial importance in a country like ours, where, as I have said, authority and respect for authority are impaired by the excess of the democratic spirit, but yet unchecked by political experience, and still in a state of violent motion against the well-remembered evils of despotism and privilege in the old world. It is needless to tell you, who know so well, in what a good discipline consists. Reasonable laws, such as the child, as its intelligence opens, may clearly see to be for its good, inflexibly enforced, or