

## OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.

THE REV. JOHN MAY.

TO venture the assertion that the school system of Ontario is not perfect, is, I suppose, to write one's self down an educational heretic. I take the risk. It is not perfect. It is very far from perfection. In some vital respects it is even dangerous.

Into the Ross Bible controversy I shall not here enter, further than to say that the very effort to provide Scripture readings for the schools at all, is a gratifying recognition of a root principle which seemed at one time in danger of strangulation by that "spirit of the age"—Satan's mundane successor—Materialism. But is there no danger that in the mind of the coming generations will be immovably embedded the thought that much of the "old Bible" is useless, or even worse than that? Also, if there is any unwholesome reading in the Bible, could there be a better device for securing the greedy perusal thereof?

From the sepulchres of all deunct empires come a warning voice. They perished, simply because they had the civilization of the head without that of the heart. To a cultured intellect annex a dead heart and you have a dangerous monster. A wholesome education includes religion in both its spiritual and its ethical aspects. But I must descend from these altitudes to what many deem a small matter—*Manners*.

The school boy of Ontario—God help him—bends under a load of text books, not one of them on *manners*. And yet I believe there is more money in manners than in arithmetic. But money is not everything. What would life be without its civilities and amenities? What is more pleasing in young people than respect for age and station duly exhibited? Deportment has made or marred many a career. There is no better passport to favour. It is the very bloom of society.

It is as oil to the wheels of intercourse, music to the dance in this mortal life, so prone to grate and jar. Is it so regarded in our school system? Is a gentle, subdued, respectful demeanour a marked characteristic of Ontario youth? They are, on the whole, a class to be proud of. Their strong and able points are not a few; but an over-delicately retiring deportment or courteous address cannot with truth be said to be of the number. Ontario is inclined to plume herself on her general superiority to Quebec, but the children of Quebec are better trained to the idea that respect to others means respect for self; that

"Manners are not idle, but the fruit  
Of loyal nature and of nobler mind."

Akin to manners and religion is personal *cleanliness*. There are people in Ontario who have passed through the schools and yet hardly ever take a bath. Some wash hands and face on Sunday morning only. Even the schoolmaster may sometimes be seen setting before his charge the example of unpolished boots, dirty collar, and teeth golden with perennial accumulations. An assembly of such people on a hot day can, with truth, be

described as odoriferous rather than fragrant. This is a tender subject, and should a storm of indignation burst on me I suppose I shall have to recant. In a lower key, however, as an honest man, I must say with Galileo, "Yet it moves for all that." 'Twere wholesomer to wash than get mad.

The defects already specified admit of easy remedy. Not so, however, that which I shall now name—the *overtaxing of the young*. This is not a surface blemish but a heart affection. It would not be just to say that in her devotion to pernicious "cunning" Ontario stands alone. The deadly canker is eating up intellect everywhere. The great universities lead off: all the small fry follow. "Cram" has its tap root in the utilitarian urgencies of life as this age lives it. It is fed directly by competitive examination which mistakes the musty stowage of a garret for the furniture of kings. Under existing conditions, I admit, cram is a necessary evil, and no school system—a competing school—can hold its own without it. What I do venture to take the Ontario system to task for is, the attempt to teach to the same learner *too many things at once*. I condemn the present *mania* for teaching everybody everything that is known. This springs from a total misconception of the very *nature* of education. To utter a paradox: the chances are, *ceteris paribus*, that the less a man knows on leaving college the better he is educated. Education does not *give* knowledge; it fits one to go forth and *get* knowledge. The school is a chopper whetting his axe, or a minor sharpening his tools. That is all. It is not a wood yard or smelting house. The grand aim is to develop the whole being—the intellectual, moral, and physical powers—gradually, calmly, peacefully. To effect this there must be growingly, short, sharp tension of the bow, it is true, but this in the midst of the most placid repose. The opening mind must sit in the cool shade by the still waters; not writhe in the fiery heat and fever of distraction. So far as intellectual education is concerned it simply means a creation of the desire and a development of the capacity and habit of thinking. A greed for universal attainment simply vetoes this. A multiplication of studies, however useful each may be, just crushes development. It is death to education. It means, not strengthening, but paralysis, of the mind. It is a great stone laid on the mouth of all originality. It is dissipation, not concentration. It will bear as its fruit mediocrity or imbecility, nothing higher or better. A people thus educated may make out a hum-drum living, or perhaps be tolerably "smart" in a smart way; but men that shake the world—statesmen, philosophers, divines, discoverers—will never spring from its ranks.

In conclusion, *religion*, when it gets possession of the heart, has also a mighty tendency to expand and strengthen and ennoble the intellect. Had Newton been an agnostic the world would have had no Newton. The mind that would unite within itself precision of thought with all its possible expansion and

power should begin with geometry, thence ranging the divine architecture of the visible in quest of the Great Geometrician and Architect of the universe.

## MARTINEAU'S STUDY OF RELIGION.\*

WE have no doubt that this new work of Dr. Martineau's will take the same high place which has been assigned to his previous work on "Types of Ethical Theory," which many competent persons consider the most important contribution to ethical service made for many a year by an English writer. We will, therefore, endeavour to give our readers a correct and fairly adequate notion of the book which Dr. Martineau undertakes and accomplishes in these handsome and inspiring volumes.

First, then, we must explain what this book is not. It is not a study of revealed religion or of the contents of the Bible. It is not a study of historical religion; of the various forms which religious belief and service have assumed in the history of the human race. Useful as these works must be accounted, Dr. Martineau has undertaken a work no less necessary and quite as useful. He has dedicated to these volumes to what might properly be called the metaphysic of religion. In other words he has attempted to solve the question, whether, on a consideration of the actual phenonema of existence, life and thought, we are bound to believe in a God, and whether we can know anything definite about His character and our own destiny and relations to Him.

It is well known that Dr. Martineau has been for many years a leading Unitarian minister and professor in England. His point of view in these volumes is the simply theistic. We regret to add that it is clearly deistic also; in other words, that whilst he adheres clearly and strongly to a belief in the personality of God, he can hardly be numbered among those who believe in a supernatural revelation in any sense of the word. All this being remembered we are still grateful to Dr. Martineau for what he has here done. With the exception of certain points, to some of which we shall draw attention, we are greatly in agreement with his argument and with his conclusions. We can hardly state the author's plea better than in his own words, the summing up his view of his attempt (Vol. II., p. 139): "The theism," he says, "which we have thus far indicated has been reached by following out two distinct lines of thought, each taking its commencement from a primary axiom of our cognitive nature. The first proceeds from the principle of causality, while the intellect carries with it all its interpretations of external phenonema: the second, from the sense of duty, by which the conscience reads a sacredness in life and puts a divine construction on a large portion of our internal experience. Under the guidance of the former we have

\*A Story of Religion; its Sources and Contents. By James Martineau, D.D., L.L.D., late principal of Manchester (New) College, London. 2 vol's., 8 mo. Macmillan and Rowse & Hutchison, Toronto. \$6.

resolved  
one wise  
of the l  
affinity w  
ness. A  
separate  
quite ev  
our differ  
their par  
alike in

This  
author h  
has succ  
break of  
in the la  
method  
as the N  
a dilige  
shown l  
In his e  
follower  
in his t  
teachin  
line tak  
being  
greatly  
Green  
lays n  
though  
our rea  
illustra  
with c  
existin

On  
he has  
tion.  
its ex  
Methu  
tary c  
to sa  
there  
not, t  
other  
foun  
they  
subli  
ing f  
lectu  
anim  
deat  
that  
but  
who  
sent

O  
'Re  
inva  
rear  
of t  
inq  
der  
livi  
Wi  
rel  
one  
thi  
an  
th  
so  
se