

losopher and artist who can thus deal in block with the great and complex life of a whole society. The requisite combination is realized only in certain rare and high types of mind, and there has been no more brilliant illustration of it than Parkman's volumes afford.

The struggle between the machine-like socialistic despotism of New France and the free and spontaneous political vitality of New England is one of the most instructive object lessons with which the experience of mankind has furnished us. The depth of its significance is equaled by the vastness of its consequences. Never did destiny preside over a more fateful contest; for it determined which kind of political seed should be sown all over the widest and richest political garden plot left untilled in the world. Free industrial England pitted against despotic militant France for the possession of an ancient continent reserved for this decisive struggle, and dragging into the conflict the belated barbarism of the stone age, — such is the wonderful theme which Parkman has treated. When the vividly contrasted modern ideas and personages are set

off against the romantic though lurid background of Indian life, the artistic effect becomes simply magnificent. Never has historian grappled with another such epic theme, save when Herodotus told the story of Greece and Persia, or when Gibbon's pages resounded with the solemn tread of marshaled hosts through a thousand years of change.

Thus great in his natural powers and great in the use he made of them, Parkman was no less great in his occasion and in his theme. Of all American historians he is the most deeply and peculiarly American, yet he is at the same time the broadest and most cosmopolitan. The book which depicts at once the social life of the stone age and the victory of the English political ideal over the ideal which France inherited from imperial Rome is a book for all mankind and for all time. The more adequately men's historic perspective gets adjusted, the greater will it seem. Strong in its individuality and like to nothing beside, it clearly belongs, I think, among the world's few masterpieces of the highest rank, along with the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Gibbon.

John Fiske.

THE ETHICAL PROBLEM OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE political instincts of the people of the United States have led them to seek the best possible system of public schools, and the supreme motive for the expenditure of the vast sums of money that have been voted with great willingness for their foundation and their continued support has been the education of the youth of the country for citizenship. The final test of all citizenship must be an ethical one; and especially is this true in a democracy where the stability of its life depends upon the character of its citizens. With this fact in view, it is perti-

nent to ask whether the public schools are fulfilling the mission for which they were founded.

There has been for some time an increasing interest in the moral aspect of the public school problem. One indication of this is seen in the appearance during the last two years of seven rather notable textbooks upon ethics, especially designed for schools of lower grade. The question that is now asked, however, does not find its answer in any reply given to the query raised as to the wisdom of publishing these books, for it seeks to go

behind the inquiry, Should ethics be taught at all to boys and girls of the age of those in the public schools? It asks whether the problem of public morals is involved in the very nature of the system as such.

No one denies that the education of the thirteen million children in these schools has much to do with the destiny of the republic, nor that the country has placed its future, for good or evil, in the hands of the public school teacher.

The church may have the capacity for the moral training of the youth of the country; but, great as is its influence, the ethico-religious movement is not at present far reaching enough to fashion even the majority of these thirteen million pupils into citizens in whom righteousness shall be the controlling element; and there is no reason for thinking that it will be in the immediate future.

The home comes much nearer meeting the need; but doubtless Mr. G. H. Palmer's statement is correct, in his article *Can Moral Conduct be Taught in Schools?* "The home," he says, "which has hitherto been the fundamental agency for fostering morality in the young, is just now in sore need of repair. We can no longer depend upon it alone for moral guardianship. It must be supplemented, possibly reconstructed." It still does, and always will, train the choice few for leadership; but after enumerating the homes in which the best that was in Puritanism still is the controlling element, and those that develop morality by means of the self-respect engendered by intellectual and æsthetic culture, — in fact, all those in which high ideals predominate, — there is still left a vast number where self-seeking is the main principle of life. If to the number of children in these latter homes are added the thousands who exist with scarcely any trace of home life to shelter them, we shall be forced to admit that there would be a moral crisis if the public school were not doing its beneficent work.

The question still awaits us, however, What is the public school system achieving for public morals?

Just at present there is a movement in various quarters to introduce instruction in the theory of morals into even the lower grades of the schools; but no one seems to be sure that this will not produce self-conscious prigs, or encourage morbid introspection rather than sturdy morality. But all are agreed that it is the function of the public schools — not to say of all schools, for that matter — to produce what some one calls "unconscious rectitude" in these thirteen million children. All appear to believe that development of morality is essential, and few that the teaching of mere ethical theories will be of much value.

The problem involves, then, the study of the system as a system from the standpoint of practical morality, to see if it is a moral force in and of itself. Its power for righteousness depends upon what it is by virtue of its plan, purpose, and scope; upon its spirit, genius, and the manner in which it is realizing the ideal that has brought it into existence.

It is not possible at present to make a comprehensive and accurate study of the moral value of the public school system. The method of examination must be inductive, and the conditions vary so greatly in different communities that it is exceedingly difficult to reach conclusions that are drawn from a sufficiently large number of facts to make one's deductions satisfactory. The literature upon the subject, and in fact upon the general subject of the public schools, especially from a sociological and economic point of view, is exceedingly meagre. A good illustration of this point is the article in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, where, in over one hundred of its large and closely printed pages upon the United States, less than quarter of a page is devoted to this institution, and even what is written is of no special value. Such papers as the articles of Dr. Rice

which have lately appeared in *The Forum* will furnish the basis of other work, and encouragement should be given to such critical examinations of the system; and much more work of this nature must be done before a comprehensive and discriminating thesis can be written upon the real influence of the public schools upon the morals of the country.

Certain conclusions, however, in regard to their power can be reached, and these ought to be stated in an article attempting to give a judicial opinion of their ethical merits. First there should be indicated the points both of direct and of indirect ethical value, and then the lines of weakness or of positive failure.

Modern psychology, leading to the study of the objective manifestations of mind, tells us that "habit covers a very large part of life;" that instincts are simply habits to which there is an innate tendency; and that these habits are due to what is characterized as the "plasticity" of brain matter to outward influences. Whether, for example, as one of our distinguished writers upon psychophysics has told us, the habit of putting one's hands into one's pockets is mechanically nothing but the reflex discharge, or not, the fact remains that "the walking bundle of habits of later years" does spin his fate for good or evil in that plastic state which covers the time when the child is usually a pupil in the public schools. If this is true, there is reason for saying that there is ethical value in the systematic order and discipline that are found in the majority of these schools. The constant and punctual attendance, the orderly arrangement of pupils, together with strict requirements in connection with these matters, fit one for successful business life, and create a sense of responsibility in regard to the use of time. The system of the public schools tends to make the pupil systematic, and helps to produce the accurate and methodical man or woman of later years. The testimony in regard to this is incontrovertible.

More than this, however, there is ethical value in the very conception from which the movement started, and the idea along which it has developed. The notion of self-improvement for a high end has in itself moral worth; for it demands that the youth of the country shall be upright not only because excellence of character is a good in itself, but because it promotes the good of the state. The expenditure of such a large proportion of the public revenues, the erection of so many buildings, the employment of such large numbers of high-minded persons, the creation and constant support of such an elaborate scheme, for the one purpose of producing good citizens, are object lessons that must have great influence upon the public.

What has been said indicates some of the lines in which the schools exert a direct moral influence; but in addition to this a large amount of testimony shows that, especially where there is a compulsory school law, a sense of responsibility has been developed in parents, making them recognize their own obligations. This, the reflex influence of the public schools upon the communities in which the system is at its best, is shown in many ways. Parents whose education has been meagre and faulty have become learners themselves, and have been led for the first time to consider seriously the duties and future of their children; and this thought for the welfare of others has had a wholesome reaction upon their own lives.

In naming the elements that give moral value to the public schools mention should be made of the indirect good accomplished by keeping large numbers of children from the haphazard companionship of the streets, and from idleness and degrading influences. Especially in the larger towns and cities has this been true. To this negative protective good should be added the positive advantage derived from the acquisition of habits of neatness, personal cleanliness, and, in many schools, good manners.

After enumerating these things, which are more or less incidental to the system, and others that might and ought to be considered, it still remains to be said that the greatest ethical value in the public school system is, and must ever be, the intellectual work that is accomplished by it. There can be no doubt that there is a great amount of teaching that is not only unmoral, but positively immoral, in its direct or indirect influence. Recent publications demonstrate this fact, and show that the public schools will be at their best as a moral force when their work is thoroughly scientific.

Their success, then, in achieving the purpose for which they have been created depends primarily upon the character of the instruction that is given in them. It may be true that "pupils will not learn their lessons in arithmetic if they have not already made some progress in concentration, in self-forgetfulness, in acceptance of duty;" but it is equally true that mental exactitude and thoroughness of work, under the influence of a teacher whose method is scientific and whose spirit is earnest, will develop the elements that produce concentration, self-forgetfulness, and dutifulness. The tendency of mechanical, unscientific instruction is towards immorality. Schools that are under the control of selfish officials, with incompetent supervision and antiquated methods of teaching, have no power to quicken those springs of action which are the sources of morality. On the other hand, ethical capacity and moral strength can and ought to be produced by a high-minded instructor in and through the very process of teaching arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Mental activity and intellectual self-respect are important factors in the truest morality. Habits of attention and observation may be developed into self-control, and the power of judgment into capacity for distinguishing between right and wrong. The ability to hold one's self uninterruptedly to any task may

be power for resisting wrong or for the performance of duty.

In this connection mention should be made of a certain force of character which may be produced by the element of continuity in the courses of study through which the pupils are required to pass. So far as these are fitted to the normal, natural method of mental growth in the pupil they have ethical value. Obedience to the laws of mental development is essential to the highest type of manhood, and abnormal, restricted, unnatural mental growth is apt to produce immorality.

The things that have been mentioned lie on the hopeful side of this problem, and on the whole they make the outlook encouraging. They lead, however, to the question, How can an institution which is fraught with so much good, and which is necessary to the life of the state, be still further improved, and how can certain evils within it be eradicated? To do a little in the effort to answer this question, and also that this statement of the moral problem of the public schools may not be one-sided, an examination must be made of the evils that at least modify their usefulness.

Dr. Rice says, in his last article on Our Public School System, "One half the work of placing the schools upon a healthful foundation has been accomplished when the members of the boards of education become endowed with the desire to improve the schools." To accept as final the opinion that they are perfect always results in the evil elements' becoming conspicuous. The most dangerous official is the one who regards no criticism as valid simply because it is uttered against the public schools. Neglect of such an essential institution is not worse than bigoted satisfaction with it and all that pertains to it.

The pride of its friends is that it is a great *system* of education. Mention has already been made of the value of the element of continuity in a course of study,

but there is also a difficulty connected with it that cannot be ignored. The fixed schedule of study is fixed for all; the long courses are, with few exceptions, unmodified for the slow or the quick minds. The only reply the writer has been able to secure to the question, "*What can be done to remedy this?*" has been, "There is no escape from it, except in a few cases where very unusually bright children are promoted more rapidly than the others." The time taken for many children of more than average ability to complete a subject is unreasonably long; but the nature of the child must bend to the system, the system little or not at all to the peculiarities of the pupil. Now, nothing is more important, in creating and preserving "unconscious rectitude," than the element of spontaneity, and there can be no doubt that many children who pass through the long years spent in the public schools lose in this respect rather than gain. The kindergarten is obviating this danger somewhat; but wherever there is a suppressed mental life there must exist, in some degree at least, a suppressed moral nature: there is a logical connection between the inflexible system that holds a responsive, sensitive child in its grasp for years, and mental reactions that too often develop into moral weakness, and occasionally into vice. This tendency is, no doubt, not entirely the fault of the system, as a hard-and-fast system, but in a large degree of those unscientific methods which merely tax the memory, stunt rather than develop the reasoning faculty, and usually make the child unhappy, and sometimes morbid. President Eliot has shown that there is a waste of time in the student life by keeping pupils too long on subjects that should be covered in a much shorter period. But this loss of time has a more important bearing than the one which he considers. The attempt to save time is important; the attempt to save the moral nature is far more important. The destruction of interest and enthusiasm in a child has

more than an intellectual significance; it interferes as well with his moral development. If one believes that there are certain definite laws for the growth of the soul, which have been discovered by the world's great teachers, he ought also to believe that the violation of these laws in the training of children must react on the moral as well as on the mental life of those who can least afford to pay the penalty. The destruction of individuality brutalizes a nature, and there is constant danger of this where mere system is conspicuous and becomes the controlling element. It is exceedingly difficult for an instructor to hold the interest and develop the enthusiasm of a pupil after an appropriate amount of time has been given to any one subject; and although it is true that the teacher is the most important factor in connection with the system, and that sing-song recitations and pure memorizing will, under any condition of affairs, produce unscientific results, yet the best teacher is influenced by the system under which he teaches. There can be no doubt that many children who pass through the long years of continuous school life lose in some degree the quality of spontaneity, and that the loss of it is accountable for the lack of some of those finer sentiments that have always been the glory and the beauty of human life.

No discussion of the moral problems of the public school system would be satisfactory if reference were not made to what has, perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly, been called "the pauperizing tendency of the public school system." Free tuition has led to free textbooks, until the principle has been clearly laid down that the State must furnish, without charge, to all its children whatever education they desire. Especially in the West has this been carried to its logical extreme, and the state university is asked to provide the highest special education not only without charge for tuition, use of buildings and apparatus, but in

some cases with free rooms that are furnished and warmed at the expense of the State. In other words, it is claimed that no money equivalent should be given for the benefit received and the service rendered. Parent and pupil can take from the State, but, except in what the pupil may return through his better preparation for citizenship, nothing is to be given for that which has been bestowed; and with large numbers of persons there is no sense of obligation whatever in the matter. It is said by those who oppose the extreme form which this theory has taken that it carries the paternal feature of government to a dangerous extent; that it makes the citizen selfish and grasping; that it may, and in many cases undoubtedly does, minister to that spirit which characterizes much of our American life, — the spirit that ever asks, What shall we have? and seldom, What shall we give? and which is the bane of our present social order. It is further claimed that the results of this are already apparent in our national life; that the spirit which made our pension system is encouraged and developed by the "pauperizing tendency in the public school system."

Although it has been difficult to secure accurate information in regard to the results of this "free element" in education, it has become only too evident that many parents look upon the teachers as if they were servants; demanding everything from the school without any idea that they owe anything in return. Such facts as these — and there are many others which might be cited — indicate some of the evil results of the plan, and make it very clear that here is an actual danger to the higher ethical conditions. We should carefully guard our national life at this point.

There seems to be no escape from this free element and its logical results. All that can be done is to ward off the possible danger by constantly holding before the pupils the idea that they must repay the State in good citizenship.

Impurity may not be a greater evil in public than in private schools; but there are certain conditions in the democratic commingling of children in the former which make it more than a possible evil. There can be little or no social distinction except that growing out of the location of the school buildings. There is the "up town" and the "down town" school; but if a pupil is admitted into the schools at all, there can be no law requiring him to be in one building rather than in another, except the regulation that arises from residence in a particular locality; and even this is not enforced in some cities and towns. The very idea of the public school makes any classification upon social and ethical grounds an impossibility. There are localities where this evil of impurity is nothing more than a potential danger; but there are very many others where it is a real evil. On the part of teachers there is a growing intelligence concerning it, and a greater vigilance in guarding against it. Those who do realize its enormity, and meet it aright, have secured results that ought to encourage all others; but there should be a most stringent requirement in this matter in defining the teacher's duties. In some of the best normal schools the students have the plainest and clearest instruction upon this subject. They are told the habits for which they are to watch, and the best ways to meet the evil of impurity in whatever form it is present among children. But such preparation is far from universal. Not many years ago, a graduate of one of these schools said that the teacher who gave her class instruction on this subject asked its members how many of them had not known of at least the existence of a vile vocabulary of words among their schoolmates. All but two of the large class replied that during their early life in the public schools they had heard what they could never forget, though no words could express the longing they felt to blot it from their memo-

ries ; and in looking back from their more mature standpoint, it seemed to them that the teachers must have felt no special duty in the matter. These were young women from the public schools of one of the older States. There is no doubt, however, that each year our public school teachers have an increasing sense of responsibility for purity in thought and word of the children under their care.

The difficulties with which they have to contend are very great. The two or three children who, with an air of mystery, bring information in regard to forms of impurity have great power for mischief, especially when they put a base interpretation upon things that are in themselves pure ; and the quick imagination of a child, together with the fact that this information is not guarded, as it would be if it came from an older and a wise person, makes it doubly dangerous. The testimony of one teacher, which has been repeated by many, is to the effect that the large majority of children in the public schools know, theoretically, as much about the forms of impurity at twelve and fourteen as they ever will. Thus the situation calls for teachers wise in heart and head, watchful in regard to this danger, and skillful in meeting it ; for the sense of disgrace that comes to many children from the mere acquisition of this information is a blow to that peculiar delicacy of feeling which exists with the highest morality. In many cases the inherent force of home training preserves the child from radical injury ; but some children never escape the wrong that is done them, others are led into practices that seriously modify their usefulness, while still others are ruined.

The public school is a normal outgrowth of our social and political order, and its tendencies are the logical outcome of this order. Its dangers are those that exist in this democratic state, but it lies in the power of the schools to eradicate much of the evil in the state.

It is difficult to say how this is to be accomplished, but certainly the most effective method will be along the line of the general improvement of the system.

This improvement will be brought about by the divorce of the control of the schools from partisan politics ; by the appointment of teachers for merit only, merit in which force of character should be regarded as a *sine qua non* ; by the introduction of scientific instruction to the exclusion of mechanical methods ; and by constantly making prominent the idea that the pupils are being fitted for citizenship and actual service. Something could also be said in regard to the necessity of a larger number of teachers, in order that the element of personal influence may be greater and more immediate.

As this paper is only a statement of the ethical problem of the public schools, and not an attempt to solve it, it is not within its province to discuss the many possible remedies that have been suggested by teachers and others who are studying this question. Few hesitate to say that there are defects in the system, and possible moral dangers associated with it, against which our national life should be guarded with great wisdom and persistence.

The public school stands in close relationship to every moral problem in the republic. The problem of municipal government is pressing upon thoughtful citizens to-day, and many schemes are devised to make it impossible for dishonest politicians to practice their dishonesty and selfishness ; but a radical cure of this and all other evils in the body politic can be effected only by the creation of upright citizens. A majority of the voters receive their only training in the public schools. If low and selfish aims rule their conduct ; if they lack the possibility of enthusiasm for a high purpose ; if, in short, their lives are wanting in principle, it is not enough to say that demoralizing influences overthrow the good wrought within the

schools, because the business of the schools is so to establish morality that it cannot be overthrown by evil circumstances in after life. For, as has already been pointed out, the church and the home of the present day are not able to perform this work, and therefore the schools, because of the very idea which underlies their foundation and secures their continued support, and because of the amount of time which the child necessarily spends in them, must be held largely responsible for the foundation of character; in other words, for the training of upright and patriotic citizens. This, as has just been said, is their *business*. School boards and teachers are needed who realize this important fact, and who are willing and able to make the development of principle the central point in their work.

No one who examines carefully the present political and social order can fail to notice that there is a spirit of self-seeking abroad that is destructive of the noblest virtues and the highest ethical conditions; that vast numbers of citizens are controlled by the passion for getting rather than for giving. This is the dan-

gerous element in the social problem. It is the bane of that partisanship that is ever willing to sacrifice the state for party supremacy; it is the moral obliquity of the pauper and the criminal, who are ever seeking to get something without rendering a fair and just equivalent. Is the public school laying its foundation deep enough? Has it struck its roots into the moral nature of these thirteen million children? These are the questions that serious and earnest people are asking. There is a striking similarity between the excellencies in our national life and the excellencies in our public school system. There is also a striking similarity between the evils in both. Can it not then be said that the eradication of the evils in the public schools will have very much to do with their eradication in the life of the state?

To touch the springs of action in these pupils is to touch the very sources of power in the national life; and there is no opportunity to be compared with that offered by the public schools. The institution is so sacred, so far reaching in its influence, that it must be rescued from political strife and partisan narrowness.

William Frederick Slocum, Jr.

HENRY VAUGHAN THE SILURIST.

In his own person Henry Vaughan left no trace in society. His life seemed to slip by like the running water on which he was forever gazing and moralizing, and his memory met early with the fate which he hardly foresaw. Descended from the royal chiefs of southern Wales, whom Tacitus mentions, and whose abode, in the day of Roman domination, was in the district called Siluria, he styled himself the Silurist upon his title-pages; and he keeps the distinctive name in the humblest of epitaphs, close by his life-long home in the glorious valley of the

Usk and the little Honddu, under the shadow of Tretower, the ruined castle of his race, and of Pen-y-Fan and his kindred peaks. What we know of him is a sort of pastoral: how he was born, the son of a poor gentleman, in 1621, at Newton St. Bridget, in the old house yet asleep on the road between Brecon and Crickhowel; how he went up to Oxford, Laud's Oxford, with Thomas, his twin, as a boy of sixteen, to be entered at Jesus College; how he took his degree (just where and when no one can discover), and came back, after a London