

# Education in New Zealand.

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## I.

Our century is remarkable for anything, it is for its progress in educational science. Yet however vain of this advance, and however clearly convinced of the pressing need for education among a people vested with full powers of self-government, we cannot yet congratulate ourselves on having perfected a system of popular and universal instruction. There are encouraging and increasing signs of an impartial spirit of enquiry into the methods and results of our costly educative machinery. These are not confined to educational experts; we find the Boards of Education and the School Committees throughout the colony expressing their dissatisfaction with the present system in resolutions forwarded to the Government. The columns of the Press, too, are becoming more and more a battlefield for the champions of rival educational theories. Perhaps, then, a series of articles dealing with our system in its entirety and inspired and guided by an intimate first hand knowledge of all its grades, may not be ill-timed. It is my purpose to treat first of primary education under the various heads of syllabus of instruction, classification, examination and inspection, training and examination of teachers, administration, technical schools, then of the secondary school system, concluding with a survey of the university work and methods.

In 1877 our efforts towards education, till then purely local, were systematised by the Hon. C. C. Bowen's Education Bill. In the course of his speech introducing the Bill, Mr Bowen touched upon the ideals the proposed system had in view. It aimed at giving the people that habit of self-control which is absolutely necessary for a civil state of

society, at preventing them from falling into a state of absolute brutishness and crime, and at affording every colonist the right to instruction calculated to improve his intellectual powers and to serve him in good stead in his station in life. All this is substantially what the greatest educators of the day assert to be the chief end of education—the formation of character, by the bettering of the will and the improvement of the intellect. When, however, we consider the limited time a child spends at school, we see that all our education can attempt is to give the impulse towards self-culture and to guide it in its earliest and most faltering steps. To attempt more than this is as fatal to success as the rejection or neglect of any educational ideal at all.

Though the framers of our system clearly outline the ideal towards which they wished their educators to work, it is to be feared that the majority of our teachers have lost all thought of it in the more immediate claims of the actual routine of the schools. It is this that seems paramount to them, nor shall we wonder at it when we later on consider what their training has been, and how heavily the incubus of the syllabus and examinations weighs upon them. They have received little impetus to philosophise even in the most modest way upon the duties of their profession—surely the noblest upon earth—and should they by nature feel the impulse, their view of the ultimate product they are to evolve is obstructed by the multiplicity of means they are called upon to use. They have little time for anything but the cramming of their pupils' minds with facts that they themselves have often but imperfectly digested.

It has undoubtedly resulted that, whatever may have been the intentions of its originators,