

Education in New Zealand.

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III.



SCIENTIFICALLY - CONCEIVED curriculum is, of course, far from being the only essential of a well-ordered system of education. The point upon which the whole scheme turns is the quality of the teaching; this it is which makes or mars the success of whatever regulations the statecraft and political wisdom of the legislator have formulated. The end of all educational effort, as I have before mentioned, is the formation of character, and it is the teacher, with the parents, and in a less degree the rest of the child's intimate acquaintances, who mould the character of our youth. The method of training our teachers, and the conditions upon which they are employed, therefore, demands the gravest consideration.

The first point to which an aspirant of the teaching profession should give his earnest attention, is an adequate conception of the ends of education. He must, of course, go farther than this; since many men are excellent judges of what constitutes a well-trained mind, but poor shapers of means to that end. No teacher has the slightest chance of succeeding in his work, unless he has clear insight into the latter, unless he can accustom himself to reason concerning the reaction of method upon method, to control the many and various wheels of the complex educational machinery, all cogged and fitted into one another so as to work with the least friction and loss of effort. This implies deep knowledge of the workings of the human mind and soul, since his task is especially to influence existing, and to develop new traits of character, to form mental power and habit. He must not only choose the right methods, but he must apply them at the right times. He must neither

anticipate or neglect the chronological appearance of each mental faculty according to the normal growth of the human mind. The forced hothouse type of scholar is as ill fitted to withstand the trying blasts from the world that lies beyond the schoolroom, as the child whose powers are stunted and crabbed. The teacher must watch nature closely, and follow her times and ways in fostering mental growth. Thus only will he take rank as a true moral artist, framing as well as instructing and forcing the world to recognise the importance of his mission.

What other profession has so noble an end? Understand its objects aright, and every other calling seems slight and trivial, so heavily fraught is it with teeming possibilities for the development of the individual and the race. But the nobility of the end allotted it, is equalled by the difficulties besetting the path that leads to that end. What other profession, then, demands more clearly and imperatively thorough preparation for those who are to follow it? The soldier who is to blow the human soul from its tenement, is trained and re-trained, day in, day out; but he who receives that soul almost fresh from its Maker, as yet unspotted by the vices, or uncramped by the prejudices, of the world, who is free to make it what he lists, comes not to his divinely-allotted work after many prayers and fastings, but jauntily confident with the self-centred confidence born of ignorance, even dreaming not of the dread potentialities for good or evil he is called upon to influence—scratching the huge globe of the human intelligence with his educational "culture." Ignorance is a giant to conquer. Why not gird on all the weapons our