

Possibilities of New Zealand Literature.

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THE accusation has been brought against us that we of New Zealand make no strides forward in the literary world. In a letter published a short time ago in one of our local papers, referring to our young men and maidens, I read that "unfortunately, the sumptuous upholstery of the sky, the richly-jewelled heavens above, the iridescent loveliness of her diversified landscapes around, fail to awaken within their minds those noble responses, high resolves, good pursuits and aspirations which all true friends of the colony would rejoice to behold. Out of the ranks there rise but few botanists, naturalists, geologists, moralists, poets or astronomers."

Such is only one out of the many inferences drawn by superficial observers in different parts of the colony, and it is for this Society to show the injustice of imputations, which, if allowed to continue, may tend to sap the vigour of our youth, and make them what they are credited with being.

In the first place, we are too apt to forget the tender age of our land. It is only a child struggling to create for itself recognition from the mother countries of the world. The victory cannot be won in a day. How many centuries did it take the British race to create a handful of writers and scientists? It may be argued that we started on a better footing, that our civilisation was worked out for us by our past and gone British ancestors. But in answer to this, I say that even though we were civilised, yet we were not without vast difficulties.

The pioneers had to fight battles with fire, forest and flood, and to make for themselves habitations. Hard, unremitting toil was

theirs; and where incessant manual labour is a necessity of existence, there must be, until the day of conquest, an apparent neglect of the fine arts. The struggle did not end with one generation, and we, the grand-children of buried veterans, have only just begun to realise that we bear in our veins the blood of adventurous spirit, of resolute will, of indomitable perseverance, which those grand types of manhood and womanhood brought into the new country. We are just getting time to look around us, to perceive our opportunities, and to gain leisure to use them. Peace and undisturbed repose are not ours, nor do we need these always. We have still continual turmoil, social, political, religious; we are in the midst of experiments, all of which cannot be successful, but all of which are conducive to education and experience. But we can so far count our repose—that we are reaping the fruit of much of the seed sown in the fallow, and that we have a multitude of gifts for which to be grateful.

We are slowly, but as surely, massing into a nation; the time has not yet come for us to rest on our oars, but it is approaching nearer and nearer, and some day we shall awake to the knowledge that we possess as many poets and philosophers as any nation had at a similar period of its history.

Having called your attention to the youth of the colony, I must now remind you of the maxim laid down by a certain author—that no man should write till he is forty years of age. This may account for our apparent unproductiveness. A young writer is sensitive of criticism, and hesitates before exposing his tender children to the jeers of an unappreciative public. And, in this respect, I may remark, by the way, that this Association is doing excellent work by giving its young members the benefit of that criticism and