

the public service, and it ought to connote a fair measure of sound attainment at the final stage of the training bestowed by an elementary school.

The exact scope of this training and its general tendencies are topics which of late years have received much anxious consideration and have furnished ample material for discussion. On neither issue has the final word been spoken, for "with the process of the suns" the circle of human interests must still widen, the cry of human needs become more bitter. It behoves us, then, to recognise cheerfully our limitations, to provide as best we can for present wants, to glean from past systems whatever is fundamentally and permanently true, and to meet altered conditions of life and new conceptions of its duties with higher aims, with readjusted methods, and with confidence in the future.

The necessity imposed upon the State to provide a sound and useful system of elementary education—a necessity voiced in Lord Derby's cynical comment many years ago—is even more urgent now than it was in his day. The importance of the problem and the weighty issues involved in its complete solution have not been disregarded in New Zealand; but, however deep our gratitude for much that was accomplished in the earlier stages of our national system, we are constrained to note with warm admiration the high courage, the enlightened aims, and the genuine sympathy which of late years have inspired the educational policy of the Dominion, and which justify our belief that "forty years onward" the record of such services as have recently been rendered will fill some of the brightest pages of its story.

International rivalries at present are probably manifested most keenly in a general struggle for commercial and industrial supremacy. Hence, to the man of the world, as he is apt to describe himself, it seems all-important that the training of the young mind should be severely practical. The exact bearing of this practical training is subject to a wide variety of interpretation, and the impracticable nature of a demand for it in the earlier stages of education becomes fairly evident when we seek some closer definition of those departments of activity towards which it should be directed. Wiser heads than ours and pens more facile have again and again demonstrated the utter fatuity of all attempts to specialise the work of an elementary school. Practical training dissociated from recognition of underlying principles, and resting on no broad basis of sound general attainment, becomes mere rule of thumb, standing on all-fours with that of the learned pig or the performing pony. In the building and strengthening of character heart-culture, too, is all-important. Omniscience has endowed the child-mind with a lively imagination and an ever-active capacity for round-eyed wonder which it would be churlish to ignore. The world will be none the poorer if here and there are found ears prompt to catch an echo from the "horns of elf-land", or a mental vision dowered with the splendour of its "unsubstantial glory." We maintain, therefore, that the true function of the elementary school is to train intelligent and loyal citizens, not to equip them for special callings. In a democratic community, moreover, while the privileges of citizenship are not few, its responsibilities are too often overlooked. On these grounds alone the instinct of self-preservation and due regard for the freedom we enjoy should convince all concerned that the mere imparting of knowledge is only a portion of the teacher's work—that it is equally a duty to develop some faculty for clear thinking, some capacity to discriminate between reality and sham. In the absence of such endowment the charlatan and the quack find ready and willing victims—their vocation is easy and its profits are assured.

But, while strongly opposed to a purely practical scheme of training, we do regard with interest and satisfaction the practical trend of recent modifications in the programme of instruction. The syllabus of 1878 was, of its kind, an excellent one, in many respects liberal and comprehensive beyond those adopted at that time in other English-speaking communities. In common with others of the type then extant it was, however, bookish in its tendencies, and gave perhaps undue prominence to those features now known as the "scholastic arts." Formal grammar as one of these has possibly suffered from some excess of zeal in a subsequent trimming process, but arithmetic has been brought into closer touch with every-day requirements, work of direct practical value being substituted for that which was largely theoretical and abstract. But, in spite of all this, the treatment of arithmetic is still unfortunately complicated, the absurd inconsistencies of the various "tables" continuing to perplex the juvenile mind, to hamper business transactions, and to clog the wheels of British trade. If advocates of progress and apostles of reform could only appreciate the extent to which valuable time is wasted in school, and profitable openings are sacrificed in the sphere of commerce, prompt action would be taken to secure the introduction of a rational and uniform system of weights, measures, and coinage throughout Australasia, if not throughout the Empire. For thirty years some knowledge of the metric system has been laid down as part of the arithmetic prescribed for Sixth Standard; teachers, with varying degrees of emphasis, have elucidated its advantages, and pupils, sceptical as to these in the absence of public interest in the question, have accepted its problems with the stolid philosophy characteristic of their kind, plodding through them because, to use their own laconic idiom, they "jolly well have to," and very likely bent on forgetting them at the first safe opportunity. The end we long for seems yet remote; but we feel that in this case public apathy is the offspring of general ignorance, and we are convinced that the people of the Dominion do not realise the fact that our existing system (or lack of one) in weights, measures, and money practically means wasting at least six months of the school life of every pupil remaining to qualify for the proficiency certificate. Speculation regarding the disposal of wasted time hardly needs to be introduced at this stage.

On the later development of drawing we write with greater satisfaction. Its treatment has been directed towards ends of practical utility as well as to the cultivation of correct taste, while its interest to the pupil and its potency as a training for hand and eye have gained much from the change.

Of the advance that has been made in composition, both oral and written, a great deal could be said. Nature-study, in which a goodly number of North Canterbury teachers had done sound work for many a year prior to its appearance as a specific subject in the syllabus, has proved an attractive feature of the new routine, stimulating intellectual curiosity, cultivating powers of observation, and