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RESOLUTION FROM POETS' CORNER

RESOLUTION of the Group of Five appointed by the Poets' Corner Branch of the Society of Authors, Poets, and Playwrights.

Constitution of the Committee:

Wm. Shakespeare, Actor and Playwright.

*Francis Bacon, Essayist and Jurist.
Dr. Samuel Johnson, Lexicographer (Chairman).

John Milton, Poet and Civil Servant.
Charles Dickens, Author.

RESOLVED: That the attention of those responsible for adopting (or not adopting) the implications of the Report on The Post-Primary Curriculum in His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand be reminded of the words of Marcus Aurelius: "If thou



Signed: Saml. Johnson, Verulum, Shakespeare, John Milton, Charles Dickens.

thinkest twice before thou speakest once, thou wilt speak twice the better for it."

AT a largely-attended meeting held in the South Transept of Westminster Abbey the report of the Committee appointed by the New Zealand Minister of Education in November, 1942, to consider The Post-Primary School Curriculum, was discussed, special attention being given to that part of Chapter IV, "The Common Core," sub-titled "ENGLISH." In attendance were such well-known writers as Joseph Addison, Robert Browning, Geoffrey Chaucer, Abraham Cowley, John Dryden, Oliver Goldsmith, Ben Jonson, Edmund Spenser, and Lord Tennyson, in addition to the Group of Five, all of whom had learned to write under the old system, and grave doubts were expressed concerning the possibility of suppressing literary ability, or "flair," or even genius, in the children attending post-primary schools in New Zealand.

In the preliminary discussion Ben Jonson pointed out that one of the Group of Five (John Milton) had matriculated on April 9, 1625, and it did not seem to have done him any harm: on the contrary he had written some quite good stuff. The training in English that was good enough for John Milton, urged Ben Jonson, should be good enough for New Zealand children to-day.

Oliver Goldsmith disagreed with this view, saying that all children were not endowed with the same amount of grey matter as Milton, and a different system of education might produce more Miltons in New Zealand who were not mute and inglorious. John Dryden said that all babies were alike when born, whether or not they afterwards became poets depending mostly on what



*Also known as Baron of Verulum, Viscount St. Alban, and (by some) as the author of Shakespeare's Plays.

was drummed into their thick pates during their impressionable years. Geoffrey Chaucer expressed the opinion that, if English was not to be taught in New Zealand, as it had been taught in England for 700 years, then he was afraid that no New Zealander would ever attain the honour of joining their society in Poets' Corner. This was disappointing, personally to him, because he understood that New Zealand was now over 100 years old, and he had been hoping that during the next hundred or two hundred years, at least one New Zealander would gain what was, after all, something worth having. The growth of a national culture, he added, was a long and slow process. To produce one literary genius might take 200 years, starting from scratch, but if the teaching of English in New Zealand were to be subject to passing whims or impetuous desire for change, then he was afraid that they must look elsewhere for new and honourable members of their society.

Report of an Immaterial Debate on the Astral Plane, about Projected Changes in New Zealand Education—As recorded for "The Listener" by KINGSLEY BRADY

The speaker was listened to with all the respect due to such a venerable member, but some of those present disagreed: Edmund Spenser pointed out that perhaps New Zealand did not wish to be represented in Poets' Corner, and might prefer instead honours at Blackheath or Twickenham. Ben Johnson mentioned that Alexander Pope had achieved international honours at Twickenham.

The preliminary discussion then closed, and the Group of Five, before adopting its resolution, questioned a New Zealander whom Lord Macaulay had found loitering on the local bridge calmly surveying the ruins of a brace of Heinkels rusting on the strand of the Thames.

"In this report," said John Milton (who had vacated his niche at St. Giles's, Cripplegate, specially to take part in this discussion), "stress is laid on functional training. Is that nice? Would not a dimensionless syllabus be more in

(Continued on next page)