

AN EDUCATED PEOPLE.

THE FOUNDATION OF EVERY STATE AND EMPIRE.

To one of the philosophers of ancient Greece is credited the statement that "the foundation of every state is the education of its youth." Time has wrought many changes of opinions concerning almost every conceivable subject; but standing out, beacon like, amidst these many conflicting opinions is one that admits of no modification, and which time can not be said to stale. "The philosophers," said Findlay, Professor of Education in Manchester, "who differ in every thing else, agree in maintaining that the progress of mankind depends upon education; for defined in the broadest terms, education is no more and no less than the provision that mankind has to make for the progress of the species to which he belongs—i.e., civilised man."

History—ancient, mediaeval, modern—shows us in no unmistakable manner that education rightly interpreted and rightly utilised is the saving factor in the development of the nation. In our own times the great world war is bringing forcibly home to us the reflection that national survival is dependent largely upon national efficiency, which latter depends upon the strength and stability of its super-structure to an educational basis embodying that which is best morally, physically and intellectually.

There are associated to-day with educational thought and enquiry issues of the very greatest and gravest national importance, and if we are to carry forward successfully the work of civilisation in the name of which our brave men—and women too—have shed blood, we must be alive to the fact that the great reconstructive work ahead of us can be adequately appreciated and carried out only by a National Educational organisation complete in its various aspects.

It will be necessary after this war to establish new standards of value in our judgment of what makes life worth living, to the end that a more kindly spirit of fellowship between class and class and between man and man may be born of a finer appreciation of the meaning and value of co-operation. "That which occupies the mind enters into the conduct, just as that which is near the heart invades the intelligence and what enters into conduct fashions fate."

If, then, education is to become a vitalising dynamic force in the community, making for efficiency amongst the unity of the nation, there must be a united purposeful effort made by the people themselves to raise our educational system to a higher plane that it may become expressive of the best ideals of an educated democracy.

The New Zealand Educational Institute is to-day testing the people of the Dominion in terms of these ideals, as to the reality of their interest in the education of their boys and girls—the coming legislators of the nation. No greater asset has the nation than the child—no greater responsibility has it than the education of the child.

We claim then for the child the very best that the State can give in the direction of adequate educational equipment, to the end that our nation may the better face and handle the problems of the future as a nation of trained character and robust physique.

The Hon. Mr Hanan, Minister for Education, speaking at Palmerston North recently, said, "We will not attain to that position among the nations to which we aspire until we make education our leading industry." This surely implies the greatness of the responsibility of determining the educational ways of our nation. It positively indicates a vital interference with its very soul.

Is there any disposition to-day, let us ask, on the part of the people of this Dominion to place education on this high pedestal? Is there any conclusive evidence of any profound belief in education on our part as a people? The man in the street is hardly ready to endorse the conviction of R. L. Stevenson, that "To be wholly devoted to some intellectual exercise is to have succeeded in life." By success we mean something different.

It is interesting at times to note the care with which we discriminate between matters mutually related. Take for example health of mind and health of body. These two are surely complementary, vitally depending the one upon the other, but one would hardly think so, in view of the fact that although sanitation is rightly regarded as being an indispensable condition of national well-being, education is not so regarded. It is one of the things which can be starved in the interests of war economy. One large City Council exposed its intelligence in this direction soon after the war began by withholding a grant of £50

which it had made a few years previously to the School of Social Studies!

How can we hope to retain our high position among the nations of the earth if we fail to provide adequately for the educational equipment of the units which enter into the composition of the State? Dr T. A. Smith, in his illuminating work, "The Soul of Germany," tells us that the various States spare no expense whatever in making their universities the finest in the world, with the result that in medicine, experimental science, and so on, the institutes have become models for other countries. In December, 1914, the Bavarian Government granted the funds for building a new Technological Chemistry Institute in Erlangen. Thus even in war time, the Government intends to see that the universities and schools do not go short. Our Government, of course, has yet to be convinced that such a procedure is not disadvantageous to the best interests of the Dominion and the Empire.

We fairly state the case, we believe, when we say that war or no war education is a vital necessity, and we should be satisfied with nothing savouring of the makeshift. Our educational machinery should be such as to reflect the highest credit upon those directly responsible for it. Coming to actual conditions, what do we find?

Thousands of our children are spending their school-days—the impressionable days of their lives—in dingy buildings, in rooms dimly lit, overcrowded and under-ventilated, and in this condition of affairs we quietly acquiesce. The schools of our grandparents are the schools of the grandchildren, and we are quite satisfied that they should be so, for we have not yet caught the spirit of the vital national importance of Education.

Let us look now to the teacher problem. We are officially assured of a most acute shortage in the teaching ranks. Men are not forthcoming. Obviously in the long run the only way to obtain an adequate supply of adequate teachers is to pay adequate salaries. The strengthening of the teaching force is an economic problem, and it is by economic inducements alone that a satisfactory and permanent solution can be found.

Knowing the facts, what are we going to do? Some point to the war to-day, and say that educational reform must stand in abeyance because of it. But this condition of affairs existed