

EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS.

At the time when the Education Act of 1877 was passed our Colony was almost in its infancy, and education was viewed largely as a luxury. The three R's were believed to be sufficient for those who had to make their way in life.

The change in social and industrial life, due to the application of science to industry, has opened up for our children new and varied opportunities, and requires a better and more varied equipment than was needed forty years ago. Every boy and girl to-day must be trained, not merely to become a wage-earner, but also to fulfil the duties of a citizen. The schooling that was found sufficient for those times and conditions is, neither in kind nor in degree, suitable for to-day. The average life of to-day requires, in addition to an accurate knowledge of fundamentals, an alert and active mind, a well-developed imagination, a power to reason as to cause and effect, a skill in the use of the hands; while the strenuous days before us can be met only by those whose moral and physical equipment has received every care.

Alongside of this widened conception of the province of school education, there has grown up on the part of both thinkers and teachers a keen desire to improve the methods of teaching, in order that the children may receive the full benefit of this more comprehensive view of education. It will be evident that the teaching staff, buildings and equipment suited to the earlier scope of education, can in no way meet the greater aims of to-day. It is pertinent in this connection to enquire as to the qualification of our teachers for the work that now faces them. The day is far past—we would fain hope—when the failure in other walks of life has only to buy a cane in order to secure a position as a guide to youth. A few figures will help to indicate the present condition of things:

In 1915, there were under the Education Department 4668 adult teachers in the primary schools. Of these 1370 were uncertificated, while 1076 of these had no recognised examination status at all. Of the total number of teachers only 1568 had any educational standing above that of the matriculation examination. And yet neither a doctor, nor a lawyer can commence his

professional training until he has passed that examination. In view of these facts, can it be claimed that our teaching staff is qualified educationally for the important work given into their hands? What inducement is there for highly-educated young men and women to enter the profession? An average salary of about three pounds per week. It cannot be stressed too strongly or reiterated too often that the trained teacher is the key that will open the door to the improved education of our future citizens.

As a result of the shortage of trained teachers, modern methods and ideals cannot be applied effectively. How can a teacher know the mental and physical make-up of sixty, seventy or eighty children? These unwieldy numbers make it necessary for pupils to be drilled, not taught, in the mass. Any inducement to encourage individuality is promptly checked by the task of disciplining the crowd.

When we turn to the buildings doing duty to-day as schools, we find the same failure to adapt our means to our growing needs. Many of the buildings are old, of poor design, without proper attention to ventilation and to lighting; while the requirements of new and approved methods are seldom given consideration.

Let anyone read one of the many books on the Montessori system of teaching infants, and then visit the infant department of any of our large schools. He will receive a very striking illustration of the futility of attempting to make bricks without straw.

If our nation is to hold its own in the coming commercial and industrial competition between nation and nation our system of education must be reconstructed with a view to greater efficiency. I have endeavoured to point out one or two of the more pressing needs. These can be met only by the public realising the responsibility resting upon them for the welfare of the rising generation of citizens. When they do this they will demand, and by demanding will obtain, the improvements so urgently needed. Education Boards, Committees and teachers are doing what they can. The Department is hampered by want of money, although they know, and are anxious to remedy, the defects of our system. Upon the people themselves, and upon them solely, must rest the onus of improvement.

D. W. LOW.

TWO WORDS FROM RUSKIN.

The sensibility of the nation is indicated by the fineness of its customs; its courage, continence and self-respect by its persistence in them. By sensibility I mean its natural perception of beauty, fitness and rightness; or of what is lovely, decent and just; faculties dependent much on race, and the primal signs of fine breeding in man; but cultivable also by education, and necessarily perishing without it. True education has, indeed, no other function than the development of these faculties, and of the relative will. It has been the great error of modern intelligence to mistake science for education. You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not, but by making him what he was not.

Since the essence of wealth consists in power over men, will it not follow that the nobler and the more in number the persons are over whom it has power, the greater the wealth? Perhaps it may even appear, after some consideration, that the persons themselves are the wealth, that these pieces of gold with which we are in the habit of guiding them are, in fact, nothing more than a kind of Byzantine harness or trappings, very glittering and beautiful in barbaric sight, wherewith we bridle the creatures; but that if these same living creatures could be guided without the fretting and jingling of the Byzants in their mouths and ears, they might themselves be more valuable than their bridles. In fact, it may be discovered that the true veins of wealth are purple—and not in rock, but in flesh—perhaps even that the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed and happy-hearted human creatures. Our modern wealth, I think, has rather a tendency the other way—most political economists appearing to consider multitudes of human creatures not conducive to wealth, or at best conducive to it only by remaining in a dim-eyed and narrow-chested state of being.

Last January Idaho became a Prohibition State, and now for the first time in her history the gaol is empty. The local paper announced this fact by inserting the following advertisement:—"For Rent—Several rooms, large and small; centrally located; plainly but durably furnished; efficient attendance; meals free. Apply to the Sheriff Pfest, Ada County Gaol."