

that though it may be unwise or impracticable to abolish the rural school, there is a possibility of so remodelling its curriculum as virtually to keep the bulk of the rural population *adscriptos glebae*, or at any rate to arrest a process of unpalatable economic change.

Waiving for the moment all question as to the rightness of the intention, I greatly doubt whether it could be put into practice. The school, it is true, is a potent factor in social progress, but it is not easy to withstand or reverse certain penetrating social tendencies by means of the school and of the school alone. The school can be got to co-operate with progress, or it may remain sleepy and dull; but the third alternative, namely, using it as the instrument of reaction, looks easier on paper than hitherto it has proved to be in practice. Great social and spiritual movements are in the air. They are as pervasive as air. The school may affect to ignore or may even protest against them, but, in so far as an intellectual or social change has become economically or spiritually inevitable, it will pay as little heed to the embargo of the school as the cuckoo did to the stone wall in Borrowdale. Great tidal movements of economic or spiritual change sweep over the world with irresistible force; walls and windows cannot withstand them. They always produce some mischief, always much discomfort, always disturbance and pain. But they prevail because they are needed, and, after a time, things right themselves on the new plane. What the school can do is to bend all its power to the task of understanding the inner significance of each new and perturbing movement. It should diagnose the symptoms, and seek to detect, and then bravely to remedy the evil against which the movement is a needful, though a more or less unconscious, protest. Then, but not till then, will it be in a position to influence the movement through its sympathetic understanding of it.

Then, but not till then, will it be able to elevate, to enlighten, to ennoble the movement; perhaps even to divert it from doing ignorant mischief and to direct it to its proper aim.

In every shape and form the idea of stunting the life aims of little boys and girls, and of artificially dwarfing what would otherwise have been their intellectual stature, seems to me to be a violation of the fundamental principles of Christian liberty. Towards any advances it might make, I trust that the same answer may be given as once on a time an official in a Government office is said to have made to a caller's proposal. Reporting the interview to his chief, the official wrote, "I told him that I couldn't if I would, and that I wouldn't if I could. He thanked me for my courtesy, and withdrew."

But in thus protesting against the tendency to use the school as a dehumanising agency, I would earnestly plead for the adjustment of its work to the environment in which it is placed. By this I don't mean that the school should seek to chain a child to the surroundings amid which he is born. But let the school interpret to the child the meaning and opportunities of the world in which he is growing up. If the child's surroundings are remediablely evil, let the school be free to not spare criticism. Don't muzzle it on social questions. But let it always, in that criticism, have practical remedies in view, and lead the child to a sympathetic understanding of other people's difficulties and of the unseen drawbacks, as well as the visible attractions, of other people's lives. This means that the teacher must have a real interest in, and love for, the institution, the place, or the kind of life in which he seeks to interest his pupil. Interest and love are the most infectious things in the world.

We ought not to forget that the intellectual conditions of our time forbid us to provide for our children,