

as well as the pronunciation of words. The prescribed series of readers should be completed before entering the high school, and there let literature, style and versification, instead of the reader, have a large place in the curriculum of at least the first year.

In conclusion, let me say that though these hasty suggestions may not be in the direction of the plan most feasible, nor productive, perhaps, of the very best results, yet I am convinced of the urgent need of some device, whereby a knowledge of English may be acquired early in life; for, to the majority of our youth, if not then—never.

J. CROMBIE.

For the REVIEW.]

"The Teaching of Ethics in Schools."

BY REV. E. P. HURLEY.

The duties of a very extensive parish do not allow me the time and opportunities necessary to treat, as I should wish, the important paper on Ethics by Professor Murray, of Dalhousie, to which I have already referred in a first instalment. But continuing the arguments I then introduced I would ask: If it is not a fact that in the ordinary subjects of school study our children are being trained in habits of concentration and self-forgetfulness not too imperfectly to warrant the teaching of ethical science in schools? Behold that boy deeply immersed over a problem in Euclid or algebra. Is he not away in a world of his own while all things around him are as if they did not exist? A mind thus developing its reasoning faculties is, I think, becoming day by day a fitter subject for ethical instruction, unless indeed the more important things in life and those nearer our inner self, are the last to be recognized and appreciated. Is Professor Murray prepared to assert this? But let us go a step farther, and taking a survey of the world of crime around us, see, if after all, it is not a fact that the vast majority of criminals are people whose intellects are darkened through lack of ethical instruction. There are in them only the feeble remnants of a will weakened by habits of sin—a will perverted from a righteous course of conduct by an intellect whose ethical knowledge was null or grossly erroneous.

If advancement in every other branch has a tendency to move the social world into newer and more excellent methods of practise, why should we doubt that similar results will follow from higher standards of ethical teaching? It will not do to reply in popular phraseology that "theory may be good, but practice is better." I have an impression that theory, right or wrong, cannot help leading on to practice. The Romish inquisitors had a theory that heresy was a crime greater in its malice than murder, because it destroyed the soul: therefore, as the state may put a man to death for taking away the life of the body, *a fortiori* for destroying the spiritual life of the soul. If false theories lead to evil practice, ought we not hope for a virtuous course of conduct from sound ethical knowledge wisely and prudently imparted?

I am not unaware that there is often made a very nice distinction between ethics and morals, and Professor

Murray's paper seems to me to bear very much on the side of that distinction. Morals are referred entirely to practice, ethics to the theory or principles underlying practice. The practice may be bad, while the principles of righteous action may be duly apprehended by the agent. What matters it, Professor Murray would seem to say, whether a person has a correct ethical understanding or not, provided his conduct is such as will merit the approbation of the majority of the best of men? Indeed it would be far from a thing to be regretted to find a man's understanding at fault while his practice is sound (though whether this would long continue so I very much doubt), but far better would it be to find his comprehension of the course of conduct he is pursuing in perfect harmony with the best ethical theories.

But there is a charm in spontaneity, says the Professor. Now it seems to me whatever may be said of the charm of spontaneity in righteous doing, that when a man is conscious he is acting as he ought to act—as duty requires him—when he is persuaded *hic et nunc* by a habit of introspection that he might, if he should so choose, pursue another—an evil course—and deliberately and joyfully rejects it for that which is sanctioned by divine and human law—it seems, I say, that this man shows a deeper and stronger tendency to virtue than the other. He is more complete master of his own will which runs on after what is good, not so much by instructive impulse as by rational choice. Spontaneity seems to exclude consciousness altogether, but the Christian grace of humility takes away from it, even when it is most present with us, everything that would divest our courtesy in well-doing of its highest moral beauty.

I do not believe in *manufacturing* moral men by too stiff a process of scientific teaching in righteousness, for the moral law itself is so flexible that it is, I think, impossible for any system of ethics to interpret it uniformly. However, I am not thence led to conclude that every instinctive right action, as it were, is the most morally excellent, because done with the least show of vacillation. My consciousness that I am doing what is right is not necessarily a growth of slow process, but is sometimes so rapidly formed, especially when habits of right thinking have been the rule, that this consciousness may be said to have more of the character of spontaneity about it than it has of deliberativeness. There is nothing cold, vulgar, or repellant in it. All the charms of spontaneity are there, with this additional advantage, that the person so acting can at any moment render to himself a reason for what he is doing. If men were better trained in and more imbued with Christian humility, moral prigism would be less known in society.

Moreover, is it not very practicable that while our ethical teaching is running along on a good scientific basis, our stress and main energies can, and indeed ought to be, devoted to draw out into practice every latent power of the soul for good? And the very fact that many boys and girls only begin to come to school when they have already imbibed or inherited a false system of morals, is in itself a strong reason for imparting to them ethical instructions in what is right and better. Every one familiar with the study of human nature knows how very difficult it is for a boy and girl to shake off the incrustated evil habits which ignorant and barbarous parents have unconsciously sanctioned, either