

CUI BONO?

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WHAT earnest teacher, in these degenerate days, has not from time to time had his righteous soul vexed with this impertinent little query? It meets him at every turn in the higher walks of his profession, coming often like a cold douche upon the kindling fires of professional enthusiasm. Blandly put by cautious parents, sceptically repeated by matter-of-fact trustees, perpetually reiterated by grumbling rate-payers, flung out, *sotto voce*, in the midst of a charming demonstration or a profound disquisition, by some phlegmatic pupil, how often has it well nigh driven him to abandon his chosen work in disgust, and leave the education of the young in the hands of hirelings, willing to degrade the noble profession of mind-culture to the low level of a "Bread-and-Butter Science." True, the question in itself is well enough. It is not only pregnant with profound meaning, but venerable by reason of classical associations. Alas, that in the ignoble rush and crush of this feverish century it should be no longer uttered in the dignified accents of a philosophy seeking only to employ the noblest powers for high and immortal uses, or even in the anguished tones of a crushed and bleeding spirit, crying out for light from the border-land of despair, but rather in the piping notes of the Mammon worshipper, or with the sneering inflection of the Positivist.

But however the teacher who holds lofty views in respect to the dignity of his calling may, in his sublimer

moods, be disposed to quarrel with the narrow utilitarianism which seems to him so incompatible with the highest educational work, he is eventually forced to admit that the question, WHAT GOOD? is notwithstanding a perfectly natural and proper one. Utility is after all at the very root of all culture, even the highest. Education can have no other *raison d'être*. All educators are, of necessity, utilitarians, so far as their professional work is concerned. The only ground of difference, a very broad one we admit, is in the last analysis as to the kind of utility they have in view. When we are once agreed in respect to the true nature of education, or in other words the one ultimate aim to be kept in view in all educational work, there would seem to be scarcely room left for very wide differences of opinion in respect to methods.

It is not the object of this paper to discuss the vexed question of the true end of higher education, so much as to inquire whether there may not be found a harmonizing principle underlying the various and apparently conflicting theories. May it not be that they are not only not contradictory, but when broadly and wisely interpreted, not even necessarily incompatible? The highest goal of all progress, social, political, or religious, is unity in diversity. May not such an unity be the best attainable, nay the best possible, outcome of all the apparently conflicting educational theories of the present day?