

SOME IMPRESSIONS

An Educational Tangle

THE commencement of a new experiment in public education by the introduction of nature study and manual training into primary schools is awakening considerable interest, not only among educationists, but in the mind of the general public. A great diversity of opinion exists regarding the trend of public education. Some deal entirely with the practical and mechanical side, and insist on an absolute simplicity in pedagogical methods, and would limit all primary training to the assimilation of the three R's. On the other hand, many insist on the introduction of a more aesthetic type of training, with the introduction of various complexities of a distinctively novel character, but quite in harmony with the scientific development of the age.

Apart from these considerations, and accounting fully even the failures of mental development so often cited against our existing educational methods, there is still ample proof remaining for assuming an enormous reformation of pedagogical methods in the last two decades. The disposition of the educator has been powerfully shaped by the facts of scientific investigation into the phases of developing mental life, with all its physiological and psychological accessories. Doubtless the facts that have been learned and have been sought to be turned into efficient use, are quite mystifying to the uninitiated, and, perhaps, often also poorly discerned by those whose duty remains to apply them. To satisfactorily apply these scientific developments there will be needed a more efficiently trained and more essentially professional type of teachers than the Canadian provinces have as yet generally secured. The problem of education will no longer be how to teach, or what to teach, but how to obtain capable teachers of the adopted methods, and to give them

support adequate to their professional dignity.

The battle of educational procedure will concern most essentially the primary schools. In these the rank and file of the nation will receive their first definite notions of life and citizenship. There is reason for assuming that frequent disastrous failures in after life are due to wrong direction in school experience. A system of primary education that does not produce an average of satisfactory results upon the children trained, had better be speedily abandoned. For a long time great dissatisfaction has prevailed over the training given in rural schools. In very many cases the children, when leaving school, were little better than illiterate. Worst of all, they were absolutely in the dark regarding the principles of agricultural life which they were about to enter. Some one will doubtless say, read the papers. But that would be no help to them; for an agricultural journal is practically useless, unless the reader has an intelligent appreciation of the scientific side of its contents.

To remedy this the agricultural colleges have, through the agency of trained men, sought to have introduced into the primary curriculum a system of nature study as suited for the proper direction of rural education. The enthusiasm of Professor Robertson and others has finally led to the interesting of Sir William Macdonald in this project. He came to the rescue with ample funds for the establishment of special rural schools in all the provinces, and the training of special teachers for the special work of nature study. The "consolidated school" will undoubtedly prove a great success wherever tried, once the merely local difficulties have been overcome. The experiment has only begun, but we believe, in the rural sections particularly, it will result in a wholesome interest being created in the minds of the pupils in out-