

part. The character of communities, of widely separated states or sections—in other words, the environment—is found practically to be a governing element in the choice of kinds of text-books. This happens sometimes even in different parts of the same state, and is a matter not easily explainable. These idiosyncrasies perhaps grow out of the freedom of our republican life. Communities are accustomed to take care of themselves with the utmost freedom, in their own peculiar ways; as one might say, it is in accordance with the genius of our institutions.

Books of real merit have a certain personality, and, like persons, they attract or repel. The ideal education comes from a contact of personalities, of mind with mind; the live teaching force is always the *teacher* himself. The pre-eminent teacher can sometimes put the best part of himself into a book, and so the book becomes characteristic. There are really living books, attractive, popular, successful within their own circles, and yet indescribable, but containing certain elements of individuality or personality, such as distinguish the intelligent, clear-headed, magnetic teacher. They have a flavour that attracts and impresses and which endows the subject with a living speech.

There is a shallow and dangerous popular belief, unhappily now rife in many states and communities, that a school-book is only so much paper, print and binding, and that anybody can produce it at short order, at its mere mechanical cost, and that the results produced by its use in schools will be just as satisfactory as the use of any book whatever. This is an emphasis of the evil of text-book routine in its worst form. State uniformity, state publication, state contracts in the interest of mere cheapness are its outcome. I have referred to the makers of schoolbooks as authors, and not editors, because the real schoolbook is a creation; the best thought that can be put into printed pages, in the most skilful form that genius can contrive, under the great stress of competition to produce the most excellent, is none too good to help out and supplement the teaching abilities of the average teacher, and give life and reality to the subject taught. Such books can be produced only where there is the freedom of an open and ambitious competition, and where, without fear or favour, merit shall win, and where the rewards of success are worth this intense striving. And every publisher knows to his dear cost how