

THE TEACHER AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

THOSE with whom biography, and particularly autobiography is a favorite form of reading, often have occasion to note the influence exerted by teachers of strong personality upon men who have afterward attained sufficient distinction to make the story of their lives worth reading about. The literature of autobiography is full of tributes—appreciative, affectionate, grateful and reverent—to the memory of the men who, at the impressionable age of the writer's lives, gave to them the bent that was to remain characteristic, inculcated the ideals of learning or of conduct that were thereafter to be pursued. The tribute of the Florentine to his teacher, met upon the Fiery Plain of the Seventh Circle, has been repeated, with every possible shade of tender expression, by all sorts and conditions of men of the modern world, down to the pupils of Arnold at Rugby, and of other teachers of our own day. It is to be noted that in nearly all cases of the class now under discussion, the teacher is remembered as an individual, a distinctly-marked character, a personal influence for good; rarely, if ever, as the representative of a system or the exponent of a method. Stress is laid upon the fruitful contact of soul with soul, not upon the workings of the educational machinery, however nice the adjustment of its parts.

However completely a teacher may achieve the lower aims of educational work—the aims that are tested by examinations, and theses, and the observation of official visitors—a student will feel but slight personal indebtedness if the higher aims have not at the same time been sought after with equal strenuousness. Many wise writers upon education have sought to set forth the really vital aims of the art pedagogic; none, perhaps, more

successfully than John Morley. He says:

"There appear to be three dominant states of mind, with groups of faculties associated with each of them, which it is the business of the instructor firmly to establish in the character of the future man. The first is a resolute and unflinching respect for Truth, for the conclusions, that is to say, of the scientific reason, comprehending also a constant anxiety to take all possible pains that such conclusions shall be rightly drawn. Connected with this is the discipline of the whole range of intellectual faculties, from the simple habit of correct observation, down to the highly complex habit of weighing and testing the value of evidence. The second fundamental state in a rightly formed character is a deep feeling for things of the spirit which are unknown and incommensurable; a sense of awe, mystery, sublimity, and the fateful bounds of life at its beginning and its end. The third state, which is at least as difficult to bring to healthy perfection as either of the other two, is a passion for Justice."

What, it may well be asked, is the bearing of these extremely abstract considerations upon the actual problems of the present educational day? To us the reply seems very obvious. Such aims as we believe to be the most essential of all in education are not easy of attainment at best, and whatever tends to repress the individuality of the teacher tends also to make impossible the attainment of these aims. What we are sometimes tempted to call the curse of centralization has so fallen on most of our educational organizations that the very word "system" has come to have the connotations of lifelessness, and inadequacy, and dull uniformity.