

"the ethics of the period." And just as to-day we cannot rest content with the standpoint of an earlier age, so we have to expect that the progress of our age will readjust again the terms in which the ethical idea will be expressed.

Is it, you may ask, for us, as teachers, to forecast this progress? Are we to attempt the rôle of reformers of humanity, pioneers of new thoughts, of new ideals? As teachers, surely not; we must be content with a more humble task. Humble, first of all, because we are engaged with children, and they do not require, as yet, the breath of a new ethic—for them, at least, the old paths will suffice; and, secondly, because of our relationship, in administration, to the society in whose service we are engaged. They look to us to fulfil the ethical obligations of our age with all possible seriousness, rather than to discover a new law of life. The educational reformer has scope enough for progress within the bounds of his school: if he will only improve the practice of education he will find that the social and ethical doctrine of his age answers sufficiently the needs of the rising generation. Let him faithfully train up his pupils to that level, and he may rest secure; they, when their wings are grown, will fly of their own impulse to heights beyond his ken!

I fear, sir, that in this attempt to indicate the function of the teacher I have sometimes adopted the tone rather of the pulpit than of the lecturer's desk; if so, my apology must be found in the nature of the topic before us. In treating of a moral problem of this nature, which affects so intimately our own daily pursuits, we are in danger either of employing overwrought language which betrays the dreamer, or of assuming a false modesty which belies our hearts. We English teachers, I think, are peculiarly liable to this

honorable fault of self-depreciation; we hesitate to magnify our office, to talk of ideals, of ethical aims. But this modesty incurs, surely, a special danger of its own, for if we fail on proper occasions, to express our convictions, we may by our silence give encouragement to those who deny the moral obligation. We cannot be too modest in admitting limits to our personal qualifications for the teacher's office, but no barrier of reserve should hinder us from acknowledging the lofty aims of our calling. Let us contemplate this calling in its true proportion, taking our stand side by side with other professions which are "called" to the service of society.

Finally, one question suggested by the critical spirit of our age: Is our aim a reasonable one—that is to say, is it in any measure possible of achievement? Can we, by education, make children virtuous? Can we, by science, save souls? The sceptics of fifty years ago denounced the "humbug" of those who sought by legislation to improve the nation's morals. Can we, they sneered, make men virtuous by Act of Parliament? No! it was replied, but you can make the habit of virtue easy and natural: you can establish favorable conditions for virtue.

You cannot by preaching save souls, but you can touch emotion, arouse impulse, suggest reflection. Now these are possibilities within the teacher's range also; for he can bring all the armory of professional skill to bear upon this unique problem of the formation of character. Personal influence, environment, the selection of a curriculum, and methods of teaching can all be considered with reference to this supreme goal.—*The Educational Times.*