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In looking over some reports of addresses delivered at a teachers' association meeting held not very long ago, we came across the following query: "What does our system of education do to find out the natural aptitude of a boy?"

At first sight it appears a most reasonable question to ask. Every one is supposed to possess an aptitude for some particular thing, to be able to excel in it, to give up his life to it; and if our educational system is formed for the purpose of giving our youths opportunities of developing this natural aptitude and enabling them to take up that part in life for which they are best fitted, it is but fair to ask what that system does "to find out the natural aptitude of a boy."

But a very little thought will show that this is not the purpose of our educational system. Our educational system begins with the public school and ends with the university, and throughout its whole course, from the rural schoolhouse to the college lecture-room, it has nothing to do directly

with discovering a pupil's or an undergraduate's forte. Indeed we doubt whether it is possible, except in exceptional cases, to discover this forte until the pupil's studies are virtually beyond the control of his teachers. It certainly is not discovered in the public school. Nor is this the function of the public school. A natural bent cannot be created until there is something to bend. Until the mind has been endowed with some power, and has been stored with some knowledge, there cannot possibly arise any predilection for any particular branch of study. It is the function of our schools to provide this knowledge and increase this power—nothing more.

After all, one's natural bent is not found by the system of education under which we are placed, it shows itself, surely, unconsciously, in spite of any system. Cowper's literary and poetical tastes—what school could have discovered them, much less developed them? And so with Shelley's, and so probably with all who have shown remarkable talent in some one direction. All that the school can do is to foster this talent *when found*. The finding of it must be left to the pupil himself. No other can do it for him. All others can do is to place before him such advantages as will enable him to pursue his natural bent.

So is it with the university, the highest part of our educational system. The professor's duty is not to probe the undergraduate's mind; his duty is merely to lecture to the best of his ability on his particular subject. Here again the discovery of natural bent is left to the man himself.

The truth is, a fallacy underlies this question. The object of education is not to take into account individual proclivities. The master may, with his matured knowledge and observation, be able to prophesy what shall be the future vocation of this or that pupil, and he may set to work to foster those means which shall most conduce to bring out in full force those mental habits; but the system as a whole has nothing to do with this.

The system as a whole is built up with the sole object of cultivating all the powers of the mind. Schools cannot recognize specialism, and it is specialism that this question refers to. It would be simply impossible in a class of thirty or forty boys and girls so to conduct the exercises and lessons as that these shall have for their aim the discovery of the peculiarities of each of those thirty or forty pupils.

DR. J. P. WICKERSHAM, ex-Supt. of Public Instruction, in speaking of "Discipline as a Factor in the Work of the School Room," well says:—"Teachers are prone to look upon discipline more as a means than an end. This view is partly correct. There is a form of discipline known as the discipline of force; another, the discipline of tact; the third, the discipline of consequences, and lastly, the discipline of conscience. They differ somewhat as to end, but materially as to method. Under the discipline of tact, a school-room is kept orderly through nice management. It governs by strategy rather than force. The teacher must keep in mind the awakening of the conscience. The straight line that runs between right and wrong should be strongly marked and well defined. We have much to do with the intellect of children, but if we do not also direct the conscience we have failed to do our whole duty. No clumsy hand can teach the conscience of a child; it takes skill of the highest order.

THE total number of votes cast on the Federation question was 251; 138 for, 113 against. By colleges, the figures were, ministers for, 66; against, 67; laymen for, 72; against 76. Guelph Conference polled the largest majority of votes for federation, viz., 21, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island the largest against, 3. London cast for the scheme a majority of one vote. Toronto Conference gave a majority of 10 for federation. The three eastern provinces combined were against federation by a majority of 9.