

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSTHE ETHICAL INFLUENCE OF
EDUCATION.

By A. B. D.

All education is to some extent ethical. Religious education is almost wholly so. The secular education given in all our educational institutions is also, to a degree, ethical in effect if not in nature. It would seem to be impossible to train the purely mental without imparting an emphatic ethical influence. Good or ill will almost inevitably result to the character of the child or youth, who is trained according to the school or college curriculum. This is not wholly dependent upon the essential moral tone of a particular subject, or set of subjects, but is inherent in the process of mental development. Abstractly considered, mathematics and literature may be alike un-moral, but when subjected to educational methods they become at once ethical in their effect. This will be manifest if we consider that all education develops. A liberal education touches the nature at many points, and leaves one, a different being from what it found him. It makes him capable of being more and of doing more than he otherwise would have imagined to be possible.

It broadens, gives scope and vision and far outlook. It reveals relationships and possibilities. It quickens and corrects the reason. It intensifies and rationalizes the imagination. It stirs the emotions. Anything which so profoundly touches the deepest things, in man could not fail to affect the moral nature, to some extent. If it does not educe the brightest moral qualities it will at least tend to make a man more susceptible to moral influences. It will tend directly to cultivate some of the virtues, which may be called minor.

It is reasonable to expect, that education will develop a love of truth. For example, such an exact science, as Mathematics properly taught should give a pupil a passion for correctness of method, and for accuracy of result. The constant, steady effort to discover a false step in a process of reasoning, and to find the only true one, or the best one, which will lead to a correct solution, is of itself a training in the love of all right steps and a dislike of all false ones. It should tend to a love of moral rightness, and a dislike of moral falsehood.

The quality of steady purpose is necessary to moral character. Without steady, determined fixedness of purpose, moral quality can indeed scarcely be said to exist. And no true education is possible without it. The mind apprehends truth in itself and in its varied relationships, only by hard, constant, steady, and oft repeated effort. This helps to give a general fixedness of purpose; and the habit of mental fixedness easily lends itself to that of moral fixedness. This would be especially expected of mathematical and philosophical studies.

But even other subjects, history for example, have also an equal basis, and should have an ethical result. The student who is taught to trace the lofty ambitions, and the mad passions of the men, who have made history the student who has been taught to watch the evolution of personal pride, patriotism, cunning, cruelty, is living in a real world, and is observing the real life, and motive of men, who were designedly doing good or evil. Their failure or success is a moral object lesson to him. He will be compelled to attach value to moral worth.

Similarly such a virtue as reverence is to be expected, even from secular education. He who, in the study of such subjects as biology or chemistry, where, despite all the known scientific laws, the mystery of life meets him, can steadily and honestly look into the vast unknown and unknowable without veneration, is one to be

pitied and dreaded. He who studies nature will see the marks of design, written large and deep, on every blade, and flower, and wing, and stone, and will find himself driven back to the Supreme, and the Eternal.

Then, too, one should not overlook the influence of such subjects as literature and art as a means of ethical culture. It is a large service, which education is doing for us, when she brings us into intelligent critical contact with the brightest and most beautiful thoughts of the greatest and best of all ages. Such a course should develop a love of the beautiful. In word, in picture, on the canvas, in the landscape, everywhere, beauty is wooing the student and calling him away from all that is coarse or low, upward to the higher, the purer, the divine. For after all what is beauty, but rectitude arrayed in exceptional garb such as only the few—the poets and the artists—can clothe her?

There can be little doubt that the natural and general tendency of education is ethical. But the definite result will depend principally, on the teacher and his methods. In itself education may result in moral degradation. An educated man may be the greater villain, because he is educated. The mind, made subtler, through general mental training, may be the more expert in discovering and developing evil as well as in concealing it. It will more easily discover rational grounds for the release of the sanctions of conscience. The educated mind will more easily perceive how easily the false and the base may be made to appear to be the true and the good, and how the true and the good may be made to appear to be the false, and the bad.

So that, if the world is to have the benefit, which is its due from education it will be necessary for our schools and colleges to emphasize the natural connection between a good education and moral excellence. Not that the primary object of intellectual training should be to any extent abandoned, but that every possible means should be used to persuade the student that moral goodness is of close kin to a liberal education, and that it is just as important even from the standpoint of mere citizenship, that he should attain a high standard of moral excellence, as that he should be educated in anything. He should feel that moral excellence is an essential part of a good education, that it need it is the design, the natural result, of a good curriculum in proper hands. He should know that no man is so base, as the educated base man.

Possibly the logical inferences from this view are that a church school properly conducted may not necessarily be such an unreasonable or inexpedient institution as many may suppose; that it is based on a high estimate of the sacred mission of all education, and that there may be circumstances which render it, or some equivalent, as necessary, as a theological school, and colleges are designedly non-moral. But even a church school, college, or university has no reason for existence, and does not deserve to exist, as such if its methods, not to say its curriculum, are wholly and designedly non-moral. Such an institution is immoral, because non-moral, and it is not reasonable or just to call it by a Christian name.

We may make wry faces at the statement, but it is a fact that the secular institutions of the land, the Public and High school, Normal schools, and universities determine the moral attitude of the people as no theological college can ever do. Not only so, but they will determine the thinking and character of the theological colleges themselves. Any church, therefore, which has a univer-

sity, great or small, should on moral grounds control it absolutely and make it an effective moral force, and otherwise refuse to allow it the church name and influence; and give an undivided attention to the betterment of the secular institutions. If the church stands for the moral good of men, it cannot morally permit the moral thinking and character of the nation's youth to be either neglected or perverted.

THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.

Every thoughtful Christian realizes that the country whose religious growth does not keep pace with its material development is foredoomed to failure. National greatness can rest broad-based only upon national righteousness.

We are laying to-day the foundations of the Canadian nationality of the future. If, in this foundation work, we fail to use the enduring elements of religion and morality, the superstructure of our national life will necessarily be devoid of both strength and beauty.

For the successful prosecution of this work two things are absolutely essential: more men and more money. During the present winter at least 75 fields will have to be left vacant and in many of them ours is the only Church that has been giving service. In so far as the supply of missionaries is concerned the situation is grave enough to awaken deep anxiety. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into his harvest."

But prayers for more missionaries must be accompanied by gifts of more money. Even with a considerable number of fields unsupplied, the expenditure for the current year will probably be about \$30,000 in excess of last year's revenue. Is this too much to ask from such a Church as ours, on behalf of such a magnificent work, in a time of such abounding prosperity?

Year by year the H. M. Committee has had to appeal for increased contributions. This increased expenditure is the unmistakable evidence, and, up to the present time, has been a fairly accurate measure of our country's expansion. There are 635 fields under the care of the Committee this year, and the grants to those fields range from fifty to a thousand dollars! The construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway has meant the establishment of at least 100 new towns between Winnipeg and Edmonton. The immigration to Canada in 1907 was sufficient to have enabled a village of 560 inhabitants to be started each day, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December!

And "the end is not yet." For many years the tide of immigration will flow with increasing volume, and the demands upon Canadian Christians must increase proportionately. Rapid growth is generally accompanied by growing pains; and the ever increasing burden of Home Mission work is simply the cost to the Christian public of the rapid expansion of our national life. That burden must be borne, if the heritage we are to bequeath in our children is to be a genuinely Christian country. For loyal soldiers of the King "there is no discharge in this war." We must pay the price of our country's well-being or suffer the consequences of our neglect.

If the contributions for this year do not exceed those of last year, the Reserve Fund will be practically wiped out next spring, and the Committee will be forced to withdraw from many of the fields already occupied as well as to refuse all requests for the opening of new fields.

Do our people generally realize what an appalling calamity that would be?

It would mean: