

CONTEMPORARY OPINION ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

HARVARD LECTURES ON
PEDAGOGY.*

TEACHERS AND NORMAL SCHOOLS.

THE professor said, in opening, that the German system of training teachers had been adopted partially by France and the United States, though it had reached a higher state of perfection in Germany than elsewhere. As regards our own country, or that part of it where public education is in any state of advancement, we have better buildings for schools, better organization, and a better class of men and women engaged in teaching, than in France or England. Still we are deficient as compared with Germany, and the nature of that deficiency is indicated in a saying that has been frequently quoted, that "in America, as brick and mortar accumulate, teaching begins;" that is, with us externals are prior and superior to internal administration. In Germany it is otherwise; the system is paramount, and external conditions quite subordinate. The school-work there has been uniform. An element of permanency and steadiness characterizes the administration. Teachers' salaries, though small as compared with ours, go on without change for twenty years. The wisdom of the statesmen who conduct the government, and the profession of teachers of every grade, is combined in the matter of school administration, and all act together upon a common understanding and to a common end. The most sensitive barometer of the tendency of affairs in any country is the condition of the schools. In them all classes have a common concern, and this because the schools develop individual character, and the totality of individual character constitutes the national character. If even under a Monarchy the

prosperity of the country is recognized, as it is in Germany, to be bound up in the welfare of the schools, not less but more clearly should it be recognized in a Republic; and this consideration is the more urgent in view of the present and prospective social conditions of our own country.

The system of normal teaching in Germany so thoroughly permeates the whole, that cases are common of teachers who began teaching in the lowest grade of the primary schools, and rose through each successive grade, studying constantly meanwhile, and reaching at length the grade, first of student, and then of professor, in the best universities. This constant daily training in the art of instructing the minds of others found its proper fruition in teaching of the highest grade; and the earlier experience was not a loss but a gain to the teacher in his work as a professor in the university—the system of teaching being governed by common principles throughout. In all grades of instruction the stress is laid on these three elements—philology, psychology, and ethics. These are held to be fundamental, so much so, and so generally so, as regards teaching, that even clergymen have to pass an examination in them before being licensed to enter upon their profession. In adopting and adhering to this policy, the underlying assumption is that there is a science of teaching; if there is such a science, then teaching is a profession; if not, it is merely a handiwork.

The view which is taken of this vital question depends very much upon the system of philosophy which is generally accepted. In England and this country it has been founded very much on the theory of Locke and others of his school, that all knowledge is derivable through the senses; that the mind originally is but a piece of blank paper on which the senses may write, and that there is nothing

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