

ECONOMY IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS.

It is true that education can be reduced to a science, and it is also true that there is now a fore-shadowing of such a science. Doubtless, in the course of time the vast number of empirical facts relating to education will be systematized and formulated, so that they can be applied to the best advantage. Many of those who are engaged in educational work seem to think that the national educationists have already formulated the principles of education ; and, laboring under this delusion, each continues to follow, with implicit confidence, his particular authority.

One of the great difficulties that lie in the way of progress at the present time is to determine to the satisfaction of all what are the relative values of the natural sciences and of the dead languages as instruments in the development of the powers of the mind. In practice this question has divided the schools and colleges into two very nearly equal groups ; and as a result, students are obliged to meet this problem individually. When the student asks advice from the educationist, the reply he usually receives is that it depends on what he is studying for. If he is studying for a clergyman, he had better take Greek and Hebrew ; if, for a physician, the natural sciences and Latin ; if, for a lawyer Latin, with a partial course in the natural sciences ; and so on. But in the majority of cases students do not definitely choose their professions until they are nearly through with their college course, and so the educationist's advice is worth little or nothing. If a student consults a professor of the Greek and Latin languages in regard to the subject, the advice which he gets is that no one can hope to have matured powers without studying the dead languages ; while, if he consults a professor of the natural sciences, he is told that there is just as much development in studying nature as there is in studying classics.

Knowing that this problem is one of urgent importance, involving as it does the pressing question of economy of time and vital energy in the educational process, as well as a grave influence on the object of education—complete living—it should be the earnest desire of every independent thinker to set aside the influences of custom and prejudice and to investigate the question with scrupulous diligence and patience. It is to be regretted that some of the closest and most comprehensive thinkers on this subject have detracted from the force of their writings by sarcasm and by statements that tend to excite controversy and resentment on the part of professors and school-masters. At the head of this class of writers stands Mr. Herbert Spencer, of England. Thirty-five years ago Mr. Spencer published his views on this topic, written in a very irritating style ; and the result has been that a class of teachers have confined