

LANDMARKS IN HISTORY OF EDUCATION.

BY A TRAINING TEACHER.

AS we open the door upon the educational means and ends of the Christian era, let us stand a moment on its threshold, and cast a glance backward as well as forward. Here the ways part. A new and softer influence arises, and the spiritual side of education, inaugurated by Socrates in Greece, is enlarged and beautified by the advent of the great Teacher from Palestine.

Certain points in the lives of Socrates and Christ have a startling similarity. Perhaps a moment will not be lost if past in reviewing the points of coincidence, in the experience of these two sources of inspiration. Both were poor; both had disciples; both were persecuted; both were accused of corrupting the public mind by their false teachings; both inaugurated new methods of instruction; both were tried and condemned to death; neither desired to save the present life; and each was confident that truth would spread more widely and rapidly by his death. The persecutors of Socrates were the popular teachers, called Sophists; the persecutors of Christ were the same, known as Pharisees.

In method both believed that the teaching instrument is interrogation; and used it in order to bring to view essential marks or qualities, of the parts of the lesson. The whole was then reduced to unity and made clear on the principle of similarity.

With Christ the object lesson, and the questions involved, characterized all teaching,—the material truth preceeding the spiritual; the question being used to resolve and to integrate.

The mission of Christ was not identical, but parallel, with that of Socrates, one dying for intellectual, the other

for spiritual truth, each endeavoring to start and purify a stagnant stream. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil, to restore to words their lost content, and his persecution was the culmination of bad teaching, the result of following literally, the words of the Old Testament. Christ said: "Ye have made the law of God of none effect by your traditions."

During the time of Socrates and Christ, the tendency was toward great spirituality—and then, the climax being reached, the educational pendulum began to swing around and back until the time of Bacon, or the practical age.

The historical line of educational progress shows that one sharp reaction follows another. The suppression of one error is usually followed by the ascendancy of another in the opposite direction. History gives us as an example the establishment of Quaker simplicity following the most extreme formalism. If graphic representation were attempted, the historical line of progress might be represented by sharp deviations; the ideal line, by every point falling directly over every other point, but the safe and sure course, flexible yet tenacious, would follow the gently upward and onward line of grace.

Leaving, then, our examination of the past and pagan, at the portal of the Christian era, before plunging into the silent centuries, let us give an hour to the Influence, which introduced new elements; brought the conception of the equality of all human beings; taught that man as man was free and owed allegiance only to God; raised the poor; educated the ignorant; and to the idea of equality added that of liberty.