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THE AIM AND NATURE OF EDUCATION.*

By DR. S. P. ROBINS.

Will you permit me to devote the minutes that remain to me to a few remarks on the nature and aim of education? The theme is one ceaselessly reiterated at our educational gatherings. To the non-professional hearer the topic may appear hackneyed, its treatment wearisome; but the teacher has in its discussion a perennial interest. We do not expect the discovery of new principles of education. Yet almost every day shows some new and valuable application of the ancient principles, or calls on us to adduce them in refutation of some miserable fad that enthusiastic quacks urge on our notice, or casts on them some new light, revealing in them beauty or vastness, or strength, before unseen, and unexpected.

When repeating what a thousand voices before me have said in tones at once more attractive and more forcible than I can command, I say that education as a process is the providing of the best conditions for the utmost development, under wise discipline, of all the powers of our nature. I know that you admit the general truth of the statement. You may, perhaps, ask to what purpose I state what everybody has heard a thousand times, and nobody disputes. My excuse must be that, however well known this is as a truth, no one lives up to it. I venture very little when I affirm that no primary school, no

* Extract from his presidential address at the Teachers' Convention of 1889, held in Montreal.