

THE SCIENCE OF CONDUCT: ITS PLACE IN EDUCATION.*

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THERE seems no end to the number of subjects we hear we are to teach. We have not decided whether to teach Classics, or Mathematics, the Natural Sciences, Art, Grammar, History, Music, and now we hear of a new science, that of Conduct. Many of us who take sides in the advocacy of the rival claims of these subjects, do not wish to see all our schools alike, or all our teachers giving equal prominence to the same subjects; but rather wish Science to carry the palm in some schools, Classics to form the principal study in others, and so on. In speaking, lately, with a gentleman from the continent, who had been inspecting and reporting on English schools, I asked him what advice his inspection had disposed him to give to English educators. He replied, "We have in Germany four types of schools only. You have almost every possible grade between the two extremes, and schools of the same grade with different methods. With us, individuality is neglected; with you, it has full play. If I presume to advise, I should say, you may secure efficiency, and at the same time keep your variety; don't imitate our dull uniformity." I felt that he had pointed out a feature peculiar to English education, and one which we ought to preserve, as agreeing most thoroughly with our national temperament and the liberty accorded by our other national institutions.

But, if I make out my case to-night, I think I shall plead the cause of a claimant for the best attention of teachers of all schools, of all grades,—a kind of knowledge which all should have, and which every teacher should know how to impart. It concerns all education, for it concerns all men and women.

Many are the definitions of education and general descriptions of the work of the educator, but this we may fairly state, that the end which all promoters of education wish it to secure is directly the good of society at large. The means by which this end has been sought have varied greatly. We are not yet agreed as to the methods to be pursued in education. We are still debating as to the kind of discipline to be enforced, the penalties to be inflicted, and the allurements to be offered. While few will doubt that education seeks to secure the common good, men have been, and are, far from agreed as to what that common good is. Such disagreement must lead to a doubt as to the conduct that ought to be encouraged, and consequently to doubt as to the character and habits which will dispose to it. It behoves teachers, above all men, to labour to remove this disagreement. Good must come from an attempt to bring order and definiteness into their thoughts and teaching on this subject. Although it is some good result to see the ready writer, the clever draftsman, the quick and correct arithmetician, the skilful seamstress, the clever cook,

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