

Another plan—it is rather a pious hope than a plan—which sometimes floats through my mind is that little groups of people should go abroad together (say, a couple of inspectors, a couple of chairmen of School Boards, some clerks of School Boards, some managers of Voluntary Schools, a headmaster and mistress, and an assistant master and mistress, from a good town school, and a master and a mistress with experience in good country schools), and really try in a systematic way to see something of the actual working and inner life of some foreign system of education, studying it with exactitude and without hurry, according to a plan carefully made beforehand. The party would form a peripatetic commission, and I feel sure that, if permission from the foreign government were sought in the proper manner, the commissioners would meet with a cordial welcome. I should not venture to suggest that they should all agree to a single report, but that they should all write their reports separately. The minority reports and notes of dissent are always the most interesting things in Blue Books, and are best read first. There is no reason why the report of the travelling commission of inquiry should not entirely consist of minority reports. I daresay that we should find some common measure of agreement running through them all. If we were to have a set of reports, say on Swiss Education of all grades and types (town and country; primary, higher primary, and secondary; technical and professional) from such a group of Imperial scouts, the public interest in the welfare of our own schools and colleges might be greatly stimulated.

But I cannot say that I foresee any likelihood of such a well-

equipped and practical body of commissioners being sent out on such a mission at any time in the immediate future. But, supposing that such a commission had been despatched, I am inclined to think that on their return to England they would tell you that our teaching of the mother-tongue is quite a long way behind the point of excellence which it should have reached. All over German speaking Europe close attention has been given to this subject for many years, and much more has been done there than here to train teachers to a sense of the beauties of good literature. We in England have a literature which cannot be rivalled all the world over, and it is a burning shame and a national scandal that more of our people are not taught from early childhood to love and revere and use it. Perhaps it is because we in England have been favored with so constant a succession of great men of letters, and because a natural love of literature is without artificial stimulus so widely diffused among the very numerous private students in our midst, that we have neglected, to our discredit among other nations, the duty of spreading yet more widely and systematically, throughout all classes of the community, a trained appreciation of the prose and poetry which are among the greatest glories and most precious treasures of our land. Though I am far from meaning that Germany is as fertile as England in fine literature, I should be inclined to believe that a respect for their great national classics is much more widely diffused amongst Germans than is the case amongst Englishmen for their own. And if this is so (and I believe it to be the case), it is the outcome of years and years of patient work done by thousands of faithful teachers in the schools.