

and least of all for country children, a starveling curriculum. You can't confine a school which is to train character and expand the intelligence of young children or youth, either to purely commercial subjects or to purely agricultural. That would be like following the example of the Shetland minister who preached for a year and a half on the twelve wells of water and the threescore-and-ten palm trees which were in Elim, devoting one Sunday to each well and each palm tree.

The danger of over early specialisation springs also from a fact to which I have not yet referred. It is by no means generally possible to predict, until he is 15 or over, what kind of calling a boy's aptitude would best fit him for.

But, for the normal development of childhood, a course of skilfully unfolding studies is appropriate and educationally fruitful.

We sometimes forget how unstable the unformed character is. It has been well said, "We are not the simple straightforward units we fancy ourselves to be. We are rather an undulating and varying unity of impulses and powers, growing slowly by effort and discipline into the unity of the perfect man."

It is the ideal of education, in a free, self-governing country, to promote and guard this growth; to guide it into its fittest direction; but always with reverent regard for its native powers and for its individual promise. Above all should we not abstain from any attempt to cast in the iron-mould of quasi-military discipline that which should develop into the orderliness of the free and self-respecting will?

IV.

I hope that the drift of my remarks has not been towards showing that the secondary school can have no bearing on practical life. That is very far from what I meant. Two

sentences, written by a Frenchman, go very near to the heart of the matter. "That which the school ought to develop before all things, in the individual whom it trains, is the man himself—namely, heart, intelligence, conscience. But it must not be forgotten that the first and best safeguards that our schools can give for the morality of the man is to create in every scholar an aptitude for, and a liking for, that labour by which he will live."

Now, gentlemen, have the secondary schools, which we ourselves attended, done that for us?

Some of us can thankfully say that every day we live we realise more clearly what was done for us at school. No institution is perfect; least of all do good institutions think themselves so; but we may say, without challenge of denial that we have in this country some secondary schools which, on the most essential points of educational influence, are absolutely without a rival in the world. Let us seek so far as may be to cherish and extend their best traditions.

But that is far from true of all. And there are others, of which their alumni might say, what Corneille said of his protector Richelieu, "He has been too much of a benefactor to me for me to abuse him; but he has done me too many bad turns to deserve my good word."

With your leave I will try to examine a little more in detail how far our secondary schools do, or can, prepare for practical life.

By practical life, I mean the whole range of callings—professional, commercial, industrial, adventurous, military, administrative, directive, legislative, official, social—for which those boys are being prepared, on whom it is worth while to make the capital outlay involved in a course of secondary education, extending up to 16, 17, or 19 years of age, as the case may be.

(1) For a certain kind of practical