

EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

of Western Canada.

VOL. 1.

BRANDON, OCTOBER 1899.

NO. 6.

Some Half-Truths.

III. THE ABDICATION OF THE PARENT.

The tendency to shift the burden of work and responsibility from our own shoulders to those of others is a very human tendency and a very general one, and so the theory that the education of its children is a duty of the state, so often put forward of late as an axiomatic principle, has been accepted with much complacency by many parents and more than a few legislators, while its corollary, that the teacher stands in loco parentis, has been adopted very readily by the majority of teachers. Yet both of these are but partial truths; for primarily education is not the duty of the state nor the teacher, but of the parent. The failure of so many parents, teachers and legislators to recognize this fact has influenced the methods and work of the school, the life of the home, the character of our youth, and the welfare of the community. Nor has this influence been wholly good. So it may be well now and then to work back to a first meridian, correct the variations in our educational compass, note the direction of the current in which we are sailing, and if possible lay a truer course for the port we hope to reach.

In this connection it does not matter whether we consider the state as the outcome of a social contract or the development of the family or clan; but it may be well to remember that the state has no existence apart from the individuals that compose it, and that the highest good of these individuals is its only raison d'être. And so the state should assume the duties of the individual only when—and only so far as—by so doing it can better promote the welfare of the individuals composing it. Now, it may be true that the state should provide the child with enough education to prevent it becoming a moral menace or a financial burden to the community; it may be true that the small part of the child's real education which we call school training can be most systematically and most economically given by the state; yet the fact remains that the duty of educating the child and the responsibility therefor rest primarily upon the parents who brought him into the world. The child is not a mere chance atom in a chaos of existence; he will become a man with a man's duty of helpfulness and a man's capacity for enjoyment; and the work of preparing him to discharge the duty and reap the pleasure and so best realize the purpose of his Creator must rest where the obligation to provide food, clothing and shelter for the years of his helplessness rests, and that is on the parents.

Nor can it be a good thing for the child, the parent, or the community to have this duty and this responsibility entirely transferred to the state. It has been said that in a majority of cases a child's future has been practically determined by the