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MEDIUM OF CIVILIZATION.

Written for the Examiners of the
University of Manitoba

by

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EDUCATION AS A MEDIUM OF CIVILIZATION.

So long as Britain retains her present supremacy among the nations, the question of raising savage tribes to a position of self-dependence or civilization will be continually before her. As tribe after tribe submits to our sway, the National Conscience will ever be exercised to know how best to apply to the present situation what has been learned from past experience. Each experiment brings out something new to be discussed, modified and applied at the next opportunity, but if the experience of the past has taught us anything it is this, - that what may be best for one nation is not necessarily the best for all.

The principal instruments employed for the civilizing of nations are the Sword, Commerce, and Education. The First brings peoples more readily under the influence of the others; the Second is often the chief object of

those who seek their own advantage; and the Third is the system which I wish to advocate, and which, while under trial as a Medium of Civilization apart from conquest and commerce, has had no little promise of success.

The first instrument - War - where avoidable, must ever be reluctantly resorted to. The destruction of human life, the shedding of a brother's blood, the desolation of homes, and the hatred the conquered nourish for their conquerors for at least a generation, are the chief drawbacks to the employment of force in the spread of civilization.

Trade follows the flag; and often precedes it. But this too is at first a doubtful civilizer. It is a well known fact that when Commerce finds a new market, among the first things purchased by the natives (and at a heavy cost) are the vices of the white man. Thus what should have been a harbinger of prosperity, becomes a minister of disease and death.

With the two forces already mentioned operating alone, there is no doubt that natives in a state of

savagery are happier without them. But happily, wherever British enterprise goes, one other civilizing influence always precedes or follows, - Education.

Attempts have been made by Christian Missionaries to bring the chief benefits of civilization within the reach of the people to whom they minister. They have sought to improve the administration of justice; artisans of sound character have been engaged to teach their trades to the natives, schools have been established for secular studies, and in many cases the Missionary has even invented the characters for a written language. This is civilizing without the direful consequences of bloody War or vicious Commerce. Thus these Missionaries may be said to be the most faultless civilizing agency. But the system has so far proved all too slow for the world's progress. Who knows though, but that, on an immensely greater scale, this system may yet prove the greatest factor in the list of civilizing influences, and the greatest blessing, - without the usual attendant curses of War and Commerce, - to the simple-minded savage?

Of the three great factors then, the Sword, Commerce and Education, it must be granted that the last is the least objectionable. It certainly has its disadvantages, which we will consider later, but these are not such as to disqualify it as a medium of civilization.

By Education we mean chiefly the training of the intellect - the developing of the man himself, as distinguished from muscular development. This, if accomplished, makes a change of environment desirable, gives new ideas of the relation of man to man, and creates new tastes and desires which can only be satisfied by the institution of commercial relations with other countries. These things are the beginnings of civilization - the object at which we aim. How shall it be accomplished?

We have referred above to the work of certain Missionaries. Leaving out of the present discussion the actual Christian teaching, we have employed, under that system, a body of trustworthy teachers possessed of ability and discretion. Working colonies are formed in chosen

centres; and artisans, traders and schoolmasters work in harmony with, and under the direction of the Missionary. The benefits of civilization are thus brought within touch of the natives. The number of teachers too commands respect from the heathen, who are thus more ready to listen to the Missionary, than if one man were to go amongst them alone. Perhaps this system seems most suitable for savage tribes that have not yet recognised British suzerainty.

Where the people are already British subjects it devolves upon the Government to establish systems of schools for the training of the rising generation. This may be done in two ways. First, Schools established at various points most frequented by the natives. Second, Boarding and Training Schools at centres nearer to civilization to which the children may be sent for a period of years with the approval of the parents.

Let us enquire into the probable results of these two systems.

In the first system, it is intended to train the people to self-reliance, and to develop their intelligence, leaving them to continue in the same course of existence, with a gradual improvement mentally, morally and physically. This plan, in the end, would seem to promise much success, but let us look at the result in one place where it has been long in existence.

India has a school system over two hundred years old. Under the British Government the schools are provided with native teachers, and are visited periodically by native Inspectors. But the English language is not taught; probably that the pupils may be given no inducement to adopt an English mode of living. This may be meant as a safeguard to prevent the people deserting their ordinary occupations and becoming a trouble and a charge to the Government. But the result is, that the majority of the natives of India are thus kept as distinct classes, who do not understand British systems, and, as a body, form a good recruiting ground for the disaffected and mutineers.

Higher education is also provided in the cities on such terms as to be easily within the reach of the better class of natives. These having learned a little English, take a University Degree, and then look to the Government which has placed education within their reach to provide them with suitable employment. But as Government offices are necessarily limited in number, there are always to be found some disappointed ones, who, if so disposed, are able to encourage disaffection in the lower half-educated classes. This is the danger that always threatens British Rule in India and it is largely the fault of the Educational System in that portion of our Empire. Is there a remedy? If there is, it consists, not in suppressing the schools, but in making them more efficient, and requiring that teachers and Inspectors should be in hearty sympathy with the British Government. The question will never be free from difficulty but wherever the British Flag waves, the English language should be paramount, and taught in every school, that the people may learn to appreciate the benefits accompanying an English Government.

The second system to which I referred is sometimes employed as a corollary to the first, and is now under trial in Canada and the United States of America, where Industrial Schools are maintained, some entirely, and others largely at Government expense. Children are sent by the Indian Agent, or drafted from the schools on the Indian Reserves to these centres of industry and learning. As far as possible they are here weaned from their old habits and associations, and trained in the ways of civilization. If this system proves a success we shall have a class of natives from which there can be provided Missionaries, School-teachers, craftsmen, Government Officers and, perhaps, later, Parliamentary Representatives for the natives. Others having completed a course at these schools may mingle with the settlers and help to relieve the great dearth of male and female servants in our Colonies.

What are the weak points in the Industrial School System? In this method there is an attempt (which can

but be a partial success) to form a new nature in the children, to transplant the child of the forest into the midst of the city. The change is such a great one from the surroundings of the child in his father's camp to the restraints of a school governed with military strictness, that he may be excused if his spirit revolts at the transformation, thus placing an immense difficulty in the way of the Officers of the School. Another difficulty arises owing to the numbers which are associated together, which makes it almost impossible to deal individually with each separate child-nature, and also fosters in them collectively longings for the free old life from which they have been torn away. The old habits to be eradicated; morals to be instilled as well as cultivated; the constant watchfulness, sympathy, and help required from the Officers, added to all the duties of a Boarding-school, make the difficulties of the management of this system greater than any person could conceive except one who has been personally engaged in the work. All these things tend to limit the success of the enterprise. The ques-

tion at once arises, - Will a sufficient number of pupils fall into the new groove to make the system pay?

No one will dispute the fact that some of the scholars, with hearts swept and garnished, will readily fall back into their old habits, and their latter state be worse than their former. But if a few can be armed against evil, taught to appreciate and encouraged to adopt what is best of civilization, these will form a nucleus of an improved class of native. Their descendants will more readily take to the new condition of things and form an invaluable help towards the amelioration of the race as a whole. Those who have watched the working of the Industrial Schools must have seen these first fruits of success, varying of course with the ability of the management under which they have developed. Some critics have been pleased to denounce them as failures, but it is because they have expected to see in the space of a few years a revolution which it will require generations to effect.

In conclusion then, can any one honestly advocate either War or Commerce as the best Agents of Civilization, or say such means are fit for the use of a righteous nation when Education can accomplish the same means by less questionable methods? And of the systems of education under trial, the slowest seems to be the most effectual. Missionary Working Colonies are the most efficient, so far as they have been established; and are deserving of more extensive support, not only from individuals and religious Societies, but also from the Government that is eventually to reap the advantage. Next to that system which I have called the Missionary Working-Colony, it will be seen that Canada is engaged in giving a fair trial to what promises to be a very successful educational means of civilization. Its defects have been pointed out, but as time rolls on these will gradually be hidden by its successes. And Canada will, I believe, stand before the rest of the world as a country which has honestly dis-

charged her duty to her native tribes, and striven to
bring within their reach all the advantages enjoyed by
her other subjects in instituting for them one of the
best possible systems of Education as a Medium of Civiliza-
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