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Editorial.

MORAL EDUCATION.

It is a sign of the times which will be, in many ways, encouraging to thoughtful people that an International Moral Education Congress will hold its first meeting in the buildings of the London University in September next. The general approval of the new movement is shown by the fact that the Ministers of Education of nine different countries have given their active support to the programme of the Congress. The basic idea of the Congress is the universal adoption of methods of better moral instruction for children, in which would be included all the influences which affect the personality of a child. In other words, as we read its objects, the Congress seeks to promote the better development of character, as distinguished from the development of the mind, which is, of course, the generally accepted end and aim of education.

There can be no doubt that special moral education has been to a large extent neglected in the teaching of the young, so far as their school curriculum extends. It is too often argued that the inculcation of moral principles is the duty of the parents, not of the schoolmaster or mistress. Some even go so far as to insist that the giving of religious instruction is also outside the province of the day-school. It was, in fact, this argument which led, 150 years ago, to the institution of the Sunday School, and of its special work amongst the children of the working classes. There are few who fail to realise that the present is a most critical time in this country for religious education, because it is generally known that the strongest efforts are being made to restrict the teaching in schools, provided by the State, solely to secular

knowledge; throwing, once more, the sole responsibility upon the parents of providing religious teaching. Unhappily, the conditions of modern life are such that it is impossible to expect parents to devote to their children the necessary time and attention—even if they were themselves qualified to teach the great facts and truths of religion; so that, if this duty be not undertaken by the State, there is every reason to fear that future generations will never receive such instruction at all. If some settlement of the present educational difficulties cannot speedily be reached, so that the children of the future shall receive education both in religious and secular matters, the experience of other countries proves that there will be a general depreciation of the religious feeling of the whole country.

The object, however, of the Moral Education Congress is to carry the education of the child one step further than the present system of religious instruction, and brief consideration of the subject proves not only the importance of this teaching, but also that it is at present much neglected. For example, neither on the religious, nor on the secular, side are children at present systematically instructed in the obligations and responsibilities which they individually possess to themselves, to their neighbours and to their country. To themselves, by the practice of thrift, temperance, and conscientious work; to others by co-operation, and the general duties of citizenship; and to their country, by greater service, and often by self-sacrifice. We earnestly welcome, and wish the utmost success to, the work of the new International movement, because, if successful, it must tend to the elevation of individual character and therefore to the betterment of the whole community.

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