A Plea for the Humanities *

WE HAVE HERE a book that is sure to awaken interest and no little discussion in educational circles. For some years past the demand for scientific and technical education has been so strong that many of the older schools have felt obliged to introduce scientific subjects so largely into their curriculum as to partially crowd out some other studies which had previously been deemed essential to a good education, while at the same time new schools have been established in which pure and applied science has been taught almost to the exclusion of everything else. These changes in the educational system, which have been felt more or less in every civilized country, have been due in part to the rapid progress in recent years of the physical sciences, but quite as much, if not more, to the utilitarian tendency of the times and the demand for an education that will pay. Against these tendencies M. Fouillée, in the work before us, makes a strong and emphatic protest, and presents a forcible plea for the restoration of the humanities to their former place of leadership and honor in the educational curriculum

Education, as treated in this work, is looked upon as consisting of three stages: primary education, which should be the same for all; secondary education, designed for those who can spend a longer time in study, and who wish to fit themselves for the higher walks of life; and higher education, which is more or less special and professional. This volume is devoted to the second of these departments, which M. Fouillée thinks is in danger of being perverted from its true object and radically vitiated by the introduction of the mercantile spirit and the excessive tendency to specialization. He views the subject not merely from the standpoint of the individual, but with regard to the general interests of humanity, and especially with a view to national greatness and civilization. No nation, he justly observes, can be great and progressive without an intellectual and political *élite*; and he maintains that such a select body cannot be produced by any scientific or other special training, but only by a broad and comprehensive discipline, of which literature must be the basis and philosophy the crown. His argument, therefore, takes the form of a plea for humanistic studies, and it is a plea that educators will not be able to ignore nor easily to refute.

M. Fouillée is by no means disregardful of the claims of science, but he maintains, and, we think, justly, that science should be subordinated to philosophy, and should be treated as part of a comprehensive scheme of instruction, having in view the spiritual interests of humanity. He strongly condemns the present tendency toward specialization, and also the tendency, so disagreeably manifest in our own country, to make education subservient to industrialism; and he rightly insists that the main object of education should be to cultivate a disinterested love of the true, the beautiful and the universal good. 'Education,' he remarks, is not an apprenticeship to a trade; it is the culture of moral and intellectual forces in the individual and in the race.' He calls attention, too, to the pressing need in our time of a deeper study of the social sciences and the cultivation of the civic virtues; and he maintains that for all these purposes literature is a much more efficient instrument than

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physical science Even for the man of business, he holds, literature is a better discipline than science, and still more so for the statesman and the teacher. Literature and science, however, are by no means sufficient for a comprehensive education such as the present age requires; they need to be co ordinated, and to have their true significance pointed out, and for that purpose they must be supplemented by philosopy, which alone can give the comprehensive view that is required. 'The ideal end of humanity,' he says, 'is clearly moral and social life carried to its highest degree; * * * moral and social ideas, with their accompanying sentiments, seem to me to be the end of education. * * * Literature, general history and philosophy have a breadth that scientific studies do not possess; they do not bring into play the intellect alone; they affect the sensibility and the will, the heart and the character; they are already penetrated by social and moral ideas; * * * for this reason I have given them a more important position than science in a liberal education' (p. 277).

We have thus briefly indicated the character of M. Fouillée's views; but we can give no idea in our short space of the ability with which these views are presented, nor of the interest which the author has imparted to the discussion; but we earnestly recommend his work to all those of our readers who are in any way responsible for the education of the young.