

PRIMARY EDUCATION.

During this month the most important event affecting the educational interests of the whole province of Bengal has been the publication of a Resolution by the Bengal Government on the courses of study for rural primary schools. Hitherto the courses of study had been uniform in all primary schools, whether they were urban, suburban or rural. The new departure prescribed by the Resolution is the separation of the rural primary schools from the urban and suburban ones and the adoption of different courses of study for the different classes of primary schools. Leaving the urban, suburban and similarly conditioned primary schools to follow the courses of study which have been prescribed for them since 1903, the Government has proposed to prescribe a simpler and more suitable course of study for the rural primary schools in which the sons of those who are engaged in the actual cultivation of the soil will have a training that is likely to make them take a more intelligent interest in their work. This class of schools is not meant for those who are more ambitious and wish to proceed to higher standards.

The books that are now in use for primary schools have been found to contain subjects and to be written in a style not quite suited to the boys of the cultivating class for whom the rural primary schools are expressly meant. It has therefore been proposed that suitable text-books will be written by some selected expert Government officers first in English and then translated into the vernaculars of Bengal by competent persons approved and selected by Government. In order that the vernacular languages of the books should be easily intelligible to the boys of these schools, it has been suggested that the vernacular used should be colloquial and not Sanskritic, and that for this purpose four local vernacular dialects for Bengal

proper and three for Behar will be recognized by Government. To make the scheme an efficient instrument of education Government further proposes to start schools for training teachers who will be competent to teach these schools. Separate courses of study and schemes of text-books on the lines of those prescribed for the boys have been framed for these training schools. We need hardly add that the present scheme of the Government of Bengal is merely a necessary corollary of the general scheme of education published by the Government of India in March 1904, and therefore there is no reason to be surprized at this resolution as if it were a bolt from the blue.

The resolution under notice opens up important educational and social questions. No doubt books written in local dialects will considerably facilitate both teaching and learning in rural primary schools, but whether this will be an unmixed good for the boys specially and the country generally is a point the satisfactory solution of which hinges upon the elucidation of two broad principles involved in it. (1) Has such localization of vernaculars any precedent in other countries? (2) Will it not stand in the way of those boys who wish to proceed to higher standards of education?

We learn from our able contemporary "the Statesman" that "in England it has not been thought necessary or advisable to translate the text-books in which primary education is conveyed, whether to rustics or others, into the dialect of Yorkshire or the West of England, though these are quite as distinct from literary English as the dialect of Fariapur or Chittagong is from the language of—say—the Bidya Sundar, and notwithstanding that instruction conveyed in them would unquestionably be more readily assimilated by the fledgling yokels of Yorkshire and Somersetshire or Shropshire than that conveyed even in the simple form of the metropolitan language in which these text books are actually written."

We are so far conversant with the dialects of England and Scotland that we can safely say without fear of contradiction, that the brogue of a Yorkshire man or Scotchman is as unintelligible in Gloucestershire or Susséx as the *patois* of a Chittagong or Dacca man in Calcutta or Burdwan. Whether this mutual unintelligibility of spoken dialects in the different parts of England and Scotland pervades also the written dialects of those parts is a question of which we have no first hand knowledge. If the question is answered in the affirmative, namely that the acknowledged difference in spoken dialects finds place also in current local literature, and if, notwithstanding this dialectic difference in spoken and written tongue, text-books meant for primary schools in England are written in the simple form of the metropolitan language, the case for the scheme of dialectic differentiation proposed to be adopted in the elementary text-books of the different parts of Bengal and Behar becomes very weak indeed. But we are not quite sure whether the acknowledged dialectic difference in England is not one mainly of pronunciation and that a book written in literary or metropolitan English is not intelligible all over England or even Scotland. If the dialectic difference in England be one mainly of pronunciation and do not find place in current local literature, then the case for the proposed scheme becomes very strong, knowing as we do that the difference in dialect at any rate in Bengal proper is not one of pronunciation only or mainly. In contrasting therefore the condition of England with that of Bengal in the matter of dialectic differentiation with a view to its adoption in text-books in Bengal, the necessary data for our decision are wanting and we appeal to the Government and to our English contemporaries to throw light on the subject.

In this connection might be mentioned the fact that the dialects of Bengal proper are too many to be fairly represented

or dealt with by the proposed division of them into four, namely Northern, Eastern, Western and Central.

As regards the other point raised, namely whether the introduction of the scheme will stand in the way of those rural boys who wish to proceed to higher standards, the Government Resolution lays down definitely that the new scheme is meant for those only who do not intend and are not likely to proceed to higher courses of study. The scheme is based on this assumption and with the reservation mentioned above we have no fault to find with it, provided the assumption be true. Whether the assumption is true or not opens up a broader question of social organization than we are prepared to discuss here.

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নানারকম বিষয় আমার মাথার মধ্যে গজগজ করিতেছে। ময়রার দোকানে তবকে তবকে শালপাতা ও ধরে ধরে বরুফি জিলিপি সাজান থাকে; চাষীর উঠানে সারি সারি ধানের পালুই দেওয়া থাকে; বেনের বিপণিতে পাতা পাতা মসলা-বাঁধা থাকে; বৈজ্ঞানিকের আলয়ে যোগ ও বিয়োগ-শক্তিপূর্ণ “সেলের” শ্রেণী; রাসায়নিকের মন্দিরে রঙ বেরঙ শিশির বাহার; পরীক্ষার সময় সেনেট হাউসে গণ্ড অপোগণ্ড ছেলের কাতার; আমার মাথায় সেইরূপ নানাবিধ বিষয় অর্থাৎ ম্যাটার ধরে ধরে, তবকে তবকে, কাতারে কাতারে, সাজান রহিয়াছে। কম্পোজিটার যেমন “কেসের” অগণ্য খুপরি হইতে “টাইপ” তুলিয়া তড়িৎ বেগে “কম্পোজ” করিয়া চলে, আমিও সেইরূপ আমার মস্তকের খুপরি হইতে ভিন্ন ভিন্ন বিষয় উন্ডোলন করিয়া প্রায়ই তুমুল আন্দোলন করিয়া থাকি। পণ্ডিতগণের নিকট শুনিয়াছি, যাহার মাথা যত বড় ও ভারী, আর মস্তকের স্নায়ুপদার্থ যত অধিক কুণ্ডলীপাকান, তাহার বিদ্যা-বুদ্ধিও তদনুসারে পরিমাণে অধিক ও ধারে