

The General Education Board

We hope that it is not too much to say that the organization of the General Education Board is an event of National and historic importance. It reduces the great task of obliterating Southern illiteracy to simpler terms, and it marks a new epoch in both Southern and Northern effort.

Ever since the Civil War, help has been generously given to Southern education. The first efforts were naturally directed to the education of the negroes. Out of these efforts grew, not only the many schools of the ordinary sort for colored youth, that stand on the outskirts of most Southern cities, but Hampton Institute and its offshoot, Tuskegee Institute, and the constantly multiplying schools of this industrial type. As the work has gone on the number of schools has greatly increased, and the demands that they make on patriotic philanthropy have become greater. The response has been generous; but the great number of the separate appeals made has caused increasing confusion, and there was danger that a comprehensive view of the great problem would be obscured by its details. And it had become clear that the problem was too large to be solved without a comprehensive plan. The whole public-school system in the South must be built up, without regard to creed or race. Great educational foundations are made or strengthened every year (the gifts to education last year being \$107,000,000), but few of the great benefactions have gone to the South, chiefly because of a lack of definite knowledge of the situation, and because there seemed to be no satisfactory means of administering it.

In the South in the meantime, especially in North Carolina and Georgia, there was an awakening of public sentiment. The Southern people themselves, and especially certain educational leaders, began to show an energetic comprehension of the problem. Then came the Southern Educational Conference at Salem, N. C., last year, where Northern and Southern men of like minds and purpose found each other. The stimulus given by this meeting resulted in the organization,

under Mr. Robert C. Ogden's leadership, of the Southern Education Board, made up of men of each section of the country. This Board, through its Southern members, is making such a comprehensive study of Southern needs and opportunities as was, perhaps, never before made of any similar subject; and it is building up Southern opinion to a degree of earnestness that puts popular education before every other public duty. There was, for instance, recently held at the capital of North Carolina a meeting of influential men from every part of the State, who published an appeal to the public, signed by the Governor and many leading citizens of the State. In this appeal the educational backwardness of the commonwealth was frankly set forth and every community was urged by local taxation to increase its public-school fund.

Both in the South and in the North the problem is now more clearly understood in its comprehensive aspects than ever before; it must include the education at the public expense, as fast as public opinion can be built up to maintain it, of both races and sexes alike.

Following this unity of purpose and unity of understanding comes the organization of the General Education Board. Mr. William H. Baldwin, Jr., is Chairman, and among its members are Mr. Ogden, Chairman of the Southern Education Board; Dr. Gilman; Dr. Curry, the agent of the Slater and Peabody Funds; Mr. Jesup, the Treasurer of the Slater Fund; and Mr. George Foster Peabody, who is the Treasurer of the Board. It is a businesslike organization. It will have an office in New York in charge of its paid Secretary, Dr. Wallace Butterick, where the needs and opportunities of Southern education can be studied as clearly as the opportunities for investment might be studied in a well-organized office for that purpose. The results of first-hand investigation, the well-matured plans of the best students of the problem, reports of results of local efforts and of Northern benefactions—all these and similar facts will be accessible. And on the Board are men of Northern birth and men of Southern birth, working with a common plan and purpose.

The Board begins its work with more

than \$1,000,000, not as an endowment the income of which may be spent, but as a fund to be spent outright as it sees fit; and its hope is to become the channel through which many large benefactions will go to hasten the obliteration of illiteracy. It has a comprehensive plan, a businesslike organization, definite knowledge, and the hearty co-operation of the most enlightened leaders of education in the South of each race; and it will work with a double aim—(1) so to direct help as to build up self-help, and (2) to secure help in an even more generous measure than it has been given hitherto towards this great National and patriotic duty.



Mr. Phillips and the Poetic Drama

If evidence were needed of the high importance and significance of poetry as an expression, not only of the genius and skill of the poet, but of the spiritual life of a period, it is afforded by the eagerness with which the work of every new writer of verse is scanned and the instant response which is evoked by verse of real feeling and of original power. The great mass of contemporary verse is excellent in form, admirable in sentiment, and often characterized by grace and finish, but it lacks vitality; it does not touch the life of the world with any searching power, and it evokes little response.

From this point of view, the work of a man like Mr. Stephen Phillips is of interest, not only to the student of letters, to whom the highest enjoyment is afforded by any exquisite, delicate, or beautiful example of the art of verse-making, but to the larger body of readers, whose judgment is, after all has been said, decisive in final settlement of a writer's place and fame. When Mr. Phillips published "*Marpessa*," which appeared in his earlier volume of verse, he produced an immediate impression; for rarely has the deep significance of human love, with its mixed elements of joy and sadness, its deathless endurance, and its pitiless exposure to the storms of fate, been more powerfully or strikingly interpreted. There were other poems in the volume which, like "*Christ in Hades*," brought a

breath of original power with them, and seemed to announce the coming of a new force in poetry. After a little interval a second volume appeared from the same hand, and it was found that Mr. Phillips had taken up that very difficult literary form in which are lodged some of the priceless treasures of English literature, but which has been so rarely practiced of late—the poetic drama. In "*Paola and Francesca*" one of the great love stories of the world was told again with exquisite delicacy, and with a beauty which carried it at once home to the imagination and lodged it in the hearts of those who love noble interpretations of great passions. The drama was not without its faults, but it was stamped by distinction, by elevation, and by beauty of a rare kind. When "*Herod*" appeared, it was seen to be at once more dramatic and less beautiful than "*Paola and Francesca*." The background had been changed from Italy to Judea, there was less subtlety of motive, less masking of purpose, greater directness and tragic force. And now Mr. Phillips makes his third experiment in this difficult form, and again shifts his background, and takes up one of the oldest and most widely known of the great stories. "*Ulysses*," which bears the imprint of the Macmillan Company, inevitably recalls one of the greatest poets of the world and a poetic manner at once noble, simple, and touched with the breadth and dignity of the classical epic.

In his introductory note Mr. Phillips explains that he has conceived parts of the poem, at least, on Virgilian rather than on Homeric lines, and he impliedly pleads for a judgment of his work which shall separate the material from the great traditions with which it is allied. He has a right to be heard, but what he asks is extremely difficult; for the story of Ulysses is so imbedded in the *Odyssey* that it is almost impossible wholly to detach it; it seems to belong by its very nature to the epic rather than the dramatic form, and it seems to demand by its spirit epic rather than dramatic treatment. The epic may not be lacking in crises, or in climaxes of action and emotion, but these are subordinate to certain broad, general effects which it seeks to secure. On the other hand, it is the very essence of the drama that its movement