

THE NEW JAPANESE EDUCATION.

THROUGH the thoughtfulness of Mr. E. W. Clement of Tokyo, we have received an elaborate review from a Japanese daily of a series of four graded text-books designed "to bring Japan's moral creed up to date," by inculcating high moral ideals while at the same time instilling the principles of the most primary instruction. They are of unusual value to foreigners who are interested in following the development of the Japanese mind, because they represent pretty thoroughly the national sentiment that prevails on ethical questions. The following paragraphs from the journal referred to, give an idea of the need of this series and the purpose it is to serve:

"Speaking generally, the ethical policy of the Department during the past twenty years may be said to have favored a reiteration of Confucianism in one form or other, while allowing teachers to introduce Western ethical teaching when so inclined. The result of this policy has been considerable confusion of thought. The old and the new have not been blended together by any means, and the minds of young men to-day as a consequence of this are very unsettled as to the moral standard which every true-hearted, loyal Japanese should implicitly follow. In this country morality as a rule does not rest on religion, and the government has most resolutely set its face against basing moral teaching on religion. But the Department of Education has naturally wished at the same time to make its moral teaching authoritative, and it has now hit on the happy expedient of building up a system of morality firmly based on the most indestructible of all foundations, utility.

"It has at last reached the conclusion that moral codes which suited the nation well enough in feudal days do not quite suit it to-day; that the new civilization, new form of government, and new customs render the recasting of the nation's code of morals a necessity. Traditional Japanese morality is tainted with a certain amount of despotism. Moreover, it is a onesided system designed especially to support the cause of those in authority. While it defines the duties

of inferiors to superiors, it says little about the duties of superiors to inferiors. Individualism as a principle is not included in the old system. There is no attempt to give due weight to egotism as well as to altruism, to teach self-development, self-respect, independence of spirit and the like alongside with devotion to others and self-sacrifice. The interest of these text-books is just this. They teach the boys and girls of Japan to-day that they are under an obligation to perform numerous duties of which the children of pre-Meiji days never heard."

The publication of these text-books is too serious an innovation not to meet with opposition from ultra-conservative statesmen. "The ground taken by these critics is that the new text-books do not give sufficient weight to the culture of loyalty, filial piety, and patriotism. They do not deny that these virtues are treated here and there, but they are put on a level with the development of independence of spirit, self-reliance, and the like; whereas in the opinion of these old statesmen they should occupy a higher rank."

They were answered by Dr. Kato Hiroyuki, the chairman of the committee that passed upon the value of the books and sanctioned their publication.

"He maintains that traditional Japanese ethical teaching is embodied in the text-books in a most unmistakable manner. But at the same time he and the compilers of the text-books are of opinion that the altered circumstances of the country demand that Japan should add some new elements to the moral training she gives her young people, and the most important of these elements is the cultivation of self-reliance, self-respect and independence of spirit. In Japan these qualities are not so highly developed as in the West, observes Dr. Kato, and this fact militates considerably against Japan in her competition with foreigners."

Because of this adverse criticism the Minister of Education has promised to revise the text-books by the end of the year, even though the majority of officials and statesmen are emphatic in their expressions of approval. "It remains to be seen how far the alterations will go. It is to be hoped not very far; for the qualities held up to admiration in these text-books are certainly those which after centuries of experience and experimentation have in the West been found worthy of implicit confidence. As moral text-books they have a brightness, a crispness, and pointedness, which we should be very sorry to see removed. Compared with the dreary text-books of old times, with their long, learned, and, to the child, unintelligible quotations, they are a perfect God-send to modern boys and girls."

"The text-books are graded so as to meet the capacity of elementary school children during the first four years of the course. The chapters are all very short and the language is most simple. The plan is to begin with the most easily understood subjects, reserving the most difficult ones for the last volume, though it can hardly be said that any of the topics treated are above the comprehension of boys and girls of average ability."

The books contain chapters on every conceivable virtue and relation in life, and these are made attractive by illustrative incidents from the lives of remarkable Japanese, Europeans, and Americans. The last chapter in the fourth book gives such an excellent summary of this entire code of ethics, that we quote it entire in translation:

"A good Japanese is one who fulfils all his duties to his parents, brothers and sisters, who never forgets the veneration due to his ancestors, who as a master is kind and considerate to his servants, who as a servant is faithful to his master. A good Japanese is a man who in his intercourse with friends, neighbors and the general public acts in a strictly correct manner, respecting the persons, property, liberty, and reputation of other people. He will never forget benefits conferred on him. He will act straightforwardly in all things, scrupulously observing his agreements, acting in a generous and large-minded way to others. He will be kindly and charitable, a respecter of what is right, and full of compassion for the unfortunate, holding in high esteem public order, devising schemes for furthering the progress of society and careful not to be guilty of any impropriety even in his dealings with foreigners. A good Japanese develops his physical powers, stores his mind with useful knowledge, cultivates valour, endurance, self-control, moderation, modesty, and self-examination, ever bears in mind what is required of him in work, business, competition, and money-making, and how men's trust is to be won. He forms useful habits, he practices virtue, he applies his mind to the practical application of learning, he devises measures for self-development and continual progress. A good Japanese thinks highly of his country, and by the culture of a spirit of loyalty and patriotism strives to fulfil all the obligations of a good citizen. In this manner should we develop our own personality, raise families, and do all that is required of us to benefit the world and our fellow-men, and thus shall we constitute ourselves good Japanese and shall carry out the Imperial desires set forth in the Imperial Rescript issued on October 30th, 1890." Then follows the Imperial Rescript in large print.