

THE HOME
EDUCATION SERIES

VOLUME 6

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

CHARLOTTE MASON

'Home Education' Series

VOLUME VI.

A Philosophy of Education

By

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6. *Knowledge in Literary Form*: Mind demands method—No one can live without a philosophy which points out the end of effort—A patchwork of principles etrays us—Human nature has not failed—But education has failed us—A new scale of values—We want more life—Engrossing interests—We want hope—Pleasure comes in effort, not attainment—We want to be governed—A new start—Other ways of looking at things—We are uneasy—And yet almost anyone will risk his life—Splendid magnanimity in the War—We are not decadent—Are ready for a life of passionate devotion—Our demands met by Words—And by the manifestation of a Person—“The shout of a King” among us—But *understanding*, prior to good works—A consummate philosophy which meets every occasion—The teaching of Christ—Other knowledge “dumb” without the fundamental knowledge—Our latest educational authority on imagination—Rousseau—Our chief

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A luminous figure of Education—But only 'universal opportunity'—No new thing—No universal boon like air—Only for the few who choose—No reflection on Public Schools but on the system of the Big Mesh—The letters of two Public School boys pathetic but reassuring—Desire of knowledge, inextinguishable—But limitations of the absence of education—No cultivated sense of humour—No sense of the supreme delightfulness of knowledge—Coningsby—Teaching how to learn, a farce—No avenue to knowledge but knowledge itself.

The Trustees have, at the request of the Publishers, been obliged to reduce the original volume. Two important sections on the practical work have been omitted,—(A)—Children's examination answers and, (B)—Some discussions of the method by Educational Authorities and teachers. The added chapters to which reference is made on page 20 as illustrating the history of the "Liberal Education for All" movement in the P.N.E.U. were first published as follows:—

(1) *THE BASIS OF NATIONAL STRENGTH* appeared in *The Times* in 1912 and led to the work of the P.N.E.U. in *Public Elementary Schools* and as a result.

(2) *A LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR ALL IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS* appeared in 1916.

(3) *A LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR ALL IN CONTINUATION SCHOOLS* was offered by Miss Mason in 1918 as some solution of the problem of further education for young adults who had passed through the *Public Elementary Schools* and were either attending, *Technical Schools* or had already started work in factories.

(4) To complete the series Miss Mason wrote in 1919 a survey of the P.N.E.U. work in private secondary schools and classes.

Author's Preface

IT would seem a far cry from *Undine* to a 'liberal education' but there is a point of contact between the two; a soul awoke within a water-sprite at the touch of love; so, I have to tell of the awakening of a 'general soul' at the touch of knowledge. Eight years ago the 'soul' of a class of children in a mining village school awoke simultaneously at this magic touch and has remained awake. We know that religion can awaken souls, that love makes a new man, that the call of a vocation may do it, and in the age of the Renaissance, men's souls, the general soul, awoke to knowledge: but this appeal rarely reaches the modern soul; and, notwithstanding the pleasantness attending lessons and marks in all our schools, I believe the ardour for knowledge in the children of this mining village is a phenomenon that indicates new possibilities. Already many thousands of the children of the Empire had experienced this intellectual conversion, but they were the children of educated persons. To find that the children of a mining population were equally responsive seemed to open a new hope for the world. It may be that the souls of all children are waiting for the call of knowledge to awaken them to delightful living.

This is how the late Mrs. Francis Steintal, who was the happy instigator of the movement in Council Schools, wrote,—“Think of the meaning of this in the lives of the children,—disciplined lives, and no lawless strikes, justice, an end to class warfare, developed intellects, and

no market for trashy and corrupt literature! We shall, or rather they will, live in a redeemed world." This was written in a moment of enthusiasm on hearing that a certain County Council had accepted a scheme of work for this pioneer school; enthusiasm sees in advance the fields white to the harvest, but indeed the event is likely to justify high expectations. Though less than nine years have passed since that pioneer school made the bold attempt, already many thousands of children working under numerous County Councils are finding that "Studies serve for delight."

No doubt children are well taught and happy in their lessons as things are, and this was specially true of the school in question; yet both teachers and children find an immeasurable difference between the casual interest roused by marks, pleasing oral lessons and other school devices, and the sort of steady avidity for knowledge that comes with the awakened soul. The children have converted the school inspectors: "And the English!" said one of these in astonishment as he listened to their long, graphic, dramatic narrations of what they had heard. During the last thirty years we (including many fellow workers) have had thousands of children, in our schoolrooms, home and other, working on the lines of Dean Colet's prayer for St. Paul's School,— "Pray for the children to prosper in good life and good literature;" probably all children so taught grow up with such principles and pursuits as make for happy and useful citizenship.

I should like to add that we have no axe to grind. The public good is our aim; and the methods proposed are applicable in any school. My object in offering this volume to the public is to urge upon all who are concerned with education a few salient principles which are generally either unknown or disregarded; and a few methods which, like that bathing in Jordan, are too

simple to commend themselves to the 'general.' Yet these principles and methods make education entirely effectual.

I should like to add that no statement that I have advanced in the following volume rests upon opinion only; Every point has been proved in thousands of instances, and the method may be seen at work in many schools, large and small, Elementary and Secondary.

I have to beg the patience of the reader who is asked to approach the one terminus by various avenues, and I cannot do so better than in the words of old Fuller:—"Good Reader. I suspect I may have written some things twice; if not in the same words yet in sense, which I desire you to pass by favourably, forasmuch as you may well think, it was difficult and a dull thing for me in so great a number of independent sentences to find out the repetitions. . . . Besides the pains, such a search would cost me more time than I can afford it; for my glass of life running now low, I must not suffer one sand to fall in waste nor suffer one minute in picking of straws. . . . But to conclude this, since in matters of advice, Precept must be upon Precept, Line upon Line, I apologise in the words of St. Paul, 'To write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.'"

I am unwilling to close what is probably the last preface I shall be called upon to write without a very grateful recognition of the co-operation of those friends who are working with me in what seems to us a great cause. The Parents' National Educational Union has fulfilled its mission, as declared in its first prospectus, nobly and generously. "The Union exists for the benefit of parents and teachers of *all classes*;" and; for the last eight years it has undertaken the labour and expense of an energetic propaganda on behalf of Elementary Schools, of which

about 150 are now working on the programmes of the Parents' Union School. During the last year a pleasing and hopeful development has taken place under the auspices of the Hon. Mrs. Franklin. It was suggested to the Head of a London County Council School to form an association of the parents of the children in that school, offering them certain advantages and requiring a small payment to cover expenses. At the first meeting one of the fathers present got up and said that he was greatly disappointed. He had expected to see some three hundred parents and there were only about sixty present! The promoters of the meeting were, however, well pleased to see the sixty, most of whom became members of the Parents' Association, and the work goes on with spirit.

We are deeply indebted to many fellow-workers, but not even that very courteous gentleman who once wrote a letter to the Romans could make suitable acknowledgments to all of those to whom we owe the success of a movement the *rationale* of which I attempt to make clear in the following pages.

CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

HOUSE OF EDUCATION,
AMBLESIDE,
1922.

A Short Synopsis

OF THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
ADVANCED IN THIS VOLUME

“No sooner doth the truth . . . come into the soul’s sight, but the soul knows her to be her first and old acquaintance.”

“The consequence of truth is great: therefore the judgment of it must not be negligent.” (WHICHCOTE).

1. Children are born persons.
2. They are not born *either* good or bad, but with possibilities for good and for evil.
3. The principles of authority on the one hand, and of obedience on the other, are natural, necessary and fundamental; but—
4. These principles are limited by the respect due to the personality of children, which must not be encroached upon, whether by the direct use of fear or love, suggestion or influence, or by undue play upon any one natural desire.
5. Therefore, we are limited to three educational instruments—the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas. The P.N.E.U. Motto is: “Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life.”
6. When we say that “*education is an atmosphere,*” we do not mean that a child should be isolated in what may be called a ‘child-environment’ especially adapted and prepared, but that we should take into account the educational value of his natural home atmosphere, both as regards persons and things, and should let him live freely among his proper conditions. It stultifies a child to bring down his world to the ‘child’s’ level.
7. By ‘*education is a discipline,*’ we mean the discipline of habits, formed definitely and thoughtfully, whether habits of mind or body. Physiologists tell us of the adaptation of brain structures to habitual lines of thought, *i.e.*, to our habits.
8. In saying that “*education is a life,*” the need of intellectual and moral as well as of physical sustenance is implied. The mind feeds on ideas, and therefore children should have a generous curriculum.

9. We hold that the child's mind is no mere *sac* to hold ideas; but is rather, if the figure may be allowed, a spiritual *organism*, with an appetite for all knowledge. This is its proper diet, with which it is prepared to deal; and which it can digest and assimilate as the body does foodstuffs.

10. Such a doctrine as e.g. the Herbartian, that the mind is a receptacle, lays the stress of Education (the preparation of knowledge in enticing morsels duly ordered) upon the teacher. Children taught on this principle are in danger of receiving much teaching with little knowledge; and the teacher's axiom is "what a child learns matters less than how he learns it."

11. But we, believing that the normal child has powers of mind which fit him to deal with all knowledge proper to him, give him a full and generous curriculum; taking care only that all knowledge offered him is vital, that is, that facts are not presented without their informing ideas. Out of this conception comes our principle that,—

12. "*Education is the Science of Relations*"; that is, that a child has natural relations with a vast number of things and thoughts: so we train him upon physical exercises, nature lore, handicrafts, science and art, and upon *many living* books, for we know that our business is not to teach him all about anything, but to help him to make valid as many as may be of—

"Those first-born affinities

That fit our new existence to existing things."

13. In devising a SYLLABUS for a normal child, of whatever social class, three points must be considered:—

- (a) He requires *much* knowledge, for the mind needs sufficient food as much as does the body.
- (b) The knowledge should be various, for sameness in mental diet does not create appetite (*i.e.*, curiosity).
- (c) Knowledge should be communicated in well-chosen language, because his attention responds naturally to what is conveyed in literary form.

14. As knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced, children should 'tell back' after a single reading or hearing; or should write on some part of what they have read.

15. A *single reading* is insisted on, because children have naturally great power of attention; but this force is dissipated by the re-reading of passages, and also, by questioning, summarising, and the like.

Acting upon these and some other points in the behaviour of mind, we find that *the educability of children is enormously*

greater than has hitherto been supposed, and is but little dependent on such circumstances as heredity and environment. Nor is the accuracy of this statement limited to clever children or to children of the educated classes: thousands of children in Elementary Schools respond freely to this method, which is based on the *behaviour of mind*.

16. There are two guides to moral and intellectual self-management to offer to children, which we may call 'the way of the will' and 'the way of the reason.'

17. *The way of the will*: Children should be taught, (a) to distinguish between 'I want' and 'I will.' (b) That the way to will effectively is to turn our thoughts from that which we desire but do not will. (c) That the best way to turn our thoughts is to think of or do some quite different thing, entertaining or interesting. (d) That after a little rest in this way, the will returns to its work with new vigour. (This adjunct of the will is familiar to us as *diversion*, whose office it is to ease us for a time from will effort, that we may 'will' again with added power. The use of suggestion as an aid to the will is *to be deprecated*, as tending to stultify and stereotype character. It would seem that spontaneity is a condition of development, and that human nature needs the discipline of failure as well as of success.)

18. *The way of reason*: We teach children, too, not to 'lean (too confidently) to their own understanding'; because the function of reason is to give logical demonstration (a) of mathematical truth, (b) of an initial idea, accepted by the will. In the former case, reason is, practically, an infallible guide, but in the latter, it is not always a safe one; for, whether that idea be right or wrong, reason will confirm it by irrefragable proofs.

19. Therefore, children should be taught, as they become mature enough to understand such teaching, that the chief responsibility which rests on them as *persons* is the acceptance or rejection of ideas. To help them in this choice we give them principles of conduct, and a wide range of the knowledge fitted to them. These principles should save children from some of the loose thinking and heedless action which cause most of us to live at a lower level than we need.

20. We allow no separation to grow up between the intellectual and 'spiritual' life of children, but teach them that the Divine Spirit has constant access to their spirits, and is their continual Helper in all the interests, duties and joys of life.

Introduction

THESE are anxious days for all who are engaged in education. We rejoiced in the fortitude, valour and devotion shown by our men in the War and recognize that these things are due to the Schools as well as to the fact that England still breeds "very valiant creatures." It is good to know that "the whole army was illustrious." The heroism of our officers derives an added impulse from that tincture of 'letters' that every Public schoolboy gets, and those "playing fields" where boys acquire habits of obedience and command. But what about the abysmal ignorance shown in the wrong thinking of many of the men who stayed at home? Are we to blame? I suppose most of us feel that we are: for these men are educated as we choose to understand education, that is, they can read and write, think perversely, and follow an argument, though they are unable to detect a fallacy. If we ask in perplexity, why do so many men and women seem incapable of generous impulse, of reasoned patriotism, of seeing beyond the circle of their own interests, is not the answer, that men are enabled for such things by education? These are the marks of educated persons; and when millions of men who should be the backbone of the country seem to be dead to public claims, we have to ask,—Why then are

not these persons educated, and what have we given them in lieu of education?

Our errors in education, so far as we have erred, turn upon the conception we form of 'mind,' and the theory which has filtered through to most teachers implies the out-of-date notion of the development of 'faculties,' a notion which itself rests on the axiom that thought is no more than a function of the brain. Here we find the sole justification of the scanty curricula provided in most of our schools, for the tortuous processes of our teaching, for the mischievous assertion that "it does not matter what a child learns but only how he learns it." If we teach much and children learn little we comfort ourselves with the idea that we are 'developing' this or the other 'faculty.' A great future lies before the nation which shall perceive that knowledge is the sole concern of education proper, as distinguished from training, and that knowledge is the necessary daily food of the mind.

Teachers are looking out for the support of a sound theory, and such a theory must recognize with conviction the part mind plays in education and the conditions under which this prime agent acts. We want a philosophy of education which, admitting that thought alone appeals to mind, that thought begets thought, shall relegate to their proper subsidiary places all those sensory and muscular activities which are supposed to afford intellectual as well as physical training. The latter is so important in and for itself that it needs not to be bolstered up by the notion that it includes the whole, or the practically important part, of education. The same remark holds good of vocational training. Our journals ask with scorn,—“Is there no education but what is got out of books at school? Is not the lad who works in the fields getting education?” and the public lacks the courage to say definitely, “No, he is

not," because there is no clear notion current as to what education means, and how it is to be distinguished from vocational training. But the people themselves begin to understand and to clamour for an education which shall qualify their children for life rather than for earning a living. As a matter of fact, it is the man who has read and thought on many subjects who is, with the necessary training, the most capable whether in handling tools, drawing plans, or keeping books. The more of a person we succeed in making a child, the better will he both fulfil his own life and serve society.

Much thoughtful care has been spent in ascertaining the causes of the German breakdown in character and conduct; the war scourge was symptomatic and the symptoms have been duly traced to their cause in the thoughts the people have been taught to think during three or four generations. We have heard much about Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardt and the rest; but Professor Muirhead did us good service in carrying the investigation further back. Darwin's theories of natural selection, the survival of the fittest, the struggle for existence, struck root in Germany in fitting soil; and the ideas of the superman, the super state, the right of might—to repudiate treaties, to eliminate feebler powers, to recognize no law but expediency—all this appears to come as naturally out of Darwinism as a chicken comes out of an egg. No doubt the same *dicta* have struck us in the *Commentaries* of Frederick the Great; "they shall take who have the power, and they shall keep who can," is ages older than Darwin, but possibly this is what our English philosopher did for Germany:—There is a tendency in human nature to elect the obligations of natural law in preference to those of spiritual law; to take its code of ethics from science, and, following this tendency, the Germans found in their reading of Darwin sanction for manifestations of brutality.

Here are a few examples of how German philosophers amplify the Darwinian text:—"In matter dwell all natural and spiritual potencies. Matter is the foundation of all being." "What we call spirit, thought, the faculty of knowledge, consists of natural though peculiarly combined forces." Darwin himself protests against the struggle for existence being the most potent agency where the higher part of man's nature is concerned, and he no more thought of giving a materialistic tendency to modern education than Locke thought of teaching principles which should bring about the French Revolution; but men's thoughts are more potent than they know, and these two Englishmen may be credited with influencing powerfully two world-wide movements. In Germany, "prepared by a quarter of a century of materialistic thought," the teaching of Darwin was accepted as offering emancipation from various moral restraints. Ernst Haeckel, his distinguished follower, finds in the law of natural selection sanction for Germany's lawless action, and also, that pregnant doctrine of the superman. "This principle of selection is nothing less than democratic; on the contrary it is aristocratic in the strictest sense of the word." We know how Buchner, again, simplified and popularised these new theories,—"All the faculties which we include under the name of psychical activities are only functions of the brain substance. Thought stands in the same relation to the brain as the gall to the liver."

What use, or misuse, Germany has made of the teaching of Darwin would not (save for the War) be of immediate concern to us, were it not that she has given us back our own in the form of that "mythology of faculty psychology" which is all we possess in the way of educational thought. English psychology proper has advanced if not to firm ground, at any rate to the point of repudiating the 'faculty' basis. "However much assailed,

the concept of a 'mind' is," we are told, "to be found in all psychological writers."¹ But there are but mind and matter, and when we are told again that "psychology rests on feeling," where are we? Is there a middle region?

II

We fail to recognize that as the body requires wholesome food and cannot nourish itself upon any substance so the mind too requires meat after its kind. If the War taught nothing else it taught us that men are spirits, that the spirit, mind, of a man is more than his flesh, that his spirit is the man, that for the thoughts of his heart he gives the breath of his body. As a consequence of this recognition of our spiritual nature, the lesson for us at the moment is that the great thoughts, great events, great considerations, which form the background of our national thought, shall be the content of the education we pass on.

The educational thought we hear most about is, as I have said, based on sundry Darwinian axioms out of which we get the notion that nothing matters but physical fitness and vocational training. However important these are, they are not the chief thing. A century ago when Prussia was shipwrecked in the Napoleonic wars it was discovered that not Napoleon but Ignorance was the formidable national enemy; a few philosophers took the matter in hand, and history, poetry, philosophy, proved the salvation of a ruined nation, because such studies make for the development of personality, public spirit, initiative, the qualities of which the State was in need, and which most advance individual happiness and success. On the other hand, the period when

¹ I quote from the article on Psychology in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as being the most likely to exhibit the authoritative position.

Germany made her school curriculum utilitarian marks the beginning of her moral downfall. History repeats itself. There are interesting rumours afloat of how the students at Bonn, for example, went in solemn procession to make a bonfire of French novels, certain prints, articles of luxury and the like; things like these had brought about the ruin of Germany and it was the part of the youth to save her now as before. Are they to have another Tugendbund?

We want an education which shall nourish the mind while not neglecting either physical or vocational training; in short, we want a working philosophy of education. I think that we of the P.N.E.U. have arrived at such a body of theory, tested and corrected by some thirty years of successful practice with thousands of children. This theory has already been set forth in volumes¹ published at intervals during the last thirty-five years; so I shall indicate here only a few salient points which seem to me to differ from general theory and practice,—

(a) The children, not the teachers, are the responsible persons; they do the work by self-effort.

(b) The teachers give sympathy and occasionally elucidate, sum up or enlarge, but the actual work is done by the scholars.

(c) These read in a term one, or two, or three thousand pages, according to their age, school and Form, in a large number of set books. The quantity set for each lesson allows of only a single reading; but the reading is tested by narration, or by writing on a test passage. When the terminal examination is at hand so much ground has been covered that revision is out of the question; what the children have read they know, and write on any part of it with ease and fluency, in vigorous English; they usually spell well.

¹ *The Home Education Series.*

Much is said from time to time to show that 'mere book-learning' is rather contemptible, and that "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." May I point out that whatever discredit is due to the use of books does not apply to this method, which so far as I can discover has not hitherto been employed. Has an attempt been made before on a wide scale to secure that scholars should know their books, many pages in many books, at a single reading, in such a way that months later they can write freely and accurately on any part of the term's reading?

(*d*) There is no selection of studies, or of passages or of episodes, on the ground of interest. The best available book is chosen and is read through perhaps in the course of two or three years.

(*e*) The children study many books on many subjects, but exhibit no confusion of thought, and 'howlers' are almost unknown.

(*f*) They find that, in Bacon's phrase, "Studies serve for delight"; this delight being not in the lessons or the personality of the teacher, but purely in their 'lovely books,' 'glorious books.'

(*g*) The books used are, whenever possible, literary in style.

(*h*) Marks, prizes, places, rewards, punishments, praise, blame, or other inducements are not necessary to secure attention, which is voluntary, immediate and surprisingly perfect.

(*i*) The success of the scholars in what may be called disciplinary subjects, such as Mathematics and Grammar, depends largely on the power of the teacher, though the pupils' habit of attention is of use in these too.

(*j*) No stray lessons are given on interesting subjects; the knowledge the children get is consecutive.

The unusual interest children show in their work, their power of concentration, their wide, and as far as it goes, accurate knowledge of historical, literary and some scientific subjects, has challenged attention and the general conclusion is that these are the children of educated and cultivated parents. It was vain to urge that the home schoolroom does not usually produce remarkable educational results; but the way is opening to prove that the power these children show is common to *all* children; at last there is hope that the offspring of working-class parents may be led into the wide pastures of a liberal education.

Are we not justified in concluding that singular effects must have commensurate causes, and that we have chanced to light on unknown tracts in the region of educational thought. At any rate that GOLDEN RULE of which Comenius was in search has discovered itself, the Rule,—“WHEREBY TEACHERS SHALL TEACH LESS AND SCHOLARS SHALL LEARN MORE.”

Let me now outline a few of the educational principles which account for unusual results.

III

PRINCIPLES HITHERTO UNRECOGNIZED OR DISREGARDED

I have enumerated some of the points in which our work is exceptional in the hope of convincing the reader that unusual work carried on successfully in hundreds of schoolrooms—home and other—is based on principles hitherto unrecognized. The recognition of these principles should put our national education on an intelligent basis and should make for general stability, joy in living, and personal initiative.

May I add one or two more arguments in support of my plea,—

The appeal is not to the clever child only, but to the average and even to the 'backward' child.

This scheme is carried out in less time than ordinary school work on the same subjects.

There are no revisions, no evening lessons, no cramming or 'getting up' of subjects; therefore there is much time whether for vocational work or interests or hobbies.

All intellectual work is done in the hours of morning school, and the afternoons are given to field nature studies, drawing, handicrafts, etc. Notwithstanding these limitations the children produce a surprising amount of good intellectual work.

No home-work is required.

It is not that 'we' (of the P.N.E.U.) are persons of peculiar genius; it is that, like Paley's man who found the watch, "we have chanced on a good thing."

"No gain

That I experience must remain unshared."

We feel that the country and indeed the world should have the benefit of educational discoveries which act powerfully as a moral lever, for we are experiencing anew the joy of the Renaissance, but without its pagan lawlessness.

Let me trace as far as I can recall them the steps by which I arrived at some of the conclusions upon which we are acting. While still a young woman I saw a great deal of a family of Anglo-Indian children who had come 'home' to their grandfather's house and were being brought up by an aunt who was my intimate friend. The children were astonishing to me; they were persons of generous impulses and sound judgment, of great intellectual aptitude, of imagination and moral insight. These last two points were, I recollect, illustrated one day by a little maiden of five who came home from her walk silent and sad; some letting alone, and some wise openings brought out at last between sobs,—

“a poor man—no home—nothing to eat—no bed to lie upon,”—and then the child was relieved by tears. Such incidents are common enough in families, but they were new to me. I was reading a good deal of philosophy and ‘Education’ at the time for I thought with the enthusiasm of a young teacher that Education should regenerate the world. I had an Elementary School and a pioneer Church High School at this same time so that I was enabled to study children in large groups; but at school children are not so self-revealing as at home. I began under the guidance of these Anglo Indian children to take the measure of a *person* and soon to suspect that children are *more* than we, their elders, except that their ignorance is illimitable.

One limitation I did discover in the minds of these little people; my friend insisted that they could not understand English Grammar; I maintained that they could and wrote a little Grammar (still waiting to be prepared for publication!) for the two of seven and eight; but she was right; I was allowed to give the lessons myself with what lucidity and freshness I could command; in vain; the Nominative ‘Case’ baffled them; their minds rejected the abstract conception just as children reject the notion of writing an “Essay on Happiness.” But I was beginning to make discoveries; the second being, that the mind of a child takes or rejects according to its needs.

From this point it was not difficult to go on to the perception that, whether in taking or rejecting, the mind was functioning for its own nourishment; that the mind, in fact, requires sustenance as does the body, in order that it increase and be strong; but because the mind is not to be measured or weighed but is spiritual, so its sustenance must be spiritual too, must, in fact, be ideas (in the Platonic sense of images). I soon perceived that children were well equipped to deal with ideas, and

that explanations, questionings, amplifications, are unnecessary and wearisome. Children have a natural appetite for knowledge which is informed with thought. They bring imagination, judgment, and the various so-called 'faculties,' to bear upon a new idea pretty much as the gastric juices act upon a food ration. This was illuminating but rather startling ; the whole intellectual apparatus of the teacher, his power of vivid presentation, apt illustration, able summing up, subtle questioning, all these were hindrances and intervened between children and the right nutriment duly served; this, on the other hand, they received with the sort of avidity and simplicity with which a healthy child eats his dinner.

The Scottish school of philosophers came to my aid here with what may be called their doctrine of the desires, which, I perceived, stimulate the action of mind and so cater for spiritual (not necessarily religious) sustenance as the appetites do for that of the body and for the continuance of the race. This was helpful; I inferred that one of these, the Desire of Knowledge (Curiosity) was the chief instrument of education; that this desire might be paralysed or made powerless like an unused limb by encouraging other desires to intervene between a child and the knowledge proper for him; the desire for place,—emulation; for prizes,—avarice; for power,—ambition; for praise,—vanity, might each be a stumbling block to him. It seemed to me that we teachers had unconsciously elaborated a system which should secure the discipline of the schools and the eagerness of the scholars,—by means of marks, prizes, and the like,—and yet eliminate that knowledge-hunger, itself the quite sufficient incentive to education.

Then arose the question,—Cannot people get on with little knowledge? Is it really necessary after all? My child-friends supplied the answer: their insatiable

curiosity shewed me that the wide world and its history was barely enough to satisfy a child who had not been made apathetic by spiritual malnutrition. What, then, is knowledge?—was the next question that occurred; a question which the intellectual labour of ages has not settled; but perhaps this is enough to go on with;—that only becomes knowledge to a person which he has assimilated, which his mind has acted upon.

Children's aptitude for knowledge and their eagerness for it made for the conclusion that the field of a child's knowledge may not be artificially restricted, that he has a right to and necessity for as much and as varied knowledge as he is able to receive; and that the limitations in his curriculum should depend only upon the age at which he must leave school; in a word, a *common* curriculum (up to the age of say, fourteen or fifteen) appears to be due to all children.

We have left behind the feudal notion that intellect is a class prerogative, that intelligence is a matter of inheritance and environment; inheritance, no doubt, means much but everyone has a very mixed inheritance; environment makes for satisfaction or uneasiness, but education is of the spirit and is not to be taken in by the eye or effected by the hand; mind appeals to mind and thought begets thought and that is how we become educated. For this reason we owe it to every child to put him in communication with great minds that he may get at great thoughts; with the minds, that is, of those who have left us great works; and the only vital method of education appears to be that children should read worthy books, many worthy books.

It will be said on the one hand that many schools have their own libraries or the scholars have the free use of a public library and that children do read; and on the other that the literary language of first-rate books offers an impassable barrier to working-men's children. In

the first place we all know that desultory reading is delightful and incidentally profitable but is not *education* whose concern is *knowledge*. That is, the mind of the desultory reader only rarely makes the act of appropriation which is necessary before the matter we read becomes personal knowledge. We must read in order to know or we do not know by reading.

As for the question of literary form, many circumstances and considerations which it would take too long to describe brought me to perceive that delight in literary form is native to us all until we are 'educated' out of it.

It is difficult to explain how I came to a solution of a puzzling problem,—how to secure attention. Much observation of children, various incidents from one's general reading, the recollection of my own childhood and the consideration of my present habits of mind brought me to the recognition of certain laws of the mind, by working in accordance with which the steady attention of children of any age and any class in society is insured, week in, week out,—attention, not affected by distracting circumstances. It is not a matter of 'personal magnetism,' for hundreds of teachers of very varying quality, working in home schoolrooms and in Elementary and Secondary Schools on this method,¹ secure it without effort; neither does it rest upon the 'doctrine of interest'; no doubt the scholars are interested, sometimes delighted; but they are interested in a great variety of matters and their attention does not flag in the 'dull parts.'

It is not easy to sum up in a few short sentences those principles upon which the mind naturally acts and which I have tried to bring to bear upon a school curriculum. The fundamental idea is, that children are *persons* and are therefore moved by the same springs of conduct as

¹ In connection with the *Parents' Union School*.

their elders. Among these is the Desire of Knowledge, knowledge-hunger being natural to everybody. History, Geography, the thoughts of other people, roughly, the humanities, are proper for us all, and are the objects of the natural desire of knowledge. So too, are Science, for we all live in the world; and Art, for we all require beauty, and are eager to know how to discriminate; social science, Ethics, for we are aware of the need to learn about the conduct of life; and Religion, for, like those men we heard of at the Front, we all 'want God.'

In the nature of things then the unspoken demand of children is for a wide and very varied curriculum; it is necessary that they should have some knowledge of the wide range of interests proper to them as human beings, and for no reasons of convenience or time limitations may we curtail their proper curriculum.

Perceiving the range of knowledge to which children as persons are entitled the questions are, how shall they be induced to take that knowledge, and what can the children of the people learn in the short time they are at school? We have discovered a working answer to these two conundrums. I say discovered, and not invented, for there is only one way of learning, and the intelligent persons who can talk well on many subjects and the expert in one learn in the one way, that is, *they read to know*. What I have found out is, that this method is available for every child, whether in the dilatory and desultory home schoolroom or in the large classes of Elementary Schools.

Children no more come into the world without provision for dealing with knowledge than without provision for dealing with food. They bring with them not only that intellectual appetite, the desire of knowledge, but also an enormous, an unlimited power of attention to which the power of retention (memory) seems to be attached,

as one digestive process succeeds another, until the final assimilation. "Yes," it will be said, "they are capable of much curiosity and consequent attention but they can only occasionally be beguiled into attending to their lessons." Is not that the fault of the lessons, and must not these be regulated as carefully with regard to the behaviour of mind as the children's meals are with regard to physical considerations?

Let us consider this behaviour in a few aspects. The mind concerns itself only with thoughts, imaginations, reasoned arguments; it declines to assimilate the facts unless in combination with its proper pabulum; it, being active, is wearied in the passive attitude of a listener, it is as much bored in the case of a child by the discursive twaddle of the talking teacher as in that of a grown-up by conversational twaddle; it has a natural preference for literary form; given a more or less literary presentation, the curiosity of the mind is enormous and embraces a vast variety of subjects.

I predicate these things of 'the mind' because they seem true of all persons' minds. Having observed these, and some other points in the behaviour of mind, it remained to apply the conclusions to which I had come to a test curriculum for schools and families. Oral teaching was to a great extent ruled out; a large number of books on many subjects were set for reading in morning school-hours; so much work was set that there was only time for a single reading; all reading was tested by a narration of the whole of a given passage, whether orally or in writing. Children working on these lines know months after that which they have read and are remarkable for their power of concentration (attention); they have little trouble with spelling or composition and become well-informed, intelligent persons.¹

¹The small Practising School attached to the House of Education (ages of scholars from six to eighteen) affords opportunities

But, it will be said, reading or hearing various books read, chapter by chapter, and then narrating or writing what has been read or some part of it,—all this is mere memory work. The value of this criticism may be readily tested; will the critic read before turning off his light a leading article from a newspaper, say, or a chapter from Boswell or Jane Austen, or one of Lamb's Essays; then, will he put himself to sleep by narrating silently what he has read. He will not be satisfied with the result but he will find that in the act of narrating every power of his mind comes into play, that points and bearings which he had not observed are brought out; that the whole is visualized and brought into relief in an extraordinary way; in fact, that scene or argument has become a part of his personal experience; he *knows*, he has assimilated what he has read. *This is not memory work.* In order to memorise, we repeat over and over a passage or a series of points or names with the aid of such clues as we can invent; we do memorise a string of facts or words, and the new possession serves its purpose for a time, but it is not assimilated; its purpose being served, we know it no more. This is memory work by means of which examinations are passed with credit. I will not try to explain (or understand!) this power to memorise; it has its subsidiary use in education, no doubt, but it must not be put in the place of the prime agent which is *attention*.

Long ago, I was in the habit of hearing this axiom quoted by a philosophical old friend:—"The mind can know nothing save what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put to the mind by itself." I have failed to trace the saying to its source, but a conviction of its importance has been growing upon me during the last forty years. It tacitly prohibits questioning from

for testing the programmes of work sent out term by term, and the examinations set at the end of each term. The work in each Form is easily done in the hours of morning-school.

without; (this does not, of course, affect the Socratic use of questioning for purposes of *moral* conviction); and it is necessary to intellectual certainty, to the act of knowing. For example, to secure a conversation or an incident, we 'go over it in our minds'; that is, the mind puts itself through the process of self-questioning which I have indicated. This is what happens in the narrating of a passage read: each new consecutive incident or statement arrives because the mind asks itself,—“What next?” For this reason it is important that only one reading should be allowed; efforts to memorise weaken the power of attention, the proper activity of the mind; if it is desirable to ask questions in order to emphasize certain points, these should be asked after and not before, or during, the act of narration.

Our more advanced psychologists come to our support here; they, too, predicate “instead of a congerie of faculties, a single subjective activity, attention;” and again, there is “one common factor in all psychical activity, that is attention.”¹ My personal addition is that attention is unfailing, prompt and steady when matter is presented suitable to a child's intellectual requirements, *if* the presentation be made with the conciseness, directness, and simplicity proper to literature.

Another point should be borne in mind; the intellect requires a moral impulse, and we all stir our minds into action the better if there is an implied 'must' in the background; for children in class the 'must' acts through the *certainty* that they will be required to narrate or write from what they have read with no opportunity of 'looking up,' or other devices of the idle. Children find the act of narrating so pleasurable in itself that urgency on the part of the teacher is seldom necessary.

¹ I again quote from the article on Psychology in the *Encyclopadia Britannica*.

Here is a complete chain of the educational philosophy I have endeavoured to work out, which has, at least, the merit that it is successful in practice. Some few hints I have, as I have said, adopted and applied, but I hope I have succeeded in methodising the whole and making education what it should be, a system of applied philosophy; I have, however, carefully abstained from the use of philosophical terms.

This is, briefly, how it works:—

A child is a *person* with the spiritual requirements and capabilities of a person.

Knowledge ‘nourishes’ the mind as food nourishes the body.

A child requires knowledge as much as he requires food.

He is furnished with the desire for Knowledge, i.e., Curiosity;

with the power to apprehend Knowledge, that is, attention;

with powers of mind to deal with Knowledge without aid from without—such as imagination, reflection, judgment;

with innate interest in all Knowledge that he needs as a human being;

with power to retain and communicate such Knowledge; and to assimilate all that is necessary to him.

He requires that in most cases Knowledge be communicated to him in literary form;

and reproduces such Knowledge touched by his own personality; thus his reproduction becomes original.

The natural provision for the appropriation and assimilation of Knowledge is adequate and no stimulus is required; but some moral control is necessary to secure the act of attention;

a child receives this in the certainty that he will be required to recount what he has read.

Children have a right to the best we possess; therefore their lesson books should be, as far as possible, our best books.

They weary of talk, and questions bore them, so that they should be allowed to use their books for themselves; they will ask for such help as they wish for.

They require a great variety of knowledge,—about religion, the humanities, science, art;

therefore, they should have a wide curriculum, with a definite amount of reading set for each short period of study.

The teacher affords direction, sympathy in studies, a vivifying word here and there, help in the making of experiments, etc., as well as the usual teaching in languages, experimental science and mathematics.

Pursued under these conditions, "Studies serve for delight," and the consciousness of daily progress is exhilarating to both teacher and children.

The reader will say with truth,—“I knew all this before and have always acted more or less on these principles”; and I can only point to the unusual results we obtain through adhering not ‘more or less,’ but strictly to the principles and practices I have indicated. I suppose the difficulties are of the sort that Lister had to contend with; every surgeon knew that his instruments and appurtenances should be kept clean, but the saving of millions of lives has resulted from the adoption of the great surgeon’s antiseptic treatment; that is from the substitution of exact principles scrupulously applied for the rather casual ‘more or less’ methods of earlier days.

Whether the way I have sketched out is the right and the only way remains to be tested still more widely

than in the thousands of cases in which it has been successful; but assuredly education is slack and uncertain for the lack of sound principles *exactly* applied. The moment has come for a decision; we have placed our faith in 'civilisation,' have been proud of our progress; and, of the pangs that the War has brought us, perhaps none is keener than that caused by the utter breakdown of the civilisation which we have held to be synonymous with education. We know better now, and are thrown back on our healthy human instincts and the Divine sanctions. The educable part of a person is his mind. The training of the senses and muscles is, strictly speaking, training and not education. The mind, like the body, requires quantity, variety and regularity in the sustenance offered to it. Like the body, the mind has its appetite, the desire for knowledge. Again, like the body, the mind is able to receive and assimilate by its powers of attention and reflection. Like the body, again, the mind rejects insipid, dry, and unsavoury food, that is to say, its pabulum should be presented in a literary form. The mind is restricted to pabulum of one kind: it is nourished upon ideas and absorbs facts only as these are connected with the living ideas upon which they hang. Children educated upon some such lines as these respond in a surprising way, developing capacity, character, countenance, initiative and a sense of responsibility. They are, in fact, even as children, good and thoughtful citizens.

I have in this volume attempted to show the principles and methods upon which education of this sort is being successfully carried out, and have added chapters which illustrate the history of a movement the aim of which is, in the phrase of Comenius,—“All knowledge for all men.” As well as these I have been permitted to use the criticisms of various teachers and Directors

of education and others upon the practical working of the scheme.

It is a matter of rejoicing that the way is open to give to all classes a basis of common thought and common knowledge, including a common store of literary and historic allusions, a possession which has a curious power of cementing bodies of men, and, in the next place, it is an enormous gain that we are within sight of giving to the working-classes, notwithstanding their limited opportunities, that stability of mind and magnanimity of character which are the proper outcome and the unfailing test of A LIBERAL EDUCATION.

I shall confine myself in this volume to the amplification and illustration of some of the points I have endeavoured to make in this introductory statement.

