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Education of the Adolescent.¹

TO form and to strengthen character; to train tastes which will dignify leisure; to awaken and guide intelligence, especially on its practical side: these are the three ends which the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education had in mind when framing the recommendations which have been embodied in its Report on the Education of the Adolescent, and, even though we may have some difficulty in discovering the exact dividing line between the qualities of the second and third, we must admit that they are ends which, if attained, would make formal education almost as vital to human life and activity as nutrition and reproduction.

There are, of course, many forces which operate against the attainment of such ends, and not the least is the attitude of mind of the very committees which make such valuable recommendations. Let there be no mistake: if, as we shall attempt to show later, the present Committee has not been infallible, there can nevertheless be no doubt that it has faced its problems with unusual breadth and clarity of vision. It has faced boldly—whether the revision and extension of school nomenclature it suggests receive approval or not—the inevitability of a regrading of education, and it has not lacked the courage to recommend the raising of the school leaving age. It has left no avenue unexplored, and it has neglected no statistical detail in order that, so far as it could see them, no factors of the present system should be avoided in its argument. Not forgetting that “a community must solve its . . . problems in accordance with its own traditions and customs,” the Committee has carefully examined the history which has brought these factors into being, and has lucidly set forth the lines of advance which it believes will lead to a system capable of securing for its pupils the benefits we have described. Nor has it shirked the issue of demonstrating how its recommendations may be made administratively possible.

These points, in themselves, are perhaps sufficient to demonstrate with what sense of responsibility the Committee regarded terms of reference which not only requested attention to the organisation, objective, and curriculum of courses of study for children (other than those attending secondary schools) who will remain in full-time school attendance up to the age of fifteen, but also that regard should be had to their probable future occupations

¹ Board of Education. Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent. Pp. xxiv+339. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1926.) Paper, 2s. net; cloth, 3s. net.

in commerce, industry, and agriculture—a feature which led the Committee at an early stage in its report to make a pronouncement so important that we need not apologise for its reproduction: “The educationalist, unless he would build his castles in the air, is bound at every turn to take into account the probable future of the children and the nature of the industrial society into which . . . the majority will enter.” Or, again: “School and industry are different facets of a single society, and the habit of mind which isolates them is a habit to be overcome.”

Reading that, the technical teacher might well begin to congratulate himself that, at last, the liberal quality, as well as the importance of his work, was being recognised; and he would be strengthened in his view when he read, further, a recommendation which begins: “A humane and liberal education is not one given through books alone, but one which brings children into contact with the larger interests of mankind.” If he read still further, however, he would discover that the Committee is discussing the proposed ‘Modern’ (at present ‘Central’) Schools, and that when it realises whither the argument may lead, seems to become suddenly fearful and is careful to point out that it is *not* suggesting any wide extension of Junior Technical Schools, but that the ‘modern’ school should develop with a ‘realistic’ or ‘practical’ bias and should not aim “at giving a technical or vocational education.” He would see that the Committee’s attitude towards technical education is one which fits but ill with the philosophical statements which preceded his search. A little puzzled, he would turn to the Committee’s definition of this word ‘bias,’ and find his dilemma still further increased. Finally, he would lose the last vestige of his optimism when he discovered the Committee’s view that a foreign language is regarded as necessary in the modern school, but its necessity in the Junior Technical Schools—even though its lack may be a barrier against matriculation and entry into the learned institutions—is set out in very guarded terms. He will not, therefore, be very much to blame if he thinks the work of technical education is still but little understood, and that the ancient and arid arguments between the values of ‘arts’ and ‘sciences,’ and between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ science are not yet at an end. A crumb of comfort will fall to him, however, when he reads that, on suggested examination boards, “Technological teachers might be co-opted.”

If, in its view and knowledge of the work of

technical schools, the Committee has not been infallible, it is beyond doubt that it has been very largely influenced by the inevitable trend towards the linking up of education and industry. It has not failed to observe that the modern development of industry has resulted in a loss of craftsmanship and an increase in leisure, due to the lessening hours of labour, and it has therefore rightly regarded the school as an instrument which can do much to counteract the loss of craftsmanship and to secure that leisure may be wisely used. In this connexion it has laid some stress upon handwork, and, in addition, to recommending that a sufficient number of teachers must have the craftsman’s interest and outlook; it has given evidence of its recognition of another important question by its suggestion that girls as well as boys should learn something of the use of tools, and should be allowed to take a short course in wood and metal work.

There is not, perhaps, much that is new in the Committee’s suggestions on the teaching of science. The interdependence of the various subjects is clearly indicated. Not only is the science teacher to keep closely in touch with the teachers of drawing and mathematics, but also “simple apparatus might be made by pupils in wood and metal lessons.” In the case of girls, the science courses of the Modern Schools should, in their later stages, have a biological trend; and the work should not, as is frequently the case, be confined to botany. The reasons given for this recommendation show that the Committee has taken care that the liberal qualities of science teaching shall be thoroughly understood, and that it shall not aim at the assimilation of unrelated facts. “The study of simple forms of animal life can . . . be made an admirable means of widening and disciplining the pupils’ sympathies” and will increase happiness and efficiency. In the same way, for boys and girls, instruction in biology and elementary physiology “might well provide the basis for a right attitude to many social problems.” To the initiated these suggestions may form part of an accepted philosophical attitude towards education—especially on its scientific side—which is almost a *sine qua non* of a rapidly developing society. For our part we welcome them, since we do not lack evidence that words and actions are often poles apart, and we realise that there cannot be too much examination and repetition of fundamentals.

If post-primary education is to be a unity in the full sense of that word, we may be pardoned if we refer to a subject sometimes (wrongly) regarded as outside our province. In dealing with the teaching

of history, the Committee has dealt well with the view that it is a study of the organised life of a community, and has regarded part of its function as the enabling of the pupil to see the present as a development of the past. On our side we are tempted to regard the present as but a thin dividing line between the past and future. Doubtless the Committee holds the same view, but until the science section of the Report is reached we do not observe any suggestions which would mean the presentation of any historical view of what science has done for mankind. In these days of the cinema, aircraft, wireless telephony and broadcasting, it seems to us an essential part of a liberal education that the influence of science in breaking down the barriers of space, and in drawing together people who formerly were antagonistic because of their lack of mutual understanding, should have some definite part in the most formal teaching of history.

We willingly run the risk of being told that we are not aware of the correct place of such teaching. For the moment we regard it as sufficient that the point be made, and, while waiting for the later pronouncements upon such an important theme, we may leave it quite safely in the hands of the teachers of science.

Modern Occultism.

Der physikalische Mediumismus. Von Dr. W. v. Gulat-Wellenburg, Graf Carl v. Klinckowstroem und Dr. Hans Rosenbusch. ("Der Okkultismus in Urkunden," herausgegeben von Max Dessoir.) Pp. xiv + 494 + 15 Tafeln. (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, 1925.)

THIS imposing volume is known in Germany and Austria as the "Dreimännerbuch." It is the first of a trio of books intended to deal exhaustively with modern representatives of those 'occult sciences' which have never ceased to occupy a certain type of mind since the days of Paracelsus. The increasing habit of civilised humanity to submit all such 'hidden' sources of knowledge to examination by modern scientific methods has driven their advocates and devotees to adopt at least an apparently up-to-date terminology.

Thus we do not hear much about the Secret Rose, the Elixir of Life, or the Fifth Essence. But we are told all the more about Psychophysical Energy, Metapsychics, Rigid Rays, Telekinesis, and Ectoplasia—imposing words which to many minds convey an irresistible suggestion of reality.

It would of course be impossible to deal in one book with the vast volume of occult literature, nor

do the 'three men' make any attempt to do so. But they do pass in review what may be called the serious treatments of the subject, and the sporadic attempts to apply some scientific method to the study of alleged phenomena which seem to contradict well-known physical and biological laws.

Of the three authors of this book, Count von Klinckowstroem deals with the "Confessions of a Medium" as well as classical mediums like D. D. Home, Florence Cook, Slade, Guzik, and Mrs. Gilbert. Dr. Rosenbusch studies Eusapia Paladino, Stanislava Tomczyk, and Kathleen Goligher, while Dr. von Gulat-Wellenburg examines the claims of Marthe Béraud ('Eva C.'), Franck Kluski, Willy Schneider, Nielsen, and Laszlo.

It may seem a deplorable waste of time and energy to devote five hundred pages of close print to the criticism of alleged phenomena which have been almost unanimously rejected by the scientific world. But it is necessary to remember that we are here dealing with alleged happenings which, if authenticated, would necessarily change our whole outlook on the possibilities of life and even of non-living matter. Even in their unproven state these alleged observations are exerting a very wide influence on great masses of contemporary thought and feeling. To millions they form the basis of a new religion purporting to have a sound scientific basis. One cannot envy the fate of the few leaders of science whose names are perennially quoted as supporting and sanctioning spiritualist practices. The name most widely exploited in this connexion is that of the late Sir William Crookes, whose few experiments, undertaken without appropriate training and then abandoned, have formed a peerless model for all later investigators and imitators.

The truth appears to be that these 'super-normal' phenomena bring us face to face, not so much with a higher world of spirit as with an underworld of human credulity, based upon an irresistible appetite for the marvellous. This appetite or need has always existed; and it has always rebelled against the established order of things. It has always postulated the existence of beings superior to it, whether angels or jinns or the spirits of the dead. Who can wonder that men trained in scientific methods have sometimes shown a similar weakness! Physicists show this tendency perhaps more than others. But that may be due to the fact that their researches are the most fundamental as regards the structure of the universe. They work on the very frontier of the unknown,