THE LESSON IN APPRECIATION

AN ESSAY ON THE PEDAGOGICS OF BEAUTY

BY

FRANK HERBERT HAYWARD, B.Sc., D.Lit.

INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS FOR THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL
ENGLAND
AUTHOR OF "THE SECRET OF HERBART"
"EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND CRITICISM," ETC.

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1917

PREFACE

THE part of this book on which the chief stress should be laid is the first part, in which is discussed the teaching of poetry. These opening chapters spring from personal experience, observation, and reflection. The chapters on music are an obvious pendant to the ones that precede, while those that follow are of the nature of a necessary though far from satisfactory appendix. In a few years' time I shall probably be able to write with far more confidence than at present on the pedagogics of pictorial and plastic art.

Meanwhile, in apology for any faults or omissions that the reader may discover, I would point out that the literature of this subject is scanty almost to non-existence. Books on æsthetics there are in abundance; popular guides to music and pictures are also numerous; but books intended to help the teacher of the young child or even of the adolescent have hardly yet been produced by the educationists of any land, the reason, no doubt, being the confusion of purposes detected by M. Cousinet and referred to in the last chapter.

The only other word of apology is concerned with the predominance of British illustrations and examples in my discussions. The predominance is not, I think, outrageously great, and my friend Professor Bagley has helped to reduce it by supplying some excellent

illustrations drawn from American sources; still, every book that is the result of personal conviction rather than of commission or requisition from without must bear traces of its origin. British educationists are a quiet folk who rarely rush into print (let us hope that, like the famous but taciturn parrot, they are phenomenally great at "thinking") and at present American books on education are their staple food; if the tables are turned in this instance and American readers are supplied with diet from a British source, I hope the food will be found at least digestible.

The series of questions and quotations at the end may serve to stimulate thought and to suggest further developments of the themes discussed in the text. Indeed, on the basis of these questions and quotations a book twice the size could easily be written.

I have to thank Professor Bagley, not only for general encouragement in connection with the production of *The Lesson in Appreciation*, but for much help in matters of detail. Though, before I read his *Educational Values*, I had been moving towards the idea of appreciation as one of our educational ends, it was a passage in that book that gave the final push to my slowly gathering convictions.

In accordance with the prescribed usage, I have to announce that the London County Council does not hold itself responsible for any of the views of its officers.

F. H. H.

LONDON, ENGLAND, 1914.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES AND TO THE PRESENT VOLUME

By the Editor

A group of laymen may decide that it would be advisable to build a bridge across Niagara or to drive a tunnel through the Sierras. An engineer is asked whether the plan is practicable. He replies that it is, and is forthwith commissioned to put it into execution. He has at his command a complicated technique of procedure. He has accurate means of forecasting stresses and strains; he knows how to construct caissons and piers and abutments; he has mastered methods by means of which he can blast rock, and remove débris, and drive a tunnel straight or curved, on a level or at a grade. He can apply this knowledge to the problem in hand; reduce it to detailed specifications; and put these specifications into the hands of skilled workmen who will carry out his directions to the minutest detail. In a year or two years the bridge is built or the tunnel bored. The result desired by the laymen and formulated by them in a very general way has been accomplished, but the achievement has been in virtue of the technical knowledge and skill that some one possessed.

A group of laymen may decide that the public schools should teach the rising generation how to think straight, how to behave themselves properly, how to make a living,

and how to appreciate the good things of life. They should be able to call in an engineer to tell them whether the desired result can be obtained. The engineer, once he has answered the question affirmatively, should be able to lay down specifications and pass them on to skilled workers to carry out.

The analogy cannot be carried too far, but it is suggestive of a real need in education. We have the educational administrator who corresponds roughly to the engineer. We have the classroom teacher who corresponds roughly to the skilled worker. We have the group of laymen — a large group known as the Public. The public can and does express its desires and wishes. The teacher can, in a great many instances, work apparent miracles; if a definite aim is formulated in plain, concrete terms, he or she can realize the aim. But the point of vital weakness is the almost complete lack in education of anything approaching the engineer's ability to reduce a vague, half-formulated demand into these simpler, more concrete, thoroughly understandable specifications. Our conventional educational aims, it has often been asserted, are too general; they offer no suggestions that will help the teacher in carrying them out; they need to be split up into more concrete aims that may be interpolated between the present, actual, existing condition of affairs and the desired condition. Lacking this important element in achievement, the teacher labors under a severe handicap. His or her condition is quite analogous to that of a group of skilled workers who should be asked to accomplish, unaided by engineering science, the task of building a bridge or tunneling a mountain. The task might be

accomplished even under these conditions, — as many tasks in education are accomplished under equally unfavorable conditions. But it is highly probable that the bridge would fail to bear its own weight, or that the tunnel — even if it did not cave in before it was completed — would be badly "out of plumb." And the outcomes of teaching are often characterized by analogous defects.

In the series of books of which the present volume is the initial number, an attempt will be made to provide something akin to specifications for some of the more common tasks that the teacher is asked or commanded to assume. The present volume is, indeed, typical of what the editor has had in mind in planning the series. For a good many years there has been a demand for a kind of education that would help to raise the general standard of public taste. Forthwith certain "subjects" have been introduced into the school program. This is our customary procedure in solving educational problems, — and this is about as far as "specifications" have ever gone in education. Shall we guard our rising generation against the evils of bad literature and bad drama? Obviously this is a duty of the school. Very well; "teach" the pupil "to appreciate" good literature and good drama and good poetry. Shall we protect our children against the cheap, the tawdry, the suggestive, and the degrading in pictorial art and in music? Then "teach" the "appreciation" of good art and good music in the schools.

This seems to be a simple order that any intelligent teacher might easily fulfill. As a matter of fact, it is a very large order, and that is one reason why the results have not been altogether satisfactory. It is very far from

an easy task. Building a bridge across Niagara, indeed, is not unfairly to be compared with it in point of difficulty.

It is this problem of æsthetic education that Dr. Hayward has attacked. He has taught little children, and knows how hard it is to do some things that seem very easy when looked at from a safe point of vantage. He has studied the principles of æsthetics. He has mastered the principles of psychology bearing upon this problem so far as these have been worked out. He has observed and studied the work of teachers who have, through struggle and effort, succeeded in bridging Niagaras, and he has brought to the service of his readers the lessons of these fortunate experiences. His work deals with a "practical" problem in a "practical" way, — but it does not shrink from the presentation of theory when theory will enlighten the practice.

This, in general, is the plan that the editor hopes to follow in the books of this series. Each will deal specifically with some vital problem of teaching. The topics, in the main, will be those large and comprehensive tasks which are persistently pressed upon school teachers for solution, but which demand re-formulation in simpler terms before they can be successfully worked out. The aim will be to present definite and often detailed suggestions for actual teaching. Sometimes these suggestions will be in the nature of "working plans," but more often they will of necessity be concrete illustrations of principles rather than rule-of-thumb directions for practice. After all, it is here that the teacher differs fundamentally from the artisan. In dealing, as the teacher does, with human materials, ready-made devices often fail to "work" when

they have been lifted from their original setting and applied to new situations. Human minds cannot be standardized, like steel or concrete, but the teacher has a right to demand principles that can be illustrated by clear, definite, and typical applications; and principles of this sort, abundantly illustrated, this series will attempt to furnish.

Two books will, it is hoped, quickly follow the publication of the present volume. One will be concerned with the problem of *school discipline*, and the development of the habits, attitudes, and ideals of order, industry, and self-control that are so essential not only to successful school work but to right living and efficient work in adult life. The other will discuss the *problem of study* — another of those large and comprehensive tasks that the school must assume, but which it is hopeless to attack unless we analyze it into subordinate and specific problems which can be formulated in concrete terms. Other books in prospect or in preparation will treat of *habit-formation* and the *skill outcomes of education;* the problem of *training pupils to think;* and the problem of *socializing school life.*

W. C. B.

URBANA, ILLINOIS,
June, 1914.

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CHAPTER I

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE FIRST IMPRESSION

Subtlety of the subject. — The mechanism by which we appreciate is probably subtler than those mechanisms by which we perform most other mental acts. In reasoning, for example, there is always a problem [1] to be solved, a situation to be met, a purpose to be realized. We then reflect upon the resources that may aid in the solution of the problem or the realization of the purpose, "thinking through" the possible ways in which these means may be adapted to the end that we desire. Reasoning or thinking is a delayed, a deliberate process, sufficiently pedestrian to seem devoid of mysteriousness.[2] But appreciation, both æsthetic and moral, seems often to come as a subtle dawn or a sudden flash. In the oft-quoted words of Browning: —

[1] The German term *Aufgabe* has a considerable vogue. See Titchener's *Experimental Psychology of the Thought Processes*. Also below, p. 13, on Appreciation *v.* Intellection.

[2] There is, however, a "flash" of imagination or interpretation in discovery and invention. See note above.

> " There's a sunset touch,
> A fancy from a flowerbell, some one's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides; "

and these things rap and knock at the soul in ways so unforeseen that it is not a matter of surprise to find appreciation regarded by many people as something too personal and intangible to be susceptible to actual training in schools or other institutions. The spirit here seems to " blow where it listeth "; beauty is " a light that never was on sea or land."

But something can be done. The process, as we shall soon discover, is not wholly mysterious. Sooner or later, in all probability, mankind will not only understand it, but will *exploit* it in the interests of human happiness. Certainly there are some principles of appreciation upon which there can be no debate, and the first of these forms the caption of the present chapter.

The first impression is a privileged impression.— How significant first impressions are to our concrete, everyday life each can testify from his own experience; and the same principle operates in the realm of art. The first impression of a poem, a song, and,— though perhaps to less extent,—a picture, a statue, and a building is a privileged impression; not only does the impression seem more unsophisticated and spontaneous, but it is actually more intense, as a rule, than any subsequent impression, and its influ-

ence on life and taste is usually far greater. For these reasons the first impression is of extraordinary pedagogical importance, and the failure of educationists to recognize its importance is a measure of the failure of education in the task of teaching appreciation.

As has been suggested, this principle is one that applies to every phase of human experience. It applies to interviews between man and man, between candidates for appointment and committees of selection, between superintendents and inspectors and teachers. "Love at first sight" — and dislike at first sight — are important illustrations of it, and biography is full of evidence that confirms it. Our first view of the sea or of the mountains or of a foreign country is a notable event in our lives. Many of us remember exceptionally well the plants that bloom earliest in the spring, or the first chapter of a book that we have read, or our first lesson in Latin, or our first day in a new school or a new employment. Every American knows when Columbus discovered America, and the reason is not merely the importance of that date but the fact that it is the first that he learns in school. Every English teacher knows more about Julius Cæsar and the ancient Britons than about the Chartists of 1848.

The pedagogy of the first impression is often neglected in the teaching of subjects other than literature and art. In the first lesson on oxygen, for example, the initial details of preparation (the mixing of the potassium chlorate and the manganese dioxide) assume, in the eyes of the pupils, an exaggerated importance simply because they are initial; while the main purpose of the lesson, the demonstration of the qualities of oxygen, being relegated to a less impressive place, is often

missed. Possibly we should begin with the jars of gas ready-prepared. In one of his delightful essays, Samuel McChord Crothers calls attention to the first lesson that he learned in geography, — a lesson devoted to a demonstration of the earth's rotundity, — and contrasts the vivid impression that this important fact made upon his mind with the impression that he (with some justice) assumes the same fact to make on the minds of contemporary school children after several months devoted to rather less significant data.

Many a printed book, too, suffers because the first impression conveyed by its introductory chapters is feeble and unsatisfactory, and many a drama has been ruined by a weak first act.

Certainly in the lesson in æsthetic appreciation the principle of the first impression is all-important, and the best advice that can be given to a teacher of appreciation is that he should lavish care and thought upon making the first impression which the child receives from a work of art a powerful impression, and that the greater the work of art, the greater the amount of care and thought he should lavish. Poetry or music that is commonplace may (if treated at all) be treated in a commonplace fashion; but the higher the materials with which he deals rise above the level of the commonplace, the higher ought the teacher's method also to rise.

Red-letter lessons. — It is a great mistake to suppose that all lessons are equally important and should receive equally elaborate treatment. Some

lessons should be — must be — routine lessons, stop-gap, preparatory, recapitulatory, *memoriter* lessons, perhaps almost humdrum in their lack of exceptional qualities.[1] But some should be, both for the class, and for the teacher, epoch-making lessons which *he* dreams about in prospect and *they* dream about in retrospect. It is the respectable and creditable mediocrity, not the badness or goodness, of much school work that strikes intelligent observers most, and it is this consistent and conscientious mediocrity that takes the heart out of the teacher himself. He refuses to respond to the exhortations of educational prophets because he knows that many details of his school work must inevitably be of a routine nature, and it is hard to be enthusiastic, it is hard " to express his individuality," in connection with such things. And the prophets themselves usually have no formula for generating the enthusiasm they desire. But there *is* a formula, and it is this formula of the *epoch-making lesson.* Many lessons must necessarily show little but mediocrity in the amount of brilliance that they reveal to the expectant observer. But let us insist that, here and there in the school week, or month, or year, will occur lessons, particularly lessons in appreciation, which ought to stand out as notable events in the memory of teacher and pupil.

[1] Professor Adams has drawn the same distinction in recommending that some lessons should be "dull."

Such lessons would serve three purposes, each of large importance in its own domain. First, they would provide supervisors and administrators with opportunities for judging a teacher's work at its high-water mark, not merely at its medium levels. Now the high-water mark of a teacher's ability is one of the best indications of his caliber; — "It is our best moments — not our worst — that reveal our true selves." In the second place, these lessons would render the teacher's life more interesting, because more varied by hills, plains, slopes, summits, visions, and vistas; every day would not be like every other day. In the third place, such lessons would be epoch-making in the lives of the pupils.

Certainly these lessons should not be confined to the field of art. Science and history afford many opportunities for thrill and climax, and even the teaching of mathematics should not be devoid of its mountain peaks. But the opportunities will perhaps be more frequent in connection with art; and in any case the educational treatment of a work of art illustrates most clearly the necessity for lessons of this type. To spoil a work of beauty by clumsy or hasty presentation is an æsthetic crime of large magnitude. The teacher who commits it deserves little mercy, just as, conversely, he who rises to the full majesty of the occasion deserves all the recognition and reward that our educational systems can supply.