

Riverside Educational Monographs

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EDUCATION

AN ESSAY

AND OTHER SELECTIONS

BY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Riverside Educational Monographs

Modern education not fully apprehended

PROGRESS in educational theory has been so rapid in recent years, and changes in school-room practice have been made with such frequency, that many parents and teachers have failed to grasp the meaning of the new movements in education. This is not a matter for blame; it is characteristic of any period of transition such as ours. As we have become conscious of the need of modifications in our school system to meet changing social conditions, we have attempted a welding of new ideals to old traditions, with the inevitable result that not a little waste and confusion have attended the administration of our schools.

As education grows scientific it tends to become less intelligible to the public

Fortunately, the significance of our modern education is constantly becoming clearer to those who are studying its problems and results in the light of the contributions from the fields of Psy-

EDITOR'S NOTE

chology, Sociology, and Biology. More than ever before, educational theory and practice rest upon scientific truths. But as educational thought progresses it becomes increasingly difficult to keep leader, teacher, parent, and citizen in close contact. With a growing technical terminology, the educational thinker tends to speak in a dialect difficult for the ordinary person to comprehend; and in addition, the educational specialist, to a larger extent than ever before, publishes his contributions in the proceedings of some learned society or in some other equally inaccessible place. The result is that as education has become more exact and scientific, it has tended to isolate itself from the understanding of people. It is necessary, therefore, that the thoughts of these leaders be transmitted to the rank and file—to all trainers of youth, to parents as well as to teachers. To meet this need, this series of Monographs is presented to the public with the hope that it may prove a contribution to the movement for a more general understanding of the progressive tendencies in American education.

The public must understand its schools

In a society such as ours, there are many reasons why educational institutions should be

EDITOR'S NOTE

popularly understood. Imperial edicts and bureaucratic decrees do not shape the spirit and method of our education. Each locality determines the particular form of organization of its schools, and the tacit agreement of the communities throughout the country gives the common stock of ideals which makes our teaching national in purpose.

Evidently then, it does not suffice that educational leaders alone should know the significance of a given reform or movement ; the public must also understand and accept the proposed policy. The intellectual channels between leader and follower, profession and populace, must be kept open. Then our schools will be guided in the spirit of our democratic institutions ; they will avoid unwise and unnecessary innovations, and necessary reforms will be more substantially achieved.

Intelligent parental coöperation needed

In the nineteenth century our people had an over-faith in the efficacy of school education. To-day, we have a better understanding of the limitations of the school. We have come to realize that the sphere of education embraces the whole of life, in school and out ; that many different agencies are required to make a cultured

EDITOR'S NOTE

and efficient man. The school can do much, but there are aspects of life it cannot reach. The family has a rare power over the child, but it has special impotencies of its own.

Likewise other institutions offer but a partial training. It requires the coöperation of them all to develop the man of vision and power needed to-day. How, then, can the work of education be done unless others beside the teacher understand its aims and methods? Parents in particular must coöperate with the school if they would tide their children over moral and intellectual difficulties. And such coöperation requires the kind of understanding that comes not alone through sympathy, necessary as this is, but also through an acquaintance with the controlling and progressive tendencies in our education.

The education of teachers

It is probably true that the average teacher has none too clear an appreciation of much that is presented in our educational discussions. Indeed, it has been urged that there is a growing tendency for the superintendents of large and somewhat centralized systems of schools to make sweeping changes in school-room procedure without consulting, and, what is more serious, with-

EDITOR'S NOTE

out convincing the body of teachers of the necessity for such changes. If this be true, and there are certainly many evidences of such a tendency, then it indicates a serious fault which must be combated, for there can be no true profession of teaching where most of its members are required to carry out official orders mechanically. A clear understanding of underlying principles is essential to good teaching. Facts and methods are of little avail without this. In the art of ministering to the intellectual and moral crises of childhood so that strong free men shall be reared, the spiritual worker should fully comprehend the meaning of the plan. Fortunately, there are many practical leaders who realize that they must carry the teachers of the staff with them in all progressive reforms, not alone as a matter of respect for the teacher's personality, but as a matter of necessity in getting the high and subtle work of the school done. These will welcome any movement that will aid in the dissemination of the best professional knowledge and belief among the teachers of the country.

The scope of the Educational Monographs

To accomplish these large purposes, the volumes of this series are offered, the plan being

EDITOR'S NOTE

to present carefully selected writings upon education in convenient and attractive pocket editions at a small cost. Usually but a single phase of education will be treated in a given number. The series will, however, finally include every aspect of our best educational thought, from the general statements of theory to the more specific and concrete details of school-room practice.

INTRODUCTION

The worth of Emerson's views

THIS first volume of the Riverside Educational Monographs presents the views of Ralph Waldo Emerson regarding education. It consists of the entire essay on "Education," and several additional selections from his other writings. By no means a complete exposition of his philosophy of education, the material presents his fundamental beliefs with regard to the proper aims and methods which should be pursued in the liberal training of men and women. Written for the most part a generation ago, the subjects discussed are those which are of vital concern to-day. With rare penetration the essayist reveals the essential nature of the problems which everywhere arise in the effort to train free men.

A broad human training

In these days when we are necessarily so largely engaged in adding to our traditional education a system of specialized vocational training in the industrial, agricultural, and commercial arts, there is a danger that we shall lose our

INTRODUCTION

sense of proportion, forgetting the full significance of that older liberal education which is designed to equip man for the finer uses of his manhood and his citizenship.

There is no better brief for a broad, human education than that presented in the writings of Emerson. Our best American apostle of culture, he notes with precision the qualities which are the measure of a truly cultivated man. With high critical power, he describes the futility and the narrowness of much that goes under the guise of human training in the schools, and ably defends the larger cause of spiritual development, despite the failures to achieve it in the classroom. When sharp competition forces us to a serious consideration of a school training for bread winning, it is well to be told that the glorified word efficiency means spiritual efficiency as much as economic competency.

Men and nature as means

It is not alone in stating the need and the aim of broad human training that these views of a master mind are valuable. There is contributed also a clear understanding of the means by which men are to be cultivated. He points out that it is not through books alone that men are to be

INTRODUCTION

educated. The basic training is to come through direct contact with things and men, — nature and society. Then books, interpreted by an experience-stocked imagination, will be more than words and dead languages. They will lift the student out of his own time and place to a larger and truer view of life through history, literature, and the other studies. The distinctly modern emphasis of nature study, manual work, play, and other social contacts as the foundation of a sound education, is just beginning to be realized in our school practice.

Teaching method as adjustment to the child

There is no better poised critic of our teaching methods than Emerson. He demonstrates clearly that the strenuous haste of the instructor to place a uniform coating of knowledge over the minds of children does not induce growth, and it cannot be called education. The child, as well as knowledge, needs to be understood. Human impulses, interests, and necessities, as well as subject matter, furnish the opportunities for the guidance of childhood. The individuality of a child must be respected quite as much as the individuality of a fact. "Respect the child, respect him to the end, but also respect yourself. Be the com-

INTRODUCTION

panion of his thought, the friend of his friendship,
the lover of his virtues, but no kinsman of his sin.”
Here is expressed all the naturalism of our modern
education, but with no suggestion of its faults.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	xi
I. EDUCATION	I
The complete essay, "Education," in <i>Lectures and Biographical Sketches</i>	
II. CULTURE IN EDUCATION	35
From "Culture," in <i>The Conduct of Life</i>	
III. EDUCATION FOR POWER	45
From "Power," in <i>The Conduct of Life</i>	
IV. THE TRAINING OF MANUAL WORK	65
From "Man the Reformer," in <i>Nature, Addresses, and Lectures</i>	
OUTLINE	75

I

EDUCATION

A NEW degree of intellectual power seems cheap at any price. The use of the world is that man may learn its laws. And the human race have wisely signified their sense of this, by calling wealth, means, — Man being the end. Language is always wise.

Therefore I praise New England because it is the country in the world where is the freest expenditure for education. We have already taken, at the planting of the Colonies (for aught I know for the first time in the world), the initial step, which for its importance might have been resisted as the most radical of revolutions, thus deciding at the start the destiny of this country, — this, namely, that the poor man, whom the law does not allow to take an ear of corn when starving, nor a pair of shoes for his freezing feet, is allowed to put his hand into the pocket of the rich, and say, You shall educate me, not as you will, but as I will : not alone in the elements, but, by further provision, in the languages, in

EMERSON

sciences, in the useful and in elegant arts. The child shall be taken up by the State, and taught, at the public cost, the rudiments of knowledge, and at last, the ripest results of art and science.

Humanly speaking, the school, the college, society, make the difference between men. All the fairy tales of Aladdin or the invisible Gyges or the talisman that opens kings' palaces or the enchanted halls underground or in the sea, are only fictions to indicate the one miracle of intellectual enlargement. When a man stupid becomes a man inspired, when one and the same man passes out of the torpid into the perceiving state, leaves the din of trifles, the stupor of the senses, to enter into the quasi-omniscience of high thought, — up and down, around, all limits disappear. No horizon shuts down. He sees things in their causes, all facts in their connection.

One of the problems of history is the beginning of civilization. The animals that accompany and serve man make no progress as races. Those called domestic are capable of learning of man a few tricks of utility or amusement, but they cannot communicate the skill to their race. Each individual must be taught anew. The trained dog cannot train another dog. And Man himself in many races retains almost the unteachableness of

EDUCATION

the beast. For a thousand years the islands and forests of a great part of the world have been filled with savages who made no steps of advance in art or skill beyond the necessity of being fed and warmed. Certain nations, with a better brain and usually in more temperate climates, have made such progress as to compare with these as these compare with the bear and the wolf.

Victory over things is the office of man. Of course, until it is accomplished, it is the war and insult of things over him. His continual tendency, his great danger, is to overlook the fact that the world is only his teacher, and the nature of sun and moon, plant and animal only means of arousing his interior activity. Enamoured of their beauty, comforted by their convenience, he seeks them as ends, and fast loses sight of the fact that they have worse than no values, that they become noxious, when he becomes their slave.

This apparatus of wants and faculties, this craving body, whose organs ask all the elements and all the functions of Nature for their satisfaction, educate the wondrous creature which they satisfy with light, with heat, with water, with wood, with bread, with wool. The necessities imposed by this most irritable and all-related texture have taught Man hunting, pasturage,

EMERSON

agriculture, commerce, weaving, joining, masonry, geometry, astronomy. Here is a world pierced and belted with natural laws, and fenced and planted with civil partitions and properties, which all put new restraints on the young inhabitant. He too must come into this magic circle of relations, and know health and sickness, the fear of injury, the desire of external good, the charm of riches, the charm of power. The household is a school of power. There, within the door, learn the tragi-comedy of human life. Here is the sincere thing, the wondrous composition for which day and night go round. In that routine are the sacred relations, the passions that bind and sever. Here is poverty and all the wisdom its hated necessities can teach, here labor drudges, here affections glow, here the secrets of character are told, the guards of man, the guards of woman, the compensations which, like angels of justice, pay every debt: the opium of custom, whereof all drink and many go mad. Here is Economy, and Glee, and Hospitality, and Ceremony, and Frankness, and Calamity, and Death, and Hope.

Every one has a trust of power, — every man, every boy a jurisdiction, whether it be over a cow or a rood of a potato-field, or a fleet of ships,