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POPULAR EDUCATION

BY AGNES REPPLIER

THIS is so emphatically the children's age that a good many of us are beginning to thank God we were not born in it. The little girl who said she wished she had lived in the time of Charles the Second, because then 'education was much neglected,' wins our sympathy and esteem. It is a doubtful privilege to have the attention of the civilized world focused upon us both before and after birth. At the First International Eugenics Congress, held in London in the summer of 1912, an Italian delegate made the somewhat discouraging statement that the children of very young parents are more prone than others to theft; that the children of middle-aged parents are apt to be of good conduct but of low intelligence; and that the children of elderly parents are, as a rule, intelligent, but badly behaved. It seems to be a trifle hard to bring the right kind of a child into the world. Twenty-seven is, in this eugenist's opinion, the best age for parentage; but how bend all the complicated conditions of life to meet an arbitrary date; and how remain twenty-seven long enough to insure satisfactory results? The vast majority of babies will have to put up with being born when their time comes, and make the best of it. This is the first, but by no means the worst, dis-

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advantage of compulsory birth; and compulsory birth is the original evil which scientists and philanthropists are equally powerless to avert.

If parents do not know by this time how to bring up their children, it is not for lack of instruction. A few generations ago Solomon was the only writer on child-study who enjoyed any vogue. Now his precepts, the acrid fruits of experience, have been superseded by more genial, but more importunate counsel. Begirt by well-wishers, hemmed in on every side by experts who speak of 'child-material' as if it were raw silk or wood-pulp, how can a little boy born in this enlightened age dodge the educational influences which surround him? It is hard to be dealt with as 'child-material' when one is only an ordinary little boy. To be sure, 'child-material' is never thrashed as little boys were wont to be, it is not required to do what it is told, it enjoys rights and privileges of a very sacred and exalted character; but on the other hand it is never let alone, and to be let alone is sometimes worth all the ministrations of men and angels. The helpless, inarticulate reticence of a child is not an obstacle to be overcome, but a barrier which protects the citadel of childhood from assault.

We can break down this barrier in

our zeal, and if the child will not speak, we can at least compel him to listen. He is powerless to evade any revelations we choose to make, any facts or theories we choose to elucidate. We can teach him sex-hygiene when he is still young enough to believe that rabbits lay eggs. We can turn his work into play, and his play into work, keeping well in mind the educational value of his unconscious activities, and by careful oversight pervert a game of tag into a preparation for the business of life. We can amuse and interest him until he is powerless to amuse and interest himself. We can experiment with him according to the dictates of hundreds of rival authorities. He is in a measure at our mercy, though nature fights hard for him, safeguarding him with ignorance of our mode of thought, and indifference to our point of view. The opinions of twelve-year-old Bobby Smith are of more moment to ten-year-old Tommy Jones than are the opinions of Dr. and Mrs. Jones, albeit Dr. Jones is a professor of psychology, and Mrs. Jones the chairman of a mother's congress. The supreme value of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson's much-quoted 'Lantern Bearers' lies in its incisive and sympathetic insistence upon the aloofness of the child's world, — an admittedly imperfect world which we are burning to amend, but which closed its doors upon us forever when we grew into knowledge and reason.

My own childhood lies very far away. It occurred in what I cannot help thinking a blissful period of intermission. The educational theories of the Edgeworths (evolved soberly from the educational excesses of Rousseau) had been found a trifle onerous. Parents had not the time to instruct and admonish their children all day long. As a consequence, we enjoyed a little wholesome neglect, and made the most of it. The new era of child-study

and mothers' congresses lay darkling in the future. 'Symbolic education,' 'symbolic play,' were phrases all unknown. The 'revolutionary discoveries' of Karl Groos had not yet overshadowed the innocent diversions of infancy. Nobody drew scientific deductions from jackstones, or balls, or gracehoops, save only when we assailed the wealth of nations by breaking a window-pane. Nobody endeavored to make of 'Puss-in-the-Corner' or 'London Gates' 'a sort of Ariadne clew to the labyrinth of experience,' enabling us 'to master, instead of being mastered by, the infinitude of particular objects and events.' The profundity of such a purpose linked to the triviality of such a pastime would have puzzled our parents as much as it now puzzles me. Nobody was even aware that the impulses which sent us speeding and kicking up our heels like young colts were 'vestigial organs of the soul.' Dr. G. Stanley Hall had not yet invented this happy phrase to elucidate the simplicities of play. How we grasped our 'objective relationship' to our mothers without the help of bird's-nest games, I do not know. Perhaps, in the general absence of experimentation, we had more time in which to solve the artless problems of our lives. Psychologists in those days were frankly indifferent to us. They had yet to discover our enormous value in the realms of conjectural thought.

The education of my childhood was embryonic. The education of to-day is exhaustive. The fact that the school-child of to-day does not seem to know any more than we knew in the dark ages is a side issue with which I have no concern. But as I look back, I can now see plainly that the few things little girls learned were admirably adapted for one purpose, to make us parts of a whole, which whole was the family. I do not mean that there was

any expression to this effect. 'Training for maternity' was an unused phrase, and the short views of life, more common then than now, would have robbed it of its savor. 'Training for citizenship' had, so far as we were concerned, no meaning whatsoever. A little girl was a little girl, not the future mother of the race, or the future savior of the Republic. One thing at a time. Therefore no deep significance was attached to our possession of a doll, no concern was evinced over our future handling of a vote. If we were taught to read aloud with correctness and expression, to write notes with propriety and grace, and to play backgammon and whist as well as our intelligence permitted, it was in order that we should practice these admirable accomplishments for the benefit of the families of which we were useful and occasionally ornamental features.

And what advantage accrued to *us* from an education so narrowed, so illiberal, so manifestly unconcerned with great social and national issues? Well, let us admit that it had at least the qualities of its defects. It was not called training for character, but it was admittedly training for behavior, and the foundations of character are the acquired habits of youth. 'Habit,' said the Duke of Wellington, 'is ten times nature.' There was precision in the simple belief that the child was strengthened mentally by mastering its lessons, and morally by mastering its inclinations. Therefore the old-time teacher sought to spur the pupil on to keen and combative effort, rather than to beguile him into knowledge with cunning games and lantern slides. Therefore the old-time parent set a high value on self-discipline and self-control. A happy childhood did not necessarily mean a childhood free from proudly accepted responsibility. There are few things in life so dear to girl or

boy as the chance to turn to good account the splendid self-confidence of youth.

If Saint Augustine, who was punished when he was a little lad because he loved to play (and playing, he observes, is the business of childhood), could see the glorification of play in twentieth-century schoolrooms, he might enjoy the spectacle, and question the results. Nothing is too profound, nothing too subtle, to be evolved from a game or a toy. We are gravely told that 'the doll with its immense educational power should be carefully introduced into the schools,' and that a ball, tossed to the accompaniment of a song insultingly banal, will enable a child 'to hold fast one high purpose amid all the vicissitudes of time and place.' And when boys and girls outgrow these simple sports, other and more glorious pastimes await them; pastimes which will teach them all they need to know, without effort and without exaction. Listen to Judge Lindsey's glowing description of the schoolroom of the future, where moving pictures will take the place of books and blackboards, where no free child will be 'chained to a desk' (painful phrase!), and where 'progressive educators' will make merry with their pupils all the happy day.

'Mr. Edison is coming to the rescue of Tony,' says Judge Lindsey. (Tony, by-the-way, is a boy who does not like school as it is at present organized.) 'He will take him away from me, and put him in a school that is not a school at all, but just one big game, — just one round of joy, of play, of gladness, of knowledge, of sunshine, warming the cells in Tony's head until they all open up as the flowers do. There will be something moving, something doing at that school all the time, just as there is when Tony goes down to the tracks to see the engines.

'When I tell him about it, Tony shouts "Hooray for Mr. Edison!" right in front of the battery, just as he used to say "to hell wid de cop."'

Now this is an interesting exposition of the purely sentimental view of education. We have been leading up to it for years, ever since Froebel uttered his famous, 'Come, let us live with our children!' and here it is set down in black and white by a man who has the welfare of the young deeply at heart. Judge Lindsey sympathizes with Tony's distaste for study. He points out to us that it is hard for a boy who is 'the leader of a gang' to be laughed at by less enterprising children because he cannot cipher. Yet to some of us it does not seem altogether amiss that Tony should be brought to understand the existence of other standards than those of hoodlumism. Ciphering is dull work (so, at least, I have always found it), and difficult work too; but it is hardly fair to brand it as ignoble. Compared with stealing brass from a freight-car, which is Tony's alternative for school attendance, it even has a dignity of its own; and the perception of this fact may be a salutary if mortifying lesson. Judge Lindsey's picturesque likening of our antiquated school system, which compels children to sit at desks, with the antiquated Chinese custom which bound little girls' feet, lacks discernment. The underlying motives are, in these instances, measurably different, the processes are dissimilar, the results have points of variance.

Nobody doubts that all our Tonys, rich and poor, lawless and law-abiding, would much prefer a school that is not a school at all, 'but just one big game'; nobody doubts that a great deal of desultory information may be acquired from films. But desultory information is not, and never can be, a substitute for education, and habits

of play cannot be trusted to develop habits of work. Our efforts to protect the child from doing what he does not want to do, because he does not want to do it, are kind, but singularly unintelligent. Life is not a vapid thing. 'The world,' says Emerson, 'is a proud place, peopled with men of positive quality.' No pleasure it can give, from the time we are seven until the time we are seventy, is comparable to the pleasure of achievement.

Dr. Münsterberg, observing with dismay the 'pedagogical unrest' which pervades our communities, expresses a naïve surprise that so much sound advice and so much sound instruction should leave the teacher uninspired and unelated. 'The pile of interesting facts which the sciences heap up for the teacher's use grows larger and larger, but the teacher seems to stare at it with growing hopelessness.'

I should think so. A pile of heterogeneous facts — segments of segments of subjects — reduces any sane teacher to hopelessness, because he, at least, is well aware that his pupils cannot possibly absorb or digest a tithe of the material already pressed upon their acceptance. Experience has taught him something which his counsellors never learn, — the need of limit, the 'feasibility of performance.' Hear what one teacher, both sane and experienced, has to say concerning the riot of facts and theories, of art and nature, of science and sentiment, which the school is expected to reduce into an orderly, consistent, and practical system of education.

'It is not enough that the child should be taught to handle skillfully the tools of all learning, — reading, writing, and arithmetic: his sense of form and his æsthetic nature must be developed by drawing; his hand must be trained by manual work; his musical nature must be awakened by song;

he must be brought into harmony with his external environment by means of nature lessons and the study of science; his patriotic impulses must be roused by the study of American history and by flag-drills; temperance must be instilled into him by lessons in physiology, with special reference to the effects of alcohol on the human system; his imagination must be cultivated with the help of Greek and Norse mythology; he must gain some knowledge of the great heroes and events of general history; he must acquire a love for and an appreciation of the best literature through the plentiful reading of masterpieces, while at the same time his mind should be stocked with choice gems of prose and verse which will be a solace to him throughout his later life; it might be well if, by displacing a little arithmetic or geography he could gain some knowledge of the elements of Latin or of a modern language; in some manner there must be roused in him a love for trees, a respect for birds, an antipathy to cigarettes, and an ambition for clean streets; and somewhere, somewhere in this mad chaos he must learn to spell! Do you wonder that teachers in progressive schools confide to us that they fear their pupils are slightly bewildered? Do you wonder that pupils do not gain the habit and the power of concentrated, consecutive work?¹

And this irrational, irrelevant medley, this educational vaudeville, must be absorbed unconsciously by children roused to interest by the sustained enthusiasm of their teachers, whom may Heaven help! If the programme is not full enough, it can be varied by lectures on sex-hygiene, lessons in wood-craft (with reference to boy scouts), and pictures illustrating the domestic habits of the house-fly. These, with plenty

of gymnastics, and a little barefoot dancing for girls, may bring a school measurably near the ideal proposed by Judge Lindsey, — a place where 'there is something moving, something doing all the time,' and which finds its closest counterpart in the rushing of engines on their tracks.

The theory that school work must appeal to a child's fluctuating tastes, must attract a child's involuntary attention, does grievous wrong to the rising generation; yet it is upheld in high places, and forms the subject-matter of many addresses vouchsafed year after year to long-suffering teachers. They should bring to bear the 'energizing force of interest,' they should magnetize their pupils into work. Even Dr. Eliot reminds them with just a hint of reproach that if a child is interested, he will not be disorderly, and this reiterated statement appears to be the crux of the whole difficult situation. Let us boldly suppose that a child is not interested, — and he may conceivably weary even of films, — is it then optional with him to be or not to be disorderly, and what is the effect of his disorder on other children whose tastes may differ from his own?

The Right Reverend Mandell Creighton, who appears to have made more addresses to the teachers of England than any other ecclesiastic of his day, repeatedly warned them that they should not attempt to teach any subject without first making clear to children why this subject should command attention. If they failed to do this, added the bishop triumphantly, the children would not attend. He was of the opinion that little pupils must not only be rationally convinced that what they are asked to do is worth their doing, but that they must enjoy every step of their progress. A teacher who could not make a child feel that it is

¹ *The Existing Relations between School and College*, by Wilson Farrand.

'just as agreeable' to be in school as at play, had not begun his, or her, pedagogical career.

This is a hard saying and a false one. Every normal child prefers play to work, and the precise value of work lies in its call for renunciation. Nor has any knowledge ever been acquired and retained without effort. What heroic pains were taken by Montaigne's father to spare his little son the harsh tasks of the schoolboy! At what trouble and cost to the household was the child taught 'the pure Latin tongue' in infancy, 'without bookes, rules, or grammar, without whipping or whining'! Greek was also imparted to him in kindly fashion 'by way of sport and recreation.' 'We did tosse our declinations and conjugations to and fro, as they doe, who by means of a certaine game at tables learne both Arithmeticke and Geometrie.' Assuredly the elder Montaigne was a man born out of date. In our happier age he would have been a great and honored upholder of educational novelties, experimenting with the schoolrooms of the world. In the sixteenth century he was only a country gentleman experimenting with his son, — a son who bluntly confesses that of the Greek thus pleasantly trifled with, he had 'but small understanding,' and that the Latin which had been his mother tongue was speedily 'corrupted by discontinuance.'

All the boy gained by the most elaborate system ever devised for the saving of labor was that he 'overskipped' the lower forms in school. What he lost was the habit of mastering his 'prescript lessons,' which he seems to have disliked as heartily as any student of Guienne. Neither loss nor gain mattered much to a man of original parts. The principal result of his father's scheme was the lingering of certain Latin words among the simple

folk of Perigord, who, having painfully acquired these strange terms in order to rescue their little master from his schoolbooks, retained and made use of them all their lives.

An emphatic note of protest against our well-meant but enfeebling educational methods was struck by Professor William James in his *Talks to Teachers*, published in 1899. The phrase 'Economy of Effort,' so dear to the kindly hearts of Froebel's followers, had no meaning for Dr. James. The ingenious system by which the child's tasks, as well as the child's responsibilities, are shifted to the shoulders of the teacher, made no appeal to his incisive intelligence. He stoutly asserted that effort is oxygen to the lungs of youth, and that it is sheer nonsense to suppose that every step of education can possibly be made interesting. The child, like the man, must meet his difficulties, and master them. There is no lesson worth learning, no game worth playing, which does not call for endeavor. Rousseau, it will be remembered, would not permit Émile to know what rivalry meant. That harassed child never even ran a race, lest the base spirit of competition should penetrate his nerveless little being. But Professor James, deaf to social sentimentalities, averred that rivalry is the spur of action, and the impelling force of civilization. 'There is a noble and generous kind of rivalry as well as a spiteful and greedy kind,' he wrote truthfully, 'and the noble and generous form is particularly common in childhood. All games owe the zest which they bring with them to the fact that they are rooted in the emulous passion, yet they are the chief means of training in fairness and magnanimity.'

I am aware that it is a dangerous thing to call kindness sentimental; but our feeling that children have a right to happiness, and our sincere effort to

protect them from any approach to pain, have led imperceptibly to the elimination from their lives of many strength-giving influences. A recent volume on *Child Culture* (a phrase every whit as reprehensible as 'child-material') speaks always of naughty children as 'patients,' implying that their unfortunate condition is involuntary, and must be cured from without, not from within. The 'rights of children' include the doubtful privilege of freedom from restraint, and the doubtful boon of shelter from obligation. It seems sweeter and kinder to teach a child high principles and steadfastness of purpose by means of symbolic games than by any open exaction. Unconscious obedience, like indirect taxation, is supposed to be paid without strain. Our feverish fear lest we offend against the helplessness of childhood, our feverish concern lest it should be denied its full measure of content, drive us, burdened as we are with good intentions, past the borderline of wisdom. If we were

Less winning soft, less amiably mild,

we might see more clearly the value of standards.

Last winter I had sent me several numbers of a Los Angeles newspaper. They contained a spirited and sympathetic account of a woman who had been arrested for stealing a child's outfit, and who pleaded in court that she wanted the garments for her daughter, the little girl having refused to go to school, because other children had laughed at her shabby clothes. The effect of this pathetic disclosure was instantaneous and overwhelming. The woman was released, and kind-hearted people hastened to send 'nicey' frocks by the 'wagonload' to the ill-used child. A picture of the heroic mother in a large plumed hat, and another of little Ellen in curls

and hair-ribbons occupied prominent places in the paper. The public mind was set at rest concerning the quality of the goods donated. 'Ellen is going to school to-day,' wrote the jubilant reporter. 'She is going to wear a fluffy new dress with lace and hair-ribbons to match. And if any rude boy so far forgets himself as to tear that wondrous creation, there will be others at home to replace it. Happy, oh, so happy was the little miss, as she shook her curls over the dainty dress to-day. And the mother? Well, a faith in the inherent goodness of mankind has been rekindled in her bosom.'

Now the interesting thing about this journalistic eloquence, and the public sentiment it represented, is that while shabbiness was admittedly a burden too heavy for a child to bear, theft carried with it no shadow of disgrace. Children might jeer at a little girl in a worn frock, but a little girl in 'lace and hair-ribbons' was manifestly above reproach. Her mother's transgression had covered her with glory, not with shame. There seems to be some confusion of standards in such a verdict, some deviation from the paths of rectitude and honor. It is hard for a child to be more poorly dressed than her companions; but to convince her that dishonesty is the best policy and brings its own reward, is but a dubious kindness. Nor is it impossible so to stiffen her moral fibre that her poor dress may be worn, if not with pride, at least with sturdy self-control.

On this point I know whereof I speak, for when I was a little girl, my convent school sheltered a number of Southern children, reduced to poverty by the Civil War, and educated (though of this no one was aware) by the boundless charity of the nuns. These children were shabby, with a pathetic shabbiness which fell far below our very moderate requirements. Their

dressess (in my prehistoric days school uniforms were worn only on Thursdays and Sundays) were strangely antiquated, as though cut down from the garments of mothers and grandmothers, their shoes were stuffed, their hats were hopeless. But the unquenchable pride with which they bore themselves invested such hardships with distinction. Their poverty was the honorable outcome of war, and this fact, added to their simple and sincere conviction that a girl born below the Mason and Dixon line must necessarily be better than a girl born above it, carried them unscathed through the valley of humiliation. Looking back now with an unbiased mind, I am disposed to consider their claim to superiority unfounded; but at the time their single-mindedness carried conviction. The standards they imposed were preëminently false, but they were less ignoble than the standards imposed by wealth. No little girl or boy born in these peaceful years can know what it means to have the character set in childhood by history, by the vividness of early days lived under strange and violent conditions, by the sufferings, the triumphs, the high and sad emotions of war.

There is a story told by Sir Francis Doyle which illustrates, after the rude fashion of our forebears, the value of endurance as an element of education. Dr. Keate, the terrible head-master of Eton, encountered one winter morning a small boy crying miserably, and

asked him what was the matter. The child replied that he was cold. 'Cold!' roared Keate. 'You must put up with cold, sir! You are not at a girls' school.'

It is a horrid anecdote, and I am kind-hearted enough to wish that Dr. Keate, who was not without his genial moods, had taken the lad to some generous fire (presuming such a thing was to be found), and had warmed his frozen hands and feet. But it so chanced that in that little sniveling boy there lurked a spark of pride and a spark of fun, and both ignited at the rough touch of the master. He probably stopped crying, and he certainly remembered the sharp appeal to manhood; for fifteen years later, with the 3d Dragoons, he charged at the strongly entrenched Sikhs (thirty thousand of the best fighting men of the Khalsa) on the curving banks of the Sutlej. And as the word was given, he turned to his superior officer, a fellow Etonian, who was scanning the stout walls and the belching guns. 'As old Keate would say, this is no girls' school,' he chuckled; and rode to his death on the battlefield of Sobraon, which gave Lahore to England.

Contemplating which incident, and many like it, a distinguished American educator remarked that the direct product of English public schools is a little indifferent Latin verse; the by-products are the young men who run the Indian Empire.

MUCH ADO ABOUT WOMEN

BY EDWARD S. MARTIN

WHEN one or another eminent suffragist has turned up in the divorce court, people have been used to think of it as somehow prejudicial to the suffrage cause. The same thought has occurred to them when they have seen or heard of the breaking-up of families, the separation of man and wife and the distribution of the children to relatives or institutions, even without divorce. When that kind of occurrence seemed to be a result of zeal on the part of the wife and mother for the independent and untrammelled life for women, they have put it down as an evidence of failure. But it begins to suggest itself that perhaps they have been making a mistake, and that possibly these social and domestic catastrophes ought to be rated as evidences of success. For they certainly look like evidences of rebellion, and it seems that rebellion, a universal rebellion of all the women, is what the sincere Feminists want and are practicing to bring to pass.

That is what Mr. George told us in his paper on 'Feminist Intentions' in the December number of this magazine. He calls the Feminists 'promoters of sex-war,' and thinks they ought to own up to their true dispositions. He distinguishes sharply between Suffragists and Feminists, disclosing that the Suffragists are only half-way fighters in the war for women's rights, 'content to attain immediate ends,' whereas the Feminists want to change the whole attitude of mankind, as they see it, toward women.

Lord Haldane, in his address the

other day before the American Bar Association, talked about a thing for which he said we have no name, but which the Germans call 'Sittlichkeit.' It is that, he said, which really counts, far more than stated laws, in regulating the relations of human beings, and he defined it as 'the system of habitual or customary conduct, ethical rather than legal, which embraces all those obligations of the citizen which it is "bad form" or "not the thing" to disregard.' 'It is the instinctive sense,' he said, 'of what to do and what not to do in daily life and behavior, that is the source of liberty and ease. And it is this instinctive sense of obligation that is the chief foundation of society.'

It is the 'Sittlichkeit' that Mr. George's Feminists want to change. 'The Suffragists,' he says, 'wish to alter the law, the Feminists wish to alter also the conventions.' But, as a first step, they too think it necessary to alter the laws, and to that end they seek to employ sex-strikes and sex-wars; to get the vote and then band all the women together to such ends as the opening of every occupation to women and the leveling of the wages of women and men. They argue that women are what they are, and know what they know, and behave as they behave, and are paid what they receive, not because they were created so, but because they have never had a fair chance to be otherwise. They propose that woman shall have a fair chance; that she shall have a full, even share of all the education, all the power, all the