

# The New Education

## I. Its Trend and Purpose

By EVELYN DEWEY

PARENTS are not the only ones who have discovered that graduates of our schools are not endowed with all the knowledge and character necessary in a perfect state. Teachers know it too. Many of them are doing something about it. They can at least give a learned analysis of the failure of the present educational system to educate. Even those who do not admit the analysis usually admit the failure. This group are like most parents. They explain the failure from their own temperamental slant on things. The explanations are as numerous as temperaments are numerous. But they come under two main heads: the satisfied selves and the unsatisfied selves.

For the former schools fail because education is not as it used to be. We coddle the child and lap him in frills and fancies instead of devoting ourselves to the four essentials: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and the Big Stick. "If it was good enough for me," they say, "I guess it is good enough for my children."

For the latter the trouble is that things are just as they used to be. If their education was classical: "What can you expect from a system dominated by our colleges where the classical tradition largely prevails?" If they worked hard and left school young: "What can you expect in a country where laws do not compel children to stay in school until they have learned a useful trade?" If they got good marks: "Memory is the only thing that counts. I happen to have an excellent memory, so of course," etc. If they got poor marks: "No attention is paid to the individual. I was an exceptional child, dreamy, always writing stories and longing for the fields. No one appreciated me."

Some teachers keep this strong personal slant on education. They are apt to start schools from the fulness of their hearts. The chief aim, often unconscious, is to avoid doing to other children the things that were done to them. The result is an excellent school, where little children are safe and happy. We cannot help wondering at the faith of the initiator that what might have been good for her will be good for all children. The correction of a single misfit seems a limited basis for a thing as complicated as bringing up children. But it is a kindly human limitation after all. It makes sure that the school will be interested in each pupil. Such schools are rather shocking to many people because they present a new set of limitations. But are they any less suited to the business of education than most of our big successful systems?

Before you laugh at the crazy ideas you astutely discover in some of the so-called new schools suppose you make a list of some of the ideas in the old ones. They are none the less crazy because you have grown used to them. There is one school principal who says: "Yes, of course we have outgrown the old ways, but we can't change them. We must pin to them until something is worked out to take their place." Such modesty might be a virtue in a school-girl, but in the head of a school the kindest name that can be given it is caution. Why not demand that teachers themselves do a little of this working out, at least while we are waiting for a diviner revelation? How long would

a railroad last if its president said: "Oh, yes, wooden cars are unsafe. But we cannot change them. All our cars are wooden"? There is another system where a superintendent boasted that by looking at his desk clock he could tell what every child in town was doing. But even this ideal was vain. It was in one of his schools that a pupil said: "Oh, mother, now I know what you mean when you tell me to concentrate. I have learned how. You know how I dislike my new teacher. Well now she can talk all day long and I never hear a word she says."

You mere parent can choose as well as the educational expert. To help you sift the chaff from the wheat answer these questions: What is education? What do my children do in school? What is a lesson for? Do children exist for lessons in this school, or is the school for the children? If you have answered them honestly you are ready to choose between the old and the new according to your lights.

Are there any general impersonal facts that stand out from this struggle between the old and the new to convince us that our dissatisfaction with schools is more than a tempest in a tea pot? Decidedly yes. Three great factors in modern civilization require changing the school if they are to survive. These factors have nothing to do with educational theories. The man on the street, the slum child, the farmer is more affected by them than the university professor. Hence, perhaps, the slowness in changing schools. They are the increase in scientific knowledge, the resulting industrial system, and a democratic form of government.

The first has made specialization necessary. It used to be possible for a single individual to learn about all there was to know in his corner of the world. All that was known could be pretty well compressed in a few books. By earnest and continuous reading it was possible to master it. It was the sort of abstract and speculative knowledge that could be grasped by reading. The discovery of scientific laws has revolutionized the world. Keep a child reading and reading from the first grade through college, as we still do, and he has only scratched the surface of knowledge.

There are so many facts and each individual needs such a different set of facts that it is folly for schools to attempt to teach children all the things they may need to know. But the majority of schools are still doing this. And the facts they teach are the sort that were popular in the Middle Ages: the name of the highest mountain in South America, and the names and reigns of the kings of England. But, honestly, how much do you think they have to do with education? Did you get that general understanding which is the foundation of your intelligent attitude toward your job and your life from them? How much did school help you in acquiring it? Not very much, you say; you got it from experience.

So schools are not experience; or at least their curricula are not. They are magic doses from a medieval prescription. They are the continuation of a method entirely unsuited to the subject matter of today. Suppose we tried to supply the world's present demand for cloth with hand looms. It would not be much more impossible than trying

to educate by teaching facts. Education today must consist in learning to learn; finding out about knowledge and what it is for, so it can be acquired and used when needed. This means a child must know how to read. Reading is not merely pronouncing words. It is using books. He must know how to write. Writing is saying something, not merely guiding a pen. He must know how to figure, not so that he can tell the teacher when train A will meet train B, but so that he can buy a loaf of bread or find out how long it will take him to walk the five miles to the lake. It means, too, that he must know something about his own physical and social environment; physics, chemistry, biology, fundamentals of industry, and social relations, both political and historical. He cannot get this by memorizing a few samples in a textbook. What he can get is the knowledge that such sciences exist; that they explain his own world, the things he wears and eats and passes in the streets and the habits of his friends and relatives. He can get control of the intellectual methods that have enabled society to pile up this vast classification and explanation of ideas and things. It is only as children, all children, get this understanding that the fruits of knowledge can serve everyone.

Machines and so the industrial system are the direct result of scientific discoveries. They have multiplied the needs of man by supplying them. They have infinitely complicated the process of supplying them by taking manufacturing out of homes and concentrating it in factories. When it was carried on at home children had opportunities to supplement the magic facts of textbooks by real work. Processes were simple so that they understood what they saw and what they did. Compare the educational value of the weaving industry as carried on in a New England home and a visit to a modern cotton factory. And how few children today even get a chance to visit the factory!

What does a child today have to give him the understanding of his world that came from helping in the endless activities that went on in every home a hundred years ago? A little if he lives on a farm, nothing whatever if he lives in a city slum. But schools have done nothing to supply the real experiences that he got outside of school when each home or community was a self-supporting unit. The manual training and domestic science introduced in the upper grades of most schools are an obscure realization of the need. But most of their value is lost because work has been distorted into textbook form; into a list of facts. It is an educational axiom that children cannot know what they have never experienced. Examine the curriculum of the average school and then get the daily life of children in a crowded city. There is almost nothing in these children's experience to prepare them for the world they will plunge into when they begin earning a living.

But you say schools cannot really be so unsuited to the process of growing up. They have been going on like this while men were discovering scientific laws, inventing machines, and reorganizing society. What education these men had they got in school. This is not strictly true. Leaders are not a typical product of education under any conditions. A streak of genius lifts them above the common run of men. They find experience and turn it to account in things at hand no matter how meager the environment. Not the least advantage of being born poor is the opportunity it offers for getting real experience in childhood. The success of an educational system should be judged by the ability of people to live intelligently who had no useful environ-

ment or experience except school; not by the well-being of people whose daily life would have equipped them with the tools of learning and the experience to understand their world without school.

Schools must be judged by such standards if our ideas of social justice or democratic government are to be any more than an abstract conception. Any democratic organization of society depends on the ability of every individual to participate. The conception grew because of every man's sense of his own individuality. It can succeed only to the extent that each man's or woman's individuality finds expression. Educationally individualism and democracy are not opposed. They are the same thing. We have not made good citizens when we have taught every child to read and write and salute the flag. That is not education but a gilded ignorance that leaves undeveloped leadership, independence, and initiative, all the qualities that are necessary in a democratic society. An educated person is one who has had a chance to learn as much as his natural capacity allows and thinks honestly along the lines of his own temperament and personality toward a better understanding of his physical and social environment. Such characters do not spring into existence with manhood. They develop gradually from the day the person is born. It is the school's business to see that they develop so that they are a constructive force in society, not a deadweight or a destructive misfit.

## Laburnums

By PADRAIC COLUM

Over old walls the laburnums hang cones of fire;  
Laburnums that grow out of old mold in old gardens:

Old men and old maids who have money or pensions have  
Shuttered themselves in the pales of old gardens:

The gardens grow wild; out of their mold the laburnums  
Draw cones of fire.

And we, who've no lindens, no palms, no cedars of Lebannon,  
Rejoice you have gardens with mold, old men and old maids:

The grey and the dusty streets have now the laburnums,  
Have now cones of fire!

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# Fascismo—The Reaction in Italy

By CARLETON BEALS

Milan, March 24

LAST night the windows of my room overlooking the Porta Venezia in Milan puffed inwards with a mighty roar. The Diana Theater a block and a half away had been wrecked by a bomb. For the next hour the hospital guards carried out the dead and the horribly mutilated. Later two other bombs were found unexploded in different parts of the city, the new Socialist Party headquarters were attacked with hand bombs and subsequently burned, one of the union headquarters was raided, and the police stopped a rush on the anarchist paper *L'Umanità Nova*. Four days ago on the same Porta Venezia the fascisti (White Guards) and Communists battled. Two days ago a bomb exploded in the midst of a socialist meeting in the Via del Greco. Yet Milan, they say, is practically untouched by the White Guard terror; nearly every other city and every farming district in Italy has witnessed more terrible disasters.

These scenes of violence occur at a time when Italian industry is threatened with panic; when the metal trades are paralyzed; and the textile mills are expected to close their gates. They occur at a time when the liberal Government of Giolitti is marching to a fall, when that Government has itself acknowledged its own impotency, and has declared that with the present Parliament "it is no longer possible to govern."

This wave of reaction is the partial outcome of the disintegration and lost prestige of the Socialist Party, which began with the failure of the revolution of last year, when the world watched breathless while Italy trembled on the edge of bolshevism. There is little doubt that the spirit and the means were at hand for a proletarian revolution. But the very mildness of the Government disarmed the Socialists, and led to a limitation of the "occupations" to the metal trades and the signing of a compromise agreement, guaranteeing a large measure of workers' control in the industry. That agreement has yet to pass through the tedium of parliamentary action.

The revolutionary ardor has had time to cool. An apparent victory is rapidly turning to actual defeat. From Moscow came the thundering charge of betrayal of the Italian revolution, and after it the bomb of the twenty-one conditions. In the ensuing national congress those conditions were rejected, the door was shut upon affiliation, and the weapon of armed revolution cast aside. The Communists bolted.

This spirit of internal dissension infected the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro, the Socialists and Communists fighting for control at the recent Leghorn Congress. Both won a Pyrrhic victory. The C. G. L., hitherto subordinate to Socialist Party direction, will perpetuate the union, but with a certain degree of autonomy which augurs approaching independence of action. The C. G. L., numbering 327,000 members at the end of 1913, today has over 2,000,000, or double the number of adherents to the Socialist Party. The Communists effected the separation of the C. G. L. from the Amsterdam International and the passing of a resolution favoring the creation of, and affiliation with, the new red, syndicalist International being promoted by Moscow. Obviously this is a temporary encampment. Moscow

has just recognized the Communist Party as the only revolutionary organization in Italy. Will it recognize a confederation of labor affiliated with the Socialist Party? Thus the C. G. L. faces the probability of being cut off from Amsterdam because of international considerations and from Moscow because of national affiliations. The C. G. L. has been further debilitated by the conditions in Italian industry; non-production, lockouts, widespread unemployment, the breaking of strikes by fascisti and federal troops.

This waning of revolutionary spirit, the demoralization and break-up of the Socialist Party, the internal struggles to establish a new orientation have given heart to the frightened heads of industry, to the reactionary wing of the Government, and the newly created bands of fascisti who are carrying war into the disorganized camp of the revolutionists. These fascisti are supposedly organized groups of patriotic citizens saving the country for the king and maintaining its prestige before the world. To what extent their lawless acts are directly inspired by the industrial heads, as the Socialists charge, it is impossible to say. In any event a large part of their ferocity is the aftermath of that war fanaticism and brutality which is easier to arouse than control.

The acts perpetrated are everywhere similar to those in Milan: the burning of socialist and union headquarters, the disruption of radical and union meetings, the destruction of the radical press, armed attack on radical manifestations and parades. In addition they undertake to break strikes and labor contracts, and to guard private property. To their attacks the Socialist Party and the C. G. L. have been unable to offer any effective resistance beyond public denunciation and futile parliamentary bickering. The Communist Party, on the other hand, has scarcely had time to perfect its organization. In spite of that fact it has been obliged to bear the greater share of the persecution, and has opposed the greater resistance. Impromptu conflicts have usually taken place between armed groups of fascisti and Communists. About the first of March the aggressions of the fascisti led to three simultaneous communist uprisings in Florence, Trieste, and among the farm-workers of Puglia respectively. In Florence the assassination of the communist leader, Spartaco Lavagini, and the throwing a bomb into a procession of "pacifist students" resulted in street fighting and barricades. In Trieste the burning of the labor temple resulted, not only in street fighting but in the destruction of millions of dollars' worth of property. Thus in a few months Italy has been precipitated into a whirl of lawless terror where violence has answered violence and death has paid for death.

In front of this hurricane of hate the Government announced its strict neutrality. All violators of the law, all perpetrators of outrages will be punished, whether Socialists, Communists, or White Guards. Yet in spite of such declarations the civil war continues, and apparently the fascisti are immune from punishment. Daily in Parliament the demands of the Socialists that the Government explain fascisti outrages become more pressing; daily the reactionaries arise and shake condemnatory fingers at Giolitti because of the cannon thundering in Florence, or the riots of the Communists. Is this violence, asks the outsider, due to