

The Paradox

Modern Industry, in Relation to the Family, Health, Education, Morality, by Florence Kelley. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. \$1.00 net.

FORTUNATELY there are people in the world who cannot keep still. Neglect does not shut them off and abuse merely stimulates them. If they are advised by cautious elderly persons that their agitation is pernicious, they reply that they cannot help it. "To be told," said Lowell, and his words were echoed by all the abolitionists, "that we ought not to agitate the question of slavery, when it is that which is forever agitating us, is like telling a man with the fever and ague on him to stop shaking and he will be cured."

One cannot read Mrs. Kelley's book without feeling that "the fever and ague" is on her. It is no objective and iced presentation of the evils of our modern industry with careful qualifying clauses, but warm with an emotion only half revealed. Mrs. Kelley shows us the actual wage-earners who suffer from the disease which we call industrial life. We see the men and women struggling under the burden of an impossibly low wage; the migratory workers, living from hand to mouth by casual jobs, sleeping in dirty freight cars and vermin-filled bunk-houses, and condemned by the very nature of their occupations to a not too fastidious celibacy. We see the men killed "in the ordinary course of their employment," the daughters and even the wives drafted into industry, the deterioration of the workman's home, the persistence of the sweatshop, the spread of industrial disease, that grim "by-product" of the factory, the wholesale and merciless exploitation of young children. We are taken into a mill where a white-haired man, a native American, able to read and write, stands ten hours a day, "watching an endless procession of cans to which the lids would later be attached. This work called for no quality of mind, but sustained attention to a horrible monotony. The man watched perpetually for dents in tin cans, and when a can was dented he removed it, using one hand at long intervals. He needed good sight in order never to miss a dent. Thirteen years he had sat there, day after day, looking at cans."

Throughout the book one feels this amazed horror of the author at the meaningless tragedy of it all. Modern industry is the paradox. It provides food, shelter, clothing, the bases of life, health and education, but destroys them all in their making. The men who manufacture clothes go ragged; the men who build houses bunk in wretched shanties; the men who construct the railroads walk downcast along the ties, seeking precarious and ill-paid jobs. Wealth increases, but it is not to the many, and it is not the wealth that is life.

The indictment no doubt is overdrawn, and the remedies suggested not quite satisfying. Yet though here and there the author is evidently ignoring or at least under-emphasizing developments which are not consistent with her argument, the value of such a presentation as this of Mrs. Kelley's is unquestioned. We are all too prone to take industrial progress for granted, to measure that progress by standards which bear no consistent relation to the welfare of the many, to apply a purely mechanistic interpretation to our ever growing, ever expanding economic system. We forget that statistics of production are not everything, and that some of the human factors in industry escape all measurement. To emphasize these

What Might Be In Education

What Is and What Might Be; In Defence of What Might Be, by Edmond Holmes. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. \$1.25 net each.

THE idea of what education might do for the child enlists an ever deepening share of the wistfulness of the present generation. They turn again and again the pages of the men and women who have written these latter years out of the fulness of their idealism and experimentation—Tolstoy in Russia, Ferrer in Spain, Ellen Key in Sweden, Mme. Montessori in Italy, and our own Professor Dewey, whose influence has gone in a thousand indirect ways to fertilize and liberate our American thought. No one has written, however, with a more exasperated sense than the English Mr. Holmes of that old, mad, bad world from which we are trying to escape. Himself an inspector of elementary public schools for many years, his philosophy of education has evolved under the directest observation of a system which seems to have been contrived with almost diabolical ingenuity to thwart the realization of the purpose for which it was instituted.

The American educational system, with its disciplinary methods, its fine schoolhouses and hygienic desks and ventilating systems, its text-books and charts and marks and promotions and hierarchical organization of teaching function, has certainly achieved a triumph of mechanism. The perfection of the machine is in such contrast to the flimsiness of the product that we can only conclude that there must have been some misconception as to the nature of the raw material. Whatever may have been the cause in England, it is easy to see in America the effects of an utterly inadequate psychology. Whatever may be the lip-service that teachers pay to the theories of Dewey and Montessori, however much the educational world may pretend to agree with Mr. Holmes that "the function of education is to foster growth," the world still acts exactly as if it believed that the child was nothing more than an isolated animal with a mind, into which ideas were to be ladled by the teacher. The discipline of the classroom is a device to keep the children receptive while this process is going on. Examination and recitation are devices to test the success of the ladling. Marks and promotions are partly convenient pigeon-holes for classification, and partly appeals to the emulative instincts of children to familiarize themselves with facts about which they care nothing.

There is a deal of talk in the teaching world about "making children think for themselves," but no teacher suggests the need of examining the conditions of successful thinking. Children are put together in a classroom, rigidly isolated from each other. Their spontaneous expression is checked, their curiosity formalized, the presence of others harasses and disturbs instead of stimulating. No wonder that when school is out, they shake off the harness like a colt and go galloping into the real world. Mr. Holmes, in a passage which should be read for the sheer glow of the "what might be," describes "Egeria's" school in an English village, where, in an atmosphere of perfect freedom the children were so absorbed in their work that some of the class of fifty read silently to themselves while the others were playing a dramatic game in another part of the same room. It is not money, or numbers, or the personality of our teachers that is at fault with us. It is a careless and mechanical philosophy of life. And if this philosophy is one with "the spirit of Western civilization," then those who wish to assert freedom and life against

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