

ern provinces, already the scene of promising political experiment.

An inevitable accompaniment of the new feeling will be a still more solid barrier between Canada and the United States, a barrier which already stands high enough from this side of the line. The strongest living tradition in Canadian history is the anti-Americanism of the eighteenth-century royalists, intensified into an irreconcilable animosity by the War of 1812. This resentment has a new lease of life from America's pursuit of neutrality in the war. The extreme vehemence of the returned soldiers on this subject may be a phase of a still unabated fighting frenzy, or a reflection of the cheap London press. The mildest reproach reverts to the historic parallel of the Venetians, exacting hire out of the substance of the faithful who were true to the Cross in its hour of danger. The more violent have gone deep into the vocabulary of national vituperation, with an obviously satisfying achievement. One and all have succumbed to a living prejudice which decades will not remove.

Most tempting to observe will be the attitude of the returned soldiers to House of Commons government, especially on the part of those who were in England during the recent Cabinet crisis, and

who gathered the full import of that momentous change, of which the new Premier is both the symbol and the prophecy. Under war stress the function of the highly cultivated, procrastinating and compromising parliamentarian has ceased, perhaps permanently. Even the unity of sovereignty, which his representative character implied, we no longer feel to be a necessary presupposition; our belief in legislation through territorial constituencies is at a very low ebb. We have not yet accorded direct constitutional effect to the clear wishes and perceptions of mass opinion, but we have begun to feel their influence upon the conduct of government. If group or mass opinion can thus act in a quasi-legal way, directly and immediately upon administration, the question of House of Commons government must undergo reconsideration in Canada as well as in England. A Dominion-wide organization of returned soldiers with a common memory and a common purpose may well come to exercise such a mass opinion of palpable weight. That it may do so is the undoubted object of many a returned soldier in whom service overseas has awakened a new and lively interest towards the state.

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## Experiment in Education

**I** DO not know whether the important similarities between modern publicity and ancient magic have been sufficiently noted. The daily newspapers have recently furnished an exemplification of one point of identity—the efficacy of names. What nothing else could do, the magic name of Rockefeller accomplished. It put the idea of experimentation in education on the front page of the newspaper along with world peace, and the leak in the stock market. Such a feat tempts one away from the main theme of educational experiment. To yield to the temptation is, however, too obviously to follow the lead of the newspapers themselves. It were better to rescue if possible the idea from the mass of sensational topics out of which it barely thrusts its submerged head.

Some heroism is required from such a rescuing party. One must resolutely refuse to note that a certain number of editorials are even now deploring the fact that the Rockefeller millions, having debauched university education, have engaged in an insidious attempt to capture elementary education, and thus complete the ruin of the country. One must even strive to forget some of the quasi-

official statements which have been put forth, if the idea of experiment in education is to be recovered. One must be sufficiently unimpressed by the word modern in the phrase "modern school" to remember that archæology is a distinctly modern undertaking; the ancients doubtless dug up things when they made holes in the ground, but they most definitely did not "excavate." But the real job comes when one tries to cut the expedition loose from the accumulated baggage labeled culture and discipline, vocational and utilitarian, etc. For all these things not only divert the mind from the thought of educational experiment almost as successfully as the newspapers concealed it, but contradict it. For they belong to just that atmosphere of opinion to which experimentation is fatal. I would not speak lightly of the debates which center about these notions. They not only deserve the respect due to the aged, but they still furnish channels through which things needful to say find outlet. But just in the degree in which they insinuate themselves, the tender plant of experiment is first beclouded and then, withering, droops.

All such terms are large, gross terms; they express goals, ideals, streams of tendency taken *en*

*masse*. They are precisely the kind of terms which flourish in any subject before science, that is to say before experiment, enters. The first care of experiment is to break such large things into small and specific elements and problems. When they are so discriminated, the conceptions embodied in familiar catch-phrases, labels and party-cries tend to evaporate. It is in a non-experimental environment that for example the question of language versus science flourishes. Carried into a medium of experiment, the question becomes just what does a language do and just *how* is it done? Not what in general is the educational worth of science, but how does this specific phase of a particular science become effective in the lives of individuals of this particular age who have this particular natural and industrial background? No one educational experiment station can possibly attack any very extensive portion of the field; and in view of the comparatively little which has been done in acclimating science in elementary and secondary instruction, the announced intention to make natural science central in the new scheme is a well advised one. But this intention does not represent a dogmatic solution of an educational problem; it represents a field in which discovery of appropriate subject-matter and method is still to take place. And he knows little of present schooling who is not aware that such a search at once plunges educators into a large number of specific, difficult, harrowing perplexing problems.

This fact illustrates, to my mind, just the significance, the typical significance, of any sincere endeavor to incarnate an experimental attitude in the conduct of a school. It substitutes detailed analyses for wholesale assertions, specific inquiries for temperamental convictions, small facts for opinions whose size is in precise ratio to their vagueness. It is within the social sciences, in morals, politics and education, that thinking still goes on by large antitheses, by theatrical oppositions of order and freedom, individualism and socialism, culture and utility, spontaneity and discipline, actuality and tradition. The field of the physical sciences was once occupied by similar "total" views, whose emotional appeal was inversely as to their intellectual clarity. But with the advance of the experimental method, the question has ceased to be which one of two rival claimants has a right to the field. It has become a question of clearing up a confused subject matter by attacking it bit by bit. I do not know a case where the final result was anything like victory for one or another among the pre-experimental notions. All of them disappeared because they became increasingly irrelevant to the situation discovered, and with their detected irrelevance they became unmeaning and

uninteresting. For the present, the greatest contribution which any one experimental school can make to education is precisely the idea of experiment itself, the ideal of the experimental method as the spirit in which a social problem is to be approached.

Fortunately for the promise of the new undertaking, the experimental school of the General Education Board is not a pioneer. There are already a good many experimental schools, and there are a great many more schools not experimental in the main which are experimenting in this or that topic or method. The rigid hold of non-experimental notions—and it is the nature of non-experimental notions to be rigidly dogmatic in spite of their intellectual vagueness—has already been loosened. The soil has been stirred, and seeds are quickening. Experimental work already done makes it possible to find teachers who are themselves capable of assuming the experimental attitude—the most difficult single condition to realize. The proposal comes at the right moment—a moment which makes the enterprise a type, not merely another school. To concentrate the mind of the public upon the need of the open and inquiring attitude, to lead it to realize that education should not be confined to making a choice among already formulated conflicting alternatives, but offers a field for genuine discoveries, to help it see that progress is completely dependent upon a method for controlling discoveries, is itself the achievement. To familiarize the public with the possibility of such a method in education is an event more sensational than that heralded by even the blackest and largest headlines which announced a Rockefeller School.

JOHN DEWEY.

## Charlie Chaplin's Art

THERE died last winter, in New York, a notable artist who was comparatively unknown because he had the ill-luck to miss his right artistic medium. He was a circus clown—"Slivers" of the delectable "baseball game." He should have been "Frank Oakley of the movies." He was condemned to pantomime because of a voice that was inadequate to public utterance, but he was a comedian of surprising imagination, a serious observer, a real student of comic effects, and inherently pathetic even at his funniest.

Charles Chaplin has come into the kingdom that poor Slivers missed. He wears, as Slivers did, a grotesque costume. He has the same gift for clowning—an ability to translate any natural gesture into caricature without the slightest ap-