

Foreign Literature

A THEORY OF EDUCATION

ANTHENA FANCIULLA. By G. LOMBARDI-RADICE. Rome.

Reviewed by GERTRUDE SLAUGHTER

WRITTEN by the man who directed the Reform of Gentile in the primary schools of Italy, this book is more than a treatise on the education of children. It is in point of fact a study of children by the laboratory method, but it has been done with such a sense of human values that it extends beyond the field of science into that of literature. For children live on its pages, interpreted by one who believes, as the title implies, that the child is the true goddess of wisdom.

The material of which the book is made is a collection of the drawings and writings of numerous small children who have been taught on the principle upon which the reform of 1923 is based. They have not been given themes and subjects for drawing and composition. They have not been taught to think and write alike and to aim at a single standard. The desire to convey an impression has been aroused first of all; a motive for self-expression has been found and the habit formed of using words and design for their fundamental purpose as a sign-language. And instead of submitting their efforts to the praise or blame of a critic, they have been allowed to learn by practice and experience and by closer observation, without restraint, without rules, and without a system; for the plan differs from Montessori's by the rejection of system and of "didactic material." The result is so delightful a presentation of child-literature and art as to warrant the writer's prediction that the day will come when the writings of children illustrated by children will be preferred to most of the Children's Books created by grown-ups trying to think and speak as children.

The most important evidence is that of the writer's own children, not, he would have us believe, because they are exceptional but because he has been able to follow them for a longer period and because they learned in this free and happy manner from infancy. This record of the daily concerns of two little girls and their younger brother from the ages of three to twelve years is incidentally an ideal picture of family life. It is given to the public in order to prove that a child free from adverse criticism and delighting in its own efforts will learn by repeated attempts just as it has learned the spoken language by repeating sounds that are incoherent at first and mean nothing except to itself. These children have been carefully guided by a mother who had been for eight years a teacher in the public schools; there is no advocacy of allowing children to grow up without any training. They have been constantly encouraged and let to an ever closer observation of nature.

Well-selected literature has been read to them and they have been surrounded by good pictures. The seed has been sown and the plant given light and air. But it has not been forced or stunted in its growth. The documents speak for themselves. They are the fruits of the spirit of the new education which the writer is trying to instill into the teachers of the country in the belief that it will profoundly affect the national character.

Similar material has been collected in the public schools. One series is from an isolated mountain village where the new plan is in operation. Good literature and good pictures are rare in that village. But the beauty of nature is at hand and the charm of a life lived close to the earth. To read the compositions of the thirty peasant children of that school is to see clearly and understand intimately the everyday life of the village. It is more illuminating than many books on the hill-towns of Italy. To point the contrast, another series of compositions is reproduced from a school whose teacher has caught the letter but not the spirit of the plan. She has taught the children to repeat in words what their school ought to mean to them. They have given back to her what they know she expects, and the result is dry-as-dust verbosity and an appalling insincerity.

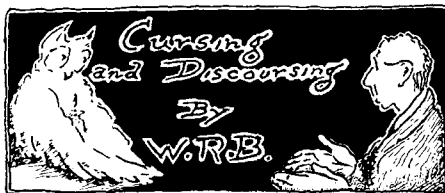
This effort to avoid standardization, to "give the child credit," to arouse his interest in his immediate surroundings and lead him to observe with genuine interest the simple facts of his daily existence, to approach him as a companion and not as one sitting in judgment, to let every impression become a part of himself so that even in retelling a fairy story or in making a copy of a figure of Della Robbia he will not copy literally but will express everything exactly as he sees it, with genuine spontaneity—the aim of all this is much more far-reaching than at first appears. It implies much more than sympathy and understanding on the teacher's part. It is in direct opposition to teaching boys and girls how to "get on in the world." It is based on the conviction that peasants, should remain peasants, delighting in their work, but educated peasants, who have learned contentment and acquired freedom of spirit. Its ideal is the cultured individual who retains the simplicity of childhood, a cultivated society made up of individuals who are as natural and spontaneous as peasants.

While the reform applies chiefly to drawing and composition, it becomes clear that the habit of exact expression with a vital motive, especially the habit of drawing before the child has learned to read and write, is not only the corrective of verbosity—teaching him not to use words without a clear concept behind them—but develops the power of observation to such an extent that every branch of later study profits thereby

—science and mathematics, Greek and Latin, as well as creative art. One of our leading American painters has said: "At the present time we have come to the point of discovering our eyes." One thinks, too, of Keyserling's statement that he who could accurately observe the universe could recreate it. When you perceive with what a sense of joy and freedom and with what fidelity to fact these children have learned to express themselves you find yourself sharing the optimism of the writer who looks forward to the time when hypocrisy shall give way to sincerity and false incentives to respect for the truth. Whoever, he says, maintains intact the spontaneity of a child is the founder of a new civilization.

Psychology and the laws of heredity are not disregarded by this idealist; he contends that they confirm his theory. On the practical side he puts a heavy responsibility upon the teacher, who must not, as Montessori counsels, efface himself but must be capable of inspiring the child with his own spontaneity. The child will take the tone of the teacher, so that personality becomes all-important, and the ideal teacher will be nothing less than an ideal human being of mature wisdom and the heart of a child.

It is a curious fact that a theory of education which aims at the freedom of the individual should have been put into effect under the Mussolini government. And although both Gentile and Lombardi-Radice have resigned their positions, the reform continues without interruption. It has found in professor Lombardi-Radice an advocate who is inspired by a great faith and one whose fine perceptions and clarity of style are strong arguments for his clarity of vision.



WELL, we have our new heading for this column of ours, having draughted it ourself! If it appears a little skew-gee, why we dashed it off free-hand, just like that! It may not be an awfully good likeness of us, but it is, at least, an excellent likeness of the Bird, our Familiar.

The holidays nearly ruined us. We attended so many parties and met so many people that we are planning stealing away incognito for a long rest on a desert island. But probably by the time you read this we shall have fully recovered.

One play we saw, "The Last of Mrs. Cheyne,"—to which we were treated by the generous author of "Pig-Iron." We thought it a fine entertainment. Then, on the evening of New Year's we heard Paul Whiteman's orchestra at Carnegie, and were fascinated by what one might call the onomatopoeic effects of Deems Taylor's "Circus Day." We were disappointed, however, in Gershwin's Harlem operetta, "135th Street." It seemed to us a rather pithless take-off on Italian opera. Tremendous possibilities, it seems to us, lie in true negro opera—possibilities that may be realized in the future. And certainly Gershwin is no mean musician. But "135th Street," for all that, does not step off in quite the right direction.

Later, at the Town Hall, we spent a glorious evening listening to Paul Robeson's wonderful, haunting singing of negro spirituals, and, after the performance, found Mr. Robeson most interesting to talk to. He and his accompanist, Mr. Laurence Brown, are a marvelous team. They complement each other perfectly. Mr. Robeson is naturally, at present, rather torn between the stage and the concert-hall. His most perfect self-expression is in his singing, though, as anyone who witnessed "All God's Chillun Got Wings" can testify, he is a powerful emotional actor. He is fortunate in being aided in his career by the intelligence of Mrs. Robeson. Rarely in one evening have we talked to two people so natural, modest, responsive, and sensitive to artistic things.

We took great pleasure also, on the following Thursday, in hearing Julius Bledsoe's fine barytone and the accompaniments of James Walker. Mr. Charles Boni, Jr., of Albert and Charles Boni, publishers of R. Emmet Kennedy's "Mellows," gave us this opportunity. Mr. Bledsoe's recital took place at "The 66 Fifth Avenue Playhouse." It was another gala evening.

This distinguished negro singing has so far made the winter most memorable for us. We have heard Mr. Robeson, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Bledsoe before, at Carl Van Vech-

ten's and at Heywood Brown's. Our knowledge of the negro spirituals has been greatly enlarged. And the more we know of them the more beautiful and moving we feel many of them to be. Where else in the range of music have such spiritual fire, inspired fantasticality, and striking poetic phrase merged in powerful rhythms?

Later in the evening upon which we conversed with Robeson we listened to Mr. Orage of *The New Age* talk of the late Katherine Mansfield. It was a remarkable experience. And we sat up another evening with John Howard Lawson, who has just finished a new play, discussing prohibition and politics. On still another evening a remark of Inez Haynes Irwin's recalled to our mind that now almost-forgotten Coast poet, Nora May French, and we listened for long to Mrs. Irwin's account of this beautiful and fated lyricist.

So the taxicabs have ticked merrily, the hospitable doors have opened upon gracious and convivial gatherings, the talk has run on and on. One evening, at Carl Van Doren's, being exhilarated by the sprightliness of Will Cuppy, or some other cuppy that cheers, we launched into a long tirade upon literature, in which we found W. E. Woodward, the debunking expert, practically our sole supporter. Later upon this same evening we made a socialistic speech, discovering in ourselves sudden all-unapprehended springs of radicalism. Yes, our hosts have had something to forgive!

It has certainly been a happy new year!

And there were several egg-nogs.

We have also spent several quiet evenings at home—reading belatedly "The Sailor's Return," and Henry Beston's "Book of Gallant Vagabonds," with the gorgeous account of Thomas Morton of Merry Mount, that vivid Elizabethan cast on the stony breast of New England, where he raised a Maypole for the Indians.

And, withal, we have offered up many a prayer of thanks for many genial friends, many as genial books, and a fairly sturdy constitution.

New York is a vast storehouse of infinite artistic riches. The opportunities to see remarkable pictures, hear remarkable music, read remarkable books, witness remarkable plays, are many and dazzling. Even to the retiring and comparatively poverty-stricken. And New York nights are enchanted nights. We doubt very much whether there are pleasanter parties in any other city in the world. There is no unusual scintillation of wit, perhaps, no very remarkable remarks—that is, as a general rule. But there are a great many interesting people, a great many interesting drinks, and a great many topics of conversation.

Babylon, our Babylon! We are becoming quite cockney. And we have discovered Bunn's California Cafeteria, the one reasonable place to eat where a superb array of viands are displayed for your delectation and music soothes your savage breast at lunch-time. Also, what a breakfast you can get there, if you happen to be flush!

We have our own New York novel to write. We must write it sometime. It will not be profound. But it could be full of a number of things. The trouble about New York is, that it is so devilish hard to write about when there is so much to experience in it. No two days are quite the same. And people are so generously always asking you out.

Well, we have now spent a good many years in this quite insane city. We have accumulated variegated memories of many parts of it. There were years when our beat was Union Square, years when we commuted to Long Island and worked on Fourth Avenue, months when we lived over in Old Chelsea, the early days when we roomed on Vannest Place in the middle of Charles Street. A year near Gramercy Park. The present inhabitancy of Bank Street, down where all the streets go crazy and criss-cross each other. There was the time when we commuted to Westchester, and the time when we commuted to Connecticut. We have ridden on all the Els, Subways, and Surface cars. We have worked downtown under the shadow of the Woolworth Tower and uptown nigh to Times Square. And yet we feel that we are just barely beginning to know the big town.

Thus, in sentimental reminiscence, we have forgotten to cuss anything this week in this column. Which is all because our friends have entertained us so well this new year, as we tremble upon the verge of being forty. Perhaps we had better retire after all and write our reminiscences. For we are certainly getting very aged.

But just possibly there is life in the old dog yet!

W. R. B.

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the column on the left are those received. Many of them will be reviewed.

Belles Lettres

LIBER DE MIRACULIS MARIAE. Edited by THOMAS FREDERICK CRANE. Oxford University Press. 1925. \$2.50.

In 1924 Professor Crane of Cornell turned eighty. To celebrate the anniversary, he has edited a collection of Latin stories first published in 1731 by Bernard Pez, but immediately suppressed. It is one of the curiosities of scholarship that the tales in this rare volume should have become the foundation for some of the most important studies in the history of mediæval exemplary literature; and it is equally curious that they have never before been reprinted in their entirety. Professor Crane has therefore done a piece of work that much needed doing. It is almost an impertinence to say that his edition is admirable, since Professor Crane has been dealing authoritatively with popular tales and ecclesiastical stories for some fifty years. To few men, however, is it given to publish when past eighty so important a work in their chosen field of study. What is more, he is a rare scholar who shows at any age so wide an erudition without a trace of pedantry or parade.

MEDIÆVAL LATIN. Edited by KARL POMEROY HARRINGTON. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. 1925. \$2.80.

It is a happy sign of the times that books of and about mediæval Latin begin to multiply. This new volume of selections has excellent competitors, notably Professor Beeson's "Primer of Mediæval Latin," but it is by no means superfluous, since it contains extracts—and very generous extracts—from authors ranging through some thirteen centuries, many of whom are not easily accessible to the general reader. Professor Harrington has done his work well, and deserves the thanks of the rapidly increasing number of lovers of good literature who refuse to admit that Latin became a dead language by the fourth century of our era. Anyone who can read Latin at all has only to work through such a book as this to be assured that Latin was indeed alive until John Milton's day at least. Mr. Harrington has wisely not set himself strict limits in time: once in a way it is a delightful thing to have Erasmus and Dante and Bede and Sulpicius Severus between the same covers.

Drama

TIMOTHEUS, OR THE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE. By BONAMY DOBRÉE. Dutton. 1925. \$1.

The little volumes of the Today and Tomorrow Series have been so stimulating in their witty or searching approach to their several problems, that it is disappointing to find how pale the ink that carries forward the story of Timotheus's powers. The volume "Thamyris," on the future of poetry, shows that in considering arts the writer is likely to be more cautious than the prophet in science, where the basis is firmer, or the philosophical prognosticator, whose fancy need not be tied to earth at all. But as an oracle Mr. Dobrée seems surest; it is in his constant undercurrent of present-day satire that he himself is drowned. He finds no better jibes than to refer to "the stupider sort of people, such as members of Parliament, wardens of libraries, teachers in science or religion at Public Schools, municipal architects, and so on"; no more striking criticism of the current attitude toward acting than the cry that one cannot tell how good an actress is until one knows *who* she is.

The theatre of the future is more effectively described, as viewed with the air of Wells's Time-Machine. The one purpose of a performance is the stimulation of emotion; scientific progress has made this precise; the government operates the theatres; and wars, loans, campaigns of all sorts (save political, when the theatres are closed) are inaugurated by means of the proper play, setting the desired emotion into action. In addition to the official playhouses, there are penny peepshows—etherealized, scientific, individual booths where one can gather a supply of courage or tenderness or whatnot for a coming interview.

This transformation in theatrical procedure and organization Mr. Dobrée sets in the year 2100; either he is converting a series into a poor jest, or he allows—as history runs—little time (behaviorism being now hardly more than conceived) for the birth of a science and the death of an art.

Education

DETERMINISM IN EDUCATION. By WILLIAM BAGLEY. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1925.

Mr. Bagley's book on mental tests and the basis of intelligence and mental organization, which followed closely in its wake, has grown into a mechanistic philosophy of education which is neither true to sound theory nor to democratic faith. So Dr. Bagley takes his case. The "fatalistic assumption" against which he directs his polemic are essentially those of the constancy of the I.Q., that intelligence is fixed by heredity, that at the sixth year it is possible "to separate the sheep from the goats," that at the twelfth year it is safe to predict a child's future on the basis of intelligence level, and that education and environment are relatively unimportant in determining mental age or future achievement.

Deterministic theories of mental measurement, Bagley contends, are the final subterfuge of the avowed intellectual aristocrat. The author presents data to show that intelligence tests now in vogue do not measure native but *acquired* ability, and that it is indefensible therefore, to use them as a criterion in determining the capacities and future possibilities of the child.

The author calls into question the interpretations placed upon data presented to substantiate Nordic superiority and maintains that the level of effective intelligence in any group can be raised through education. He takes pains to assure the reader that he neither questions the fact of inherent individual differences, nor the presence of actual and basic racial differences—that his quarrel is not with the principle of mental measurement itself, but with the interpretations which have too hastily been placed upon results obtained from mental tests.

As a critical survey of tendencies which no doubt are present, the book, with its concise yet simple and animated style, is at once interesting and enlightening. But it is doubtful whether very many of the educators whom he criticises would recognize the extreme position which he attacks.

TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ. By Paul Klapper. Appleton.

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHILDREN. By Frederick Pierce. Dutton. \$2.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF SECONDARY EDUCATION. By John Addison Clement. Century. \$2.50.

CHILDREN'S READING. By Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima. Appleton. \$2.

EASY LATIN. By Jared W. Scudder. Allyn & Bacon. \$1.25.

SPEECH CORRECTION. By Richard C. Borden and Alvin C. Busse. Crofts. \$3.50.

GERMAN GRAMMAR FOR BEGINNERS. By Edward Franklin Hauch. Oxford University Press. 95 cents.

SPIRITUAL VALUES IN ADULT EDUCATION. By Basil A. Yeaxlee. Oxford University Press. 2 vols. \$8.75.

RIGUEUR. Selected and adapted from the works of Anatole France, by V. F. Boyson. Oxford University Press. 50 cents.

Fiction

MATRIX. By MELVIN P. LEVY. Seltzer. 1925. \$2.

The pattern of "Matrix" is modern and sometimes lyrical, suggesting in its earlier portions Joyce's "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." Without any great originality or penetration it tells of the formative years in a boy's life, with their encounters, discoveries, and revolts until he definitely accepts the mold that is to shape him thereafter. The book is youthful, but not an outstanding expression of youth. It is the work of an intelligent young writer, but not of an efficient novelist, for it has no compactness or drama, no form to its plot or individuality to its characterization. Robert McKim is not real, and Mr. Levy's trick of calling him "the boy" only the more devalues him into any sensitive young fellow who ever grew up. More like a poet than a novelist, Mr. Levy has merely translated into language certain stages of feeling and thought, certain recognisable moods. The language itself has the virtues of good poetry rather than of good prose.

29 LOVE STORIES. Edited by ERNEST RHYS and C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT. Appleton. 1925. \$2.50.

These stories are wide in range and highly dissimilar in the extent and quality of their love motif. This is really for their advantage, for if it is stretching a point to regard some of them as essentially love stories, at the same time they offer a variety of reading which is vital to the success of an anthology. Some of the stories are very un-

distinguished, others very good; some are intense, others light; a good many are modern, but a fair number are taken from older authors and go back as far as the Bible, Malory, Boccaccio, and "The Arabian Nights." Many famous writers are included, and sometimes represented by splendidly chosen stories, as is Katherine Mansfield with "The Singing Lesson" and Henry James with the engrossing but rather neglected "The Way It Came." In the case of other famous people, the choice is unfortunate and far-fetched: unless for its name, why include Maupassant's "Love" when a dozen finer love stories, "Happiness" in great particular, could replace it? or why, out of his unlimited assortment, include as a love story O. Henry's "The Brief Debut of Tildy"? The authors supplement their prose selections with one poem, "Clerk Saunders," which they characterize as "the finest love story ever told in verse," a judgment with which it is difficult to agree. As a whole, "29 Love Stories" has the respectable if not lofty merit of being readable, and the additional virtue of offering uncommon rather than overworked material.

THE LOUGHSIDERS. By SHAN F. BULLOCK. Dial Press. 1925.

"The Loughsiders" is saved from unimportance by undertones of warm humanity and acute understanding, and from mediocrity by its apt delineation of character and its frequent mastery of idiom. Superficially Mr. Bullock tells the simple chronicle of a Protestant community in the North of Ireland. His people appear to be an isolated type without much universal significance. Yet one leaves them conscious of more even than their peculiar humanity, with its freshness and homeliness. As an American, one begins by finding them full of the pungent flavor of their speech, and largely attractive because they are different from the world at large; but even as an American, one is likely to end by appreciating the high degree of their actuality.

For judging them even from an alien's standpoint, once you grasp that in spite of his humor Mr. Bullock aims at more than provincial comedy, you perceive undertones and connotations to the story of their daily life, you perceive, by contrast with this generally humdrum level, an added meaning to their frustrations, their revolts, their crises of emotion. Once more, to a certain point, you are shown a macrocosm in a microcosm. The principal characters, a family called Nixon, run the gamut in their diminutive way of all the average problems and misfortunes of life. At first well-off and independent, they go down in the world beginning with the death of the paterfamilias, and their incidental weaknesses become more formidable than their general strength. Misfortune breeds the usual emotions, proves the usual corrective, causes the usual mutations of character.

The Nixons find their salvation in Richard Jebb, a middle-aged neighbor who had been the best friend of their husband and father. His relationship with them is a sophisticated complication to the soberly naive record of their fortunes. His complex na-

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ture, plotted with pains and skills, leaves no doubt as to Mr. Bullock's serious intentions, and gives the book an obvious worldly angle. Canny, clever, perspicuous, ranking under Rachel Nixon's rejection of his suit when her father was still prosperous, he forces himself to be generous for the subtle gratifications of the effort, and rounds up the strayed Nixon destinies at the command of a code whose meaning is beyond every one but himself. But even the happy, almost sentimental ending means an end to the old order, a definite end to the family life of the Nixons.

There is no irony implicit in the book, there are no hidden surfaces; it is significant in truth and humanity only because it stands upon foundations of truth and humanity. It is the plain story, not ostensibly but actually, of a group of Loughsiders leading a very particular and limited sort of life. But they are people who live, and reality is not relative but absolute; and they are people, however wanting in *joie de vivre*, however sober and self-contained, whose lives are pervaded by humanity. The flavorsome idiom they speak, finely caught by Mr. Bullock, stamps them as Loughsiders; it is what they think and feel beneath this speech, what they refrain from expressing, that gives them a more universal being.

JERICHO SANDS. By Mary Borden. Knopf. \$2.50 net.

SLEEPING DOGS. By Mary Barnes-Grundy. Stokes.

THE CANNING WONDER. By Arthur Machen. Knopf. \$3.50 net.

RACHEL MAHR. By Morley Roberts. Knopf. \$3 net.

TALES OF THE PAMPAS. By W. H. Hudson. Knopf.

GREAT SHORT STORIES OF THE WORLD. By Barrett H. Clark and Maxim Lieber. McBride. \$5 net.

FERANDE. By W. B. Maxwell. Dodd, Mead. \$2.

MUSTY CORN. By Denny Culbert. Dorrance. \$2.

A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY. By Ethel M. Dell. Putnam. \$2.

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