

As Good as It Wants to Be

WHY THE PRIVATE SCHOOL? By Allan V. Heely. New York: Harper & Bros. 208 pp. \$3.

By CLAUDE M. FUESS

parents and child guidance experts to decide on such matters individually, it is equally plain that this utopian thought cannot be applied to a public-education system which now takes care of thirty million children annually. Nor has Mr. Conrad proven to this reader's satisfaction that parents could safely be trusted to make these vital decisions objectively.

A heart-rending chapter describes the horrors of homework, the disruption caused by this needless torture in the peace-loving home, and the cruel pressure it puts on the delicate child.

"This extra burden," we are informed, "on the seven-, eight-, and nine-year-olds represents the margin between normalcy and maladjustment in hundreds of thousands of cases." Mr. Conrad believes that "whatever childhood is anywhere else in the world, it is no delight for millions of children in the United States. . . . For millions of American children we have only exchanged child labor in the factories for child struggle in the schools." The fact is—and it is easily documented—that despite all of its much-admitted imperfections the public school could not seriously be accused of overburdening its pupils.

There are many other glaring inaccuracies, mixed so unfortunately with justified criticisms as to make the entire approach useless to those who are seriously interested in improving the school system. In a totally distorted record of last year's dismissal of eight New York City teachers for alleged Communist ties the book implies that racial and religious discrimination played a part and states flatly that a public hearing had been denied to teachers. The record shows lengthy and fair hearings by trial examiner Theodore Kiendl, and there is absolutely no proof or even indication of religious bias in the case.

While he seems to shrug off the Teachers' Guild, an AFL affiliate, Mr. Conrad appears greatly preoccupied with the Teacher's Union which enrolls only a small minority of the city's teachers, has previously been expelled from the CIO on charges of Communist domination, and is no longer recognized by the New York City Board of Education.

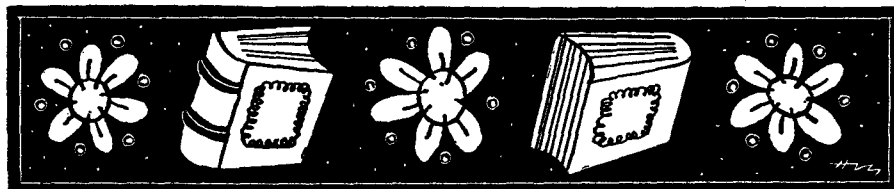
There is a wide public composed of educators and ordinary citizens anxiously waiting for a good and fearless book which will point up the ills and inadequacies of the public schools along with their great achievements, so that much-needed reforms can be brought about. Mr. Conrad still keeps us waiting for that book.

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THE HEADMASTER of the Lawrenceville School out of his rich professional experience has written a fine book on the American private school—a book refreshingly free from the extravagant claims, technical jargon, irritating clichés, and the overemphasis on mere tradition which so frequently have marred previous volumes on the subject. Admitting that the average citizen believes the private schools to be "insignificant if not contemptible," Dr. Heely aims to explain rather than to defend and appears less as a propagandist than as an unprejudiced measurer of values. Typical of his method is a passage in which he analyzes with commendable impartiality the relative merits of the

reasons why I have enjoyed it so much.

In the concluding chapter Dr. Heely puts himself on record as believing that education has, or should have, a moral end and that religion therefore "is the rock upon which the whole program of our schools should be set." The famous Dr. Thomas Arnold incurred the ridicule of Lytton Strachey for his pronouncement in Rugby Chapel: "I repeat now: what we must look for here is, first, religious and moral principle; secondly, gentlemanly conduct; thirdly, intellectual ability." Stated thus baldly this does seem to be a rather prim Victorian philosophy, a corollary of Kingsley's "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever." But Dr. Heely is careful to interpret "religious training" broadly enough so that it does not result in a narrow or negative piety. He insists that the American private school if it is to retain the confidence



private day school and the boarding school. Furthermore, his own attitude toward the public schools is free from even veiled superciliousness. Without any tremors he leads to the slaughter some of the most sacred pedagogical cows. The tone and temper of the book are admirable and should win the author readers even from those who view the private school with suspicion.

Dealing with ideas and policies rather than with personalities, Dr. Heely covers two major topics: the place of the private school and the program of the private school. Under those heads he manages to deal with nearly every problem which the private school has to face, including the curriculum, student government (which he regards with some amiable skepticism), disciplinary difficulties, practical psychiatry (on which there is a very illuminating chapter), college-entrance examinations, extracurricular sideshows, and the relation of the school to the community. He indulges in no sentimental hysteria over the Old School Tie. Indeed, he skillfully avoids the emotional approach but proceeds with enough wit to attract attention and enough seriousness to provoke thought. I confess that I find in this volume very little with which to disagree—perhaps one of the

of its natural clientele should be avowedly and positively Christian—that it should aim primarily to build character—and in this judgment he is, *me judice*, absolutely right.

Dr. Heely anticipates criticism by admitting that some private schools are "socially exclusive" and by warning his fellow schoolmen that they had better cultivate democracy. It is highly important, he says, that these schools should establish themselves in the popular mind as instruments of public service, not as "hotbeds of privilege." Here he is on firm ground. The private school in the United States has made a contribution to society far out of proportion to its numbers and resources; and, as Dr. Heely remarks in the beginning, it "enjoys the peculiar advantage that it can be as good as it wants to be, if it can find out what that is." Its opportunities are limitless—at least unless our present social and economic structure collapses; and Dr. Heely in pointing out what it ought to become and in demanding "bold, courageous leadership" has uttered words to which all those interested in the private school should give heed.

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The Teacher's Tools

THE ART OF TEACHING. By Gilbert Highet. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 282 pp. \$3.50.

By HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

REFRESHING as a salt breeze on a sultry day, Gilbert Highet's discussion of teaching differs sharply from most books on pedagogy by emphasizing the teacher as artist rather than the teacher as psychologist. I hasten to add that in so doing Professor Highet writes rational discourse, not emotion, and that his theorizing and his examples of current theory and past practice are intellectually ordered, as good art should be. Where much is sensibly said it is invidious to single out special discussions, but among other novelties is his statement that a good lecture is quite as educational as recitation work or the famous and rather overpraised tutorial method. Every other discussion of lecture courses I have recently read has treated them as evils to be got rid of. Mr. Highet assumes that there is profit in good lecturing—in that clear and rational discourse concerning a field of knowledge in which the speaker is competent, which is the ideal of lecturing. Indeed, he even thinks that television may give lecturing a great boost, though it may modify the existing method.

"The Art of Teaching" is excellent discourse but of limited application, and if I now seek to show the boundaries of the book it is in no spirit of ingratitude. Mr. Highet was brought up in the traditional British educational pattern and is currently a professor of the classics. Inevitably, therefore, his book displays rather more familiarity with the instruction of boys and young men than it does with the instruction of girls and young women, and inevitably it tacitly assumes that the teacher is a man, most of the references to the female teacher being casual. Inevitably, also, it draws its examples and bases its theorizing in large measure upon the humanities.

All this is understandable. The humanities in this country exist largely as they are taught—that is, they do not, like social work or expertise in economics, move into public life immediately nor do they, like science, turn up as industry, patent rights, or organized destruction in our culture. Mr. Highet does not ignore either science or the social sciences, but his choosing Louis Agassiz as historically an admirable science teacher is based, so to speak, upon the famous anecdote about Agassiz's shutting a student into a room with a dead fish, some paper, and a pencil. I think the problem of science teaching can no longer be set-

tled on naïve lines. Mr. Highet says nothing about the vexed problem of laboratory instruction vs. general theory or the relation of specialization to philosophy in this vast and influential field. In one sense the art of teaching is one and indivisible; but there is a fundamental chasm which sets the humanities apart from the other two-thirds of the educational circle, at least in America.

Civilized as Mr. Highet's essays are, I do not see how they are going to mesh with the biggest teaching problem in the United States—that of the public school in an inflationary period. His admirable injunctions to the teacher to keep alive, to review his original sources before each class, to read widely, to study his pupils, may have through no fault of Mr. Highet a rather hollow ring to the ear of a state-university instructor in English facing four sections of thirty freshmen each and reading and grading 120 themes each week. They become an unattainable ideal for many a high-school teacher with five classes of forty pupils, meeting every day for fifty minutes, a sixth class for study hour, and a teachers' meeting or other extracurricular activity after school hours. They become almost fantastic in connection with the grade-school teacher of (let us say gently) inferior cultural status, low pay, long hours, and inadequate matrimonial prospects, whose life is cribbed, cabined, and confined by agreements and contracts studied some years ago by Howard K. Beale in a disturbing book. That book set out to discover whether teachers are really free as human beings. The answer was emphatically that most of them are not. Nothing in post-war development indicates that the situation has bettered itself, and almost everything indicates it is worse.

Mr. Highet is disturbed by the case of a man who came to a summer school for a refresher course in elementary French and who steadfastly refused to interest himself in the comedies of Molière. I think I understand this man and his enthusiasm for basketball rather better than the anecdote seems to imply that the summer-school adviser did. In short, the teaching situation in the country at large has steadily deteriorated in a manner that Mr. Highet's sparkling pages scarcely envision. This is not Mr. Highet's fault and has nothing to do with his admirable prose; but readers who solace themselves with the pleasing assumption that all the teacher has to do is to follow Mr. Highet's injunctions had better drift into almost any overcrowded public school and watch.

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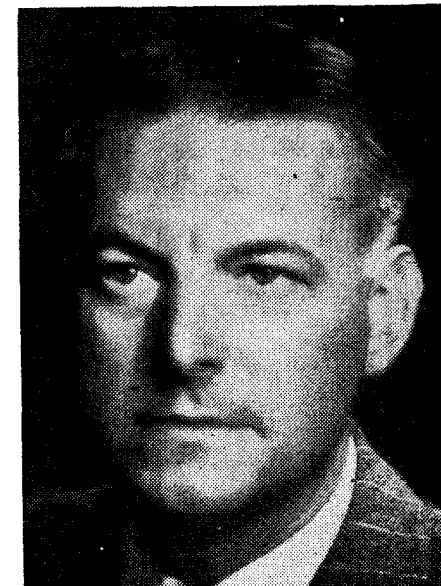
—Lotte Jacobi.

Earl Conrad—"objects to compulsion."



—Blackstone Studios.

Allan V. Heely—"positively Christian."



Gilbert Highet—"excellent discourse."