A LIBERAL EDUCATION IN THE RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.[1]

By H. W. HOUSEHOLD, ESQ., M.A.,
Director of Education, Gloucestershire C.C.

YOU have asked me to speak to you to-day on Primary Education in a Rural Area because, I suppose, you are good enough to think that having been more than twenty-five years in Gloucestershire, with its "high wild hills and rough uneven ways," I ought by this time to know something about the subject. Certainly, if I do not by this time, I never shall.

The task of providing a worthy primary education in rural areas has of course its peculiar difficulties—the small single-teacher or two-teacher school (I have one hundred and twenty of them, and many are as good as you would wish to see); the intensification of every difficulty arising out of dual control; the distances, and those rough uneven ways which make it still harder to organise senior schools and higher tops; and the poor field of candidates when you want to get a new head mistress in one of those remote Cotswold villages, so lovely to visit from May to October, so—well, so very different for a head mistress to live in, perhaps at all times, but certainly through the long winter and the slow returning spring; no picture house within reach, very likely no friends of any kind to talk to, and, unless her intellectual resources are uniquely self-sufficient, a long dull time before her once the sun has got well southward of the line and the days are short.

[p 632]

But you did not ask me to come and talk of difficulties; rather, I think, you want to know what we have done in Gloucestershire to overcome them—to give the rural child a good education in spite of them.

Well, from that point of view, I do not ask you to pity us. Before I finish it will not, I fancy, be our children that you are pitying. And after all, at worst, the child in the small school is thrown much more upon his own resources than the child who in the town is lost in a large class of his contemporaries. He has a better chance of preserving his own individuality and of doing independent work, and that, as we shall see, is the thing that mainly matters.

I am not guilty of any over-statement if I say that the nineteenth century made of the primary school throughout the land—and I almost think that I could truly add throughout the world—a thing of which the twentieth is learning to be thoroughly ashamed; a thing against which the whole instinct of three generations of devoted teachers has continuously, and often fiercely, and at last successfully, rebelled.

The nineteenth century did not believe, and the twentieth is not always willing to admit, or to act as though it admitted, that the worker's child in the primary school needs, and is capable of enjoying and profiting by, all that is meant by a liberal education. Even the teachers, many of them, declared that they could not when, twelve years ago, I made my first venture in the experiment which I shall describe to you. They could not believe that the child from a poor bookless home could enjoy and profit by the same wide range of study in history ancient and modern, in literature, poetry, art, music, even archaeology, astronomy and the whole romance of science, as his more fortunate contemporary who is bound for Winchester, or Shrewsbury, or Eton.

The primary school began as a bookless school, a cheap school of huge classes, badly housed, badly staffed, badly equipped; and a new and quite unnatural technique of teaching had to be devised to meet the unnatural conditions. A theory of education was evolved to fit the circumstances, and Training Colleges have performed miracles of ingenuity and technical skill to equip thousands upon thousands of young teachers for a task to which no teacher ought ever to have been asked to set hand or mind. They had to be the source of all the information (a very different thing from organised knowledge) which those
[p 633]
regimented classes were to obtain. They talked well if they were able teachers (and many were and are most able); they led the children cleverly to make deductions as inevitable as Euclid's; they drew up skilful summaries on the blackboard, and then questioned brilliantly in perfect sequence to get back from their scholars what they had given. But all the time it was they who were doing the real work. The child did very little. Anybody can answer questions if he listens; there is very little intellectual exercise about that. The intellectual exercise is in asking the questions, and that exercise brilliantly performed flatters the teacher, and has delighted many an inspector, but it does little for the child except leave him with certain scraps of information that have little interest, little value, and little permanence. I would always judge a teacher anywhere not by what he does, but by what his pupils do. His merit mounts with me rather as his words are few and the child's own independent work is much.

Then thirty or forty years ago came the text book, written by clever teachers in a language and manner peculiar to school text books and met with nowhere else, constructed to fit in with the method of oral teaching and of imparting information, and with this depreciatory conception of the child as a being, retarded and crippled in mind by the material and intellectual poverty of his whole environment. How should he, born of such a stock, coming from such a home, love great poetry and drama, rejoice to make contact with great minds and through them with great thoughts and great events, range eager and excited over the whole field of history, thrill to the tale of Thermopylae and Salamis, take Plutarch for his mentor in the school of citizenship, revel in the wizardry of Scott, or roam over a world of waters with Odysseus or Sir Francis Drake? So he was fobbed off with these dreary text books, which no normal adult would dream of reading, nor any normal child save on dire compulsion. And to this day a young teacher—and many an old one—cannot read poetry to a class, no, not of twelve-year-olds, without halting at every stanza to explain the obvious at interminable length, incredulous of the child's capacity to understand, forgetful of his own childish enjoyment out of school (rarely, alas, within it) when some good reader made him thrill to the music of verse read as it should be read, or swept him along upon the tide of some great prose story, which one pause for explanation or for question would have
[p 634]
ruined. We *will* ask the child to see all that the adult sees, forgetting that the fifty per cent. that he gets to-day (there are to-morrows and to-morrows still to come) is worth infinitely more than the one hundred per cent. that we would force upon him; and so we cast a blight upon literature and history, and geography and science; and for the priceless gold of knowledge won by thought and made his own, we foist upon the child the pitiful dross of information, forced, rammed at high pressure, in machine-made chunks by class-teaching upon the collective memory, where it withers unassimilated, and most often perishes leaving no mark behind.

These methods, so skilful, so effective to appearance at the moment on their plane—a low plane—but so destructive of individuality and effort, and of all joy in learning, have by their false tinsel glitter of efficiency forced their way from the bottom upwards throughout the whole school world, and, associated with the despotic sway of examinations and the competition for certificates (which half the pupils never win) bid fair to ruin the education given in every type of school. Any training college, any modern university, will tell you that it takes them two-thirds of the first year to teach a large proportion of the students coming to them from the public secondary schools how to tackle a book that is a book, how to do independent work and dig for knowledge, without a teacher in front of them and a classmate on each side. Yet, it is those training colleges and universities that are training the teachers who in due course send up to them these immature and helpless students from classes regimented and drilled to pattern, and then marched up to the batteries of the examiners, whom again the universities provide and furnish with instructions. There is a vicious circle. The methods of training and teaching and examining need drastic reformation.

Perhaps you dispute the accuracy of my description. Very well, I will fortify myself behind authority. I will not go back to the nineteenth century, though it would be reasonable enough to do so, for it was then that the teaching methods took shape. I will not go further back than 1921 and the Report of the Departmental Committee which enquired into the position of English in the educational system of England. "The tradition of older Codes," they say, "still weighs heavily on methods and curriculum." "The real teachers of Literature," runs another passage, "are the great

[p 635]

writers themselves—the greater the work the more clearly it speaks for itself; but this only leads to the conclusion that for teachers we must have those who *will not come between their pupils and the author they are reading*, but will stand by them sympathetically, directing or moderating the impact of the new experience upon their minds." Those are the words of the Committee, but behind them, I much suspect, there lies the inspiration of Charlotte Mason, the greatest educational reformer of a century, of whose influence upon our Gloucestershire schools I think you want to hear. We will come to that very soon, but for the moment I want to do a little more fortifying of my position—to dig myself in a little deeper. But in passing I will remark that it is not only Literature, and that wise handling of Literature, that the children need; it is access to knowledge at first hand, above all access to the whole field of history, to the story of the world and its people as told by writers of distinction, and to all the exhilarating romance of science. They do not want text books, which kill all desire to read and to learn. We must foster that divine curiosity which all children exhibit until they come to school and we extinguish it.

To resume—the Board of Education in 1927 issued a Report on the Teaching of History in London Elementary Schools; and what the Inspectors say in that report would undoubtedly be true of the teaching of history in many, if not most, elementary schools elsewhere. "Mere knowledge of historical facts," they say, quoting from an L.C.C. report, "is no guarantee of historical understanding." But they did not find even knowledge of the facts. "Whether the children acquire their facts from the book or the teacher," runs the Report, "unless they can be given opportunities to sort out and arrange the facts they have acquired, and to express these facts in a connected form in speech or writing, it is probable that their possession will be but a

transitory one.” They were dissatisfied with the quality of many of the text books in use: and they criticise the oral lesson. “The almost invariable practice in the lower classes,” they say, “is the oral lesson. The teacher is the narrator pure and simple, and the quality of the narration is not on the whole high . . . . . Even in the upper classes the oral lesson is still supreme. In most London schools a visitor, on entering a classroom during a History period, can rely upon finding the teacher addressing rows of
[p 636]
silent and apparently attentive children. (You would find, I may interject, the same thing in many a Secondary School). It is probably safe to say that the majority of the children in London Elementary Schools spend at least seventy-five per cent. of their time during the History periods as passive listeners, and in some schools it is difficult to ascertain what else they do.” “When a child has mastered the mechanical difficulties of reading,” say the Inspectors, “books are the best source from which to obtain information, and the function of the oral lesson is largely to elucidate, illustrate, and amplify the facts which the child has learnt form books. A few schools only have learnt this. In one, a Girls’ school, in a very poor district, where no less than two hours are assigned every day to the private study of History and other subjects, the children proved to have a greater knowledge of facts and a greater power of description than in any other school tested.”

I will only pause to remark that the Girls’ School thus singled out for praise is one of the few schools in London that are employing the Charlotte Mason methods of teaching, and following the programmes of the P.N.E.U.

Before I turn from what is to what might be, I want to say one word about the effect of the traditional methods on the child. First of all I would say that of course no method of teaching can prevent able children from making their own forceful way. We need not worry very much about them, and the primary school, by the skill and devotion of its teachers, has put large numbers of them on the threshold of brilliant careers. It is the average boy and girl who is sacrificed to them in every type of school. And the slow child suffers still more—and, as we shall see, so unnecessarily.

Who answers the questions in the oral lesson? Always the bright child. Who fills the bill in the arithmetic lesson, oral and written–too often the one and only subject on which the child in the primary school can really bite his teeth and do solid independent work, the subject by his attainments in which he is in the main assessed? Always, of course, the clever child. The slow child gets no chance; he can never shine. His sums are wrong; he does not understand problems (I sympathise, for I could never do them). In oral questioning he is always too slow with his answers, even if he can arrive at them at all. He cannot spell; he cannot express himself on paper; he is not allowed to talk. So he is written down, and writes himself
[p 637]
down, an inferior being who will do not good at school. If he is self-conscious he writhes and wilts under the constant criticism, the harsh comparisons, the damning judgment, and he hates work and hates the place. It should not be, and need not be. School can be a happy place for the slowest child, and he can both get knowledge and use it with effect if he is allowed to do so, if, in fact, his individuality is recognised and treated with respect. At present he is lost, miserable and ashamed, in the class which, because of the old primary school tradition, is still

too often the unit in the teacher's mind, and the unity for which his technique of teaching was devised.

In some three hundred of my four hundred and sixteen departments we have found a better way; and many even of the other one hundred and sixteen have been profoundly influenced by what our Charlotte Mason schools are doing.

Now it is just twelve years since I first heard of Charlotte Mason and her work. I cannot pause to tell you of her history, of her study of children, of her experiments in education, and of the books in which she gave to the world her system of educational philosophy. Some of you know them; they are easily obtainable, and no man or woman should accept the responsibility of teaching boy or girl of any age from infancy upwards without having read them. I can only here call your attention briefly to certain of her principles, and to the leading features of her technique of teaching.

First and chiefest, for it is the foundation stone, every child is a person, with a person's rights, and his individuality must be respected; not repressed so that he may fall into line with a class, nor so dominated by the teacher's personality that he learns to lean upon another instead of thinking, judging, acting for himself. It is not for us to tell the child what to think, what opinions, what judgments to form. He must have liberty to deal with knowledge in his own way, the way natural to him, and not in our way. "Knowledge," said Miss Mason, "is the aliment of mind as food is that of the body." You cannot dictate to the body the manner in which it shall deal with food, and neither should you seek to dictate to the mind the manner in which it shall deal with knowledge. There will be, as with the body, an individual and a different reaction in each case.

"The mind," Miss Mason taught, "receives knowledge, not in order that it may know, but in order that it may grow, in
[p 638]
breadth and depth, in sound judgment and magnanimity; but in order to grow it must know."

Knowledge furnishes ideas, and it is ideas that really feed the mind. And it is from the minds of great thinkers and great writers that we get knowledge and ideas.

"Mind appeals to mind," said Miss Mason, "and thought begets thought, and that is how we become educated. For this reason we owe it to every child to put him into direct communication with great minds that he may get at great thoughts; . . . . . . and here let me emphasise the importance of using first-hand books; all compendiums, digests, compilations, selections, all books at second-hand should be eschewed."

And again, "the mind refuses to know anything except what reaches it in more or less literary form."

All children can be interested in real books that convey ideas and feed their minds—books that really set them thinking; but interest is not all. There must be attention if the subject matter is to be mastered and knowledge assimilated. The mind must concentrate upon what is read. And here comes in the teaching method. The child reads once, and once only (for if he knows he is to have a second chance he probably does not attend the first time) and then he must tell, or expect to have to tell, orally or in writing what has been read. Then he will concentrate the most absorbed attention upon it. You do not really know until you can tell, as experiment will prove to you, and when you can tell you do know and you do not forget. But if there is to be concentration we must not interrupt the reading with explanations or the

narration to correct mistakes. The little explanation that may be necessary we do beforehand; the correction we do afterwards or, better still, other children do it.

But I must not go further into detail, much though there is to say, or I shall exceed my limit and weary out your patience. I will only add that where there is interest discipline ceases to be a bugbear.

This method is employed even in the Infant School. You do not tell stories; there are no oral lessons of the London type. You do not talk down even to six and seven-year-olds. You do not assume that they cannot understand. You read to them the beautiful stories that all children love, written by those whom the world has acclaimed as master tellers, Hans Andersen or Grimm, Bunyan, Andrew Lang's *Tales of Troy*
[p 639]
and Greece, Marshall's *Our Island Story*, Selous' delightful *Tommy Smith* books, and so forth, and you read good poetry as one who loves it to others who love it, and not as pedagogue to pupil, making a lesson of it. You treat the Bible in the same way; that too is read aloud and then narrated.

If you want children to read there is no better incentive or help than to read much to them. This wealth of good books and the practice of narration enlarge the vocabulary at a prodigious rate. The context will generally reveal the meaning of new words. You do not stop in the middle of a passage as I heard a young teacher do the other day to a class of twelve-year-olds, to explain at wearisome length by question and illustration the meaning of "superior" and "inferior" (it is typical of the traditional method); nor do you do outrage to the music and appeal of poetry by stopping at the end of a verse to insist upon a paraphrase. The child treats poetry as he treats anything else read; he tells what it means to him, and that is enough. There is something that it is natural for a child to see in poetry or prose or drama or history at eight years old or twelve or fourteen, and emphatically it is not what the teacher sees at four-and-twenty or the examiner on the eve of retirement and pension.

Let me now jump three or four years. I will take a child of ten or eleven and tell you what the P.N.E.U. programme for last term gave them.

To a large extent the programme is built up round the history, as you will see. The period last term in English History was 1689-1756, and it is studied in Arnold Forster's *History of England*, an 8/6 book. The same period is studied in Mrs. Creighton's *First History of France*. In ancient History they were reading a period in Malet's *Ancient World*, and a portion of a little book on *Ancient Crete*.

For Citizenship they generally have at that age in one form, Mrs. Beesley's *Stories from the History of Rome*, and in the other, one of Plutarch's Lives, but last term instead of Plutarch they had Bunyan's *The Holy War*.

For Geography, besides Allen's *Asia* or one of the Ambleside books, they had Parkin's *Round the Empire* and Hakluyt's *English Voyages*. The modern scientific school of Geographers want us to study Geography another way with isotherms, and elevations, and rainfall charts and so forth, and would persuade us that given certain postulates—latitude, elevation, oceanic
[p 640]
influence, etc.,—you can deduce the whole procession of human culture, and fill in a blank map with industries, population, cities, communications, and what not. And of course they assume that culture is the product of surroundings, and that civilisation has arisen independently in

many different centres, postulating that man's mind always reacts in a similar manner to similar stimuli. But the whole foundation of their reasoning has been undermined by the brilliant discoveries of the new school of anthropologists, let and inspired by Elliot Smith; and we are learning, in the words of Dr. Perry, that "Men in the past have imposed their will on their surroundings, and have not been forced by them into any line of action." But, in any case, the analytic and deductive method of presenting geography is as difficult and hateful to the average child as the old Euclid. He does not learn that way. So taught, geography is dropped when school is over. Taught through travel, or side by side with history, or as a study of peoples and manners, it has an enduring interest and will be pursued with zest and intelligence in after life. "Do the Chinese love rice? Do they love underselling white labour? That is real geography, but not classroom geography," said Sanderson of Oundle. It is of little use if we leave school with no more than a quantum of information; we must leave it with ideas, with habits, with a divine curiosity and a trained power of satisfying it, with imagination and sympathetic understanding, with some appreciation of what evidence and the faculty and responsible duty of judgment mean. "To think fairly requires knowledge as well as consideration," wrote Miss Mason, and you can put beside her words the late Professor Raleigh's fine aphorism, "Judge if you must, but before you judge try to understand." Yet a third aphorism I will add; it is Cicero's: "he who does not know the story of the past remains a child." Truly our modern education leaves the most of us children. But history and geography taught as Charlotte Mason would have us teach them, put before the child a view of other cultures, other civilisations, those remote in space as well as those remote in time; he sees facts from many angles and begins to think; he learns that truth is relative and progressive, not absolute and static. And it would amaze you to hear what our children think and say.

For Natural History and Science these ten-year-olds had Arabella Buckley's *Life and Her Children*, or Kingsley's *Madam*
[p 641]
How and Lady Why, and Holden's *The Sciences*, together with a little book on Wireless, and another on Astronomy.

For literature they had *As you Like It* (they have a play of Shakespeare every term and love it; it will fit the period in Ancient or in English History when that is possible). They had Scott's *The Pirate* (nearly every term they have Scott, for he ranges over seven centuries) and Bullfinch's *Age of Fable* or Keary's *Heroes of Asgard*—both favourite books. Then there was poetry from *Lyra Heroica* and Drinkwater's anthology *The Way of Poetry*; there were six of Rubens' pictures for study; and in the lucky schools where there are capable musicians, or a gramophone, studies in musical appreciation. And of course there is English Grammar.

Alongside this wealth of studies go on the handwork to which Charlotte Mason attached as much importance as anyone, the out-of-door lessons in geography and natural history, the gardening, domestic science, and physical instruction and country dances.

I have given you some idea of the curriculum at two periods. I have no time to introduce you to the child of thirteen and fourteen.

These books, you will say, of that quality and in that number, must be very expensive; how can any Local Education Authority afford them? Well, if every child had every book no Local Education Authority could afford them. I had to solve that problem; the teachers showed me the way to do it. Some books of course are only provided in single copies to be read by the

teacher, more at the bottom of the school than at the top, but some everywhere. The others are provided in the proportion of one to every three or four or five children. The classes are broken into groups, usually four or five; in some schools more, in a few not so many. The schools work by group time-tables, and not by class time-tables. Economy dictated this procedure, but it has justified itself on educational grounds. The child gets more liberty, for the teacher cannot dominate four groups as he can dominate a class; and the opportunity for narration is multiplied.

But there was another result, quite unexpected. The group method of teaching spread downwards to the infants. Reading lessons taken round the class, with that pitiful waste of time for the brighter, and that wholly inadequate amount of practice for the slower, disappeared. Even the five-year-olds will read
[p 642]
in groups, and begin to read jolly little booklets to themselves for the sake of the story. In many a rural Infant class under a Supplementary Teacher you will find children under seven who can read any book in reason that you like to put before them. A few months ago in such a school—a two-teacher school of forty children—I heard two seven-year-olds just up from the Infants read from *The Midsummer Night's Dream* at sight. The six-year-olds nowadays want a new book every week and sometimes more. Our children of eight are reading habitually books listed by the publishers for children of eleven and twelve.

Now what does the child make of all this rich and varied food for mind? He shall tell you himself in a minute; and I am not going to bring before you children or schools that are exceptional. They are just good; you can find plenty of them in any part of the county.

But before I call these witnesses I want to speak myself for the dull child, the slow child, the child of late development. He no longer feels, he is no longer regarded as, a dolt. He loves knowledge as much as any other. Read to him; he loves it. Ask him to tell what he has read and he rejoices to do it; and if you don't hustle him (and you must not hustle any child, or you will get no narration for concentration is impossible)—if you don't hustle him, he will narrate just as well as another, and not seldom better. Pride in achievement is now his; it never was before with those impossible problems, those subtle deductions and rapid questions. He gains confidence; he makes brave efforts; and the things that by the old method were impossible become possible now. He finds that what he can tell he can write, and he begins to spell. The teachers have been amazed by the progress made by children of this type.

The other children shall tell you themselves what they do. First let me explain that at the close of each term all the schools work examination papers that come down from Ambleside, and the children look forward to the examination week, and write such reams of answers as you would never dream to be possible. I am sure no class of boys of the same age in any first-class preparatory school would match these children. And there has been no preparation, no revision for this examination. So far as school work is concerned there has been the one reading followed by narration, oral, written, or silent, and no more. Of course you do not stop children from taking books home; many
[p 643]
do take them home to my great joy; and their parents read them, for they too want knowledge, and they too read Shakespeare in country villages.

I will not pretend that these methods do not give the teachers a great deal more work to do. Unquestionably they do, but the teachers rejoice to do it. The teacher's day in Gloucestershire is not 9-12 and 2-4.30. There is the best part of two hours work to be done every night to correct the great masses of written work, and to prepare for the next day.

Now here is a girl of thirteen-and-a-half in a little two-teacher school, where the school gardens are a model to the county. The children form a co-operative society, meeting for business, holding money, buying, selling, keeping accounts, declaring dividends. They work an allotment managed co-operatively on business lines; they run a poultry and egg business, and they keep pigs. A wise master looks on and only intervenes when he must. We have a number of schools that are doing the same sort of thing. The villager works no worse for liking books. Not for nothing had Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the best educated peasantry in Europe.

This girl's answer to one of the four questions that she dealt with in the History paper on four sides of foolscap runs as follows. The question was: "Who was the Elector George of Hanover? How did he come to be King of England and how was it he found a welcome?"

> "The Elector George of Hanover was made King George I. of England and was the son of Sophia and Ernest Augustus Elector of Hanover. By right it was not a right thing for George to come to the throne but the rightful heir was James.
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> "George I. came to the throne in this manner:—From James I. came Elizabeth who married Frederick V.; they had a daughter named Sophia who married Ernest Augustus and they had a son named George.
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> "Another reason why George I. was made King was:—At the death of Anne the Whigs had made her promise that George should be made King instead of another Stuart. It was by the Act of Succession that this Protestant King received the Crown, although he was a German.
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> "When George came over to England the Whigs met him and treated him very kindly, but at first the people disliked him for he could not speak a word of English. It was at this time in England that trade was flourishing and the business people were doing very well, but had another Stuart come to the throne it would have meant disaster to all the trade, but George I. happily had peace in the country so that the trade could go on and flourish and increase.
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> "It was for this cause that George I. was liked by all the people of England."

That, I think you will agree, is an answer that would get high marks anywhere.

[p 644]

Take another school in a poor mining district. This was the answer given by a boy of thirteen to the question, "Write, as far as you can, the thoughts of Carlyle on the divine right of the true King or Ableman."

> "Kingship is the commander over all men. He is called Rex, Regulator, our own name being better, which is King or Ableman. If you visit any kind of country, try to find the Ablest man there, and raise him to the supreme place, and loyally reverence him.

"It also means the truest-hearted, justest, and noblest man. Sorry stuff written some hundred years ago or more about the Divine Right of Kings moulders unread now in the Public Libraries of this country. If you find the true King or Ableman, he has a divine right over you. It is a true saying that the King is head of the Church. We have our Habeas Corpus Act, our free Representation of the people, acknowledging wide as the world that all men are free."

Here are a few other questions—just a sample—that were answered by a boy with equal skill in another of these examination papers:—

"Write an account, with dates, of Hannibal and the Second Punic War."
"What do you know (1) of the League of Cambrai and (2) of the sack of Rome in 1527?"
"Give some account of the founding of the kingdom of Italy."
"Describe the life history of the butterfly, writing notes on any butterflies that you have watched."
"Describe and explain two experiments in electricity."
"Describe Botticelli's 'Tobit and the Angels.'"
"Narrate your favourite scene from 'Henry VIII.'"
"'Even so, Alcibiades, being puffed up with vanity . . . . . as often as Socrates took him in hand, was made fast and firm by his good persuasions.' Explain and illustrate."

I could call many witnesses of all ages from many schools to testify before you of the work that we are doing, but time forbids. I must be content with just one more. He shall wind up my case. When he has finished I will leave it to the jury.

He was six years old when I went to his school last summer, that little two-teacher school where I heard the two seven-year-olds read from *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is a school where Shakespeare is a joy. The children dramatise anything and everything. They act for sheer delight in their playtime and in the dinner hour, and the little ones, at no other bidding than their own desire, sit and watch their elders. That term the play was *The Merchant of Venice*, and my little six-year-old had been much impressed by Shylock; so one day he came to his Supplementary Teacher and demanded to be allowed to write about him. It was entirely his own idea.

[p 645]

I have his book here. Again there is nothing very exceptional about it. I have many such books. Our Infants write their stories—do composition, if you please. There are plenty of stories in this exercise book, spelt and expressed with all the proper eccentricity of six, and, as it should be, entirely without a stop. I cannot read you the whole of this piece, for there are four and a half pages of it; but I will give you two of them, and introduce you to Shylock where Antonio asks him for a loan. The child writes, you will observe, of what he had seen and heard on the playground stage:—

"So he (that is Antonio) went to him and said will you lend me three thousand ducats and I will pay you when my ships come back from sea But Shylock wanted to trap

Antonio and he thought whiche way would be the best to trap him so he sat very still and quiet thinking the best way to trap him for he was very wicked and tried with all his might to trap him But he could not get him trapped But he could not so he thought again this time he had a splendid plan and said if he did not pay the money back on a sertan day he would have a pound of his flesh so Antonio said it should be done so he sinend the paper and said it should be done and said allright But when he had lent the money to Antonio friend the ships all got lost and Antonio was not able to pay back the money to shylock and when the sertan day had past Antonio was unable to pay back the money to shylock and he was put in prison and when the friend had herd he went to shylock to give him the money but he would not take it for he wanted to have the pond of flesh form him."

There, ladies and gentlemen, you have my case. I have done and I abide your verdict.

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[1] A paper read at the North of England Education Conference, Newcastle-on-Tyne.