

Parents & 'Education'

18p10m33

It is curious to consider the attitude taken up by parents in general on the subject of education. In the last quarter of a century or more, 'Education' has, in one form or other, been pretty constantly & fully prominently before us. The air has ^{long} been full of compressed noise of many words, but the din has been, for the most part, in the several camps of the Schoolmasters & their allies, the parents standing round to see fair play. Now, when the conflict of opinion issues in something definite, the 'Modern Side', the High School for Girls, the Kindergarten, the Universities' Local Examinations, parents come in to give the new thing their very hearty & unqualified support, provided that it commends itself to their common sense. But they don't make the first move. They have a right to expect that fitting education shall, somehow, be provided for their children, & they are willing to pay for it. On this way of looking at the matter implies two dangerous notions: first, that 'Education' belongs to the School, is to the professional teacher, & has little to do with the bringing up children yet-at-home; next, that, while it may be necessary to study the laws of mind & of body to get at right principles of education for the School, home bringing up is another matter, & wants no more than the light of nature & common sense, & is successful according as parents have more or less of the latter quality. A great deal is being said just now about technical education. The reform demanded is, that the children in elementary schools should

should have their muscles trained to the use of
tools - not that they should be turned out complete
as a piece of handicraft. Now this demand, as
understood, marks an educational advance, a
recognition of the principle which underlies
the possibility of all education - that the human
frame - brain as well as muscles - grows to
the uses it - is earliest put to. It is hardly
possible to get beyond the ground covered by this
assumption concerning actions; in other words,
it is hardly possible to overstate the possibilities
of education. Anything may be made of a child
by those who first get him into their hands. The
fond natured parent does not hail this news with
unmixed joy. The responsibility of efforts to which
human nature is averse is being shifted from
the shoulders of the schoolmaster to his own. He
is inclined to take an optimistic view of things.
'I don't see,' he says, 'but what - you leave out
the criminal classes & that sort of thing, the
world goes on very well. Our children are
good & pleasant; our friends are good & pleasant;
there are infinitely many good & pleasant &
able people in the world; what more could you
have?' And you think of the pleasant-people
you know, & answer, 'What more indeed! Perhaps
it is our impertinence to think of mending
a system which has produced so much that
is good. But then, you look at home -
to find yourself compassed about with infirmities;
you look abroad, in almost every family there
is a spoiled life, & you hardly know a person
without

2740m233
some defect of heart or intellect or temper which
makes him a little burdensome to himself &
a little trying to his friends. It is because of
the infirmities & not the sins of them that it is
difficult to live at peace; & it is, commonly, my
own infirmities, & not ^{my} sins, that are stumbling
blocks ~~in my path~~. Now, in the light of modern
science it is not too much to say that every infirmity
of the flesh & spirit is, more or less, the result
of defective education. Is Adam an sullen,
^{Reverent} ~~indolent~~, indolent, like his father or mother
before him? That is the fault of his education:
she was born with a tendency to sullenness, ^{but}
but a tendency only becomes a temper as the
result of an indulged habit. That such a habit
should have been allowed to grow on the child is
an instance of defective education. Has a
man a large brain & a narrow chest? It
has recently been ~~set~~ ^{found} ~~on good~~ authority that the
width of the chest of the new-born infant varies
only with the size of the child; ~~in other words~~, that is,
^{children are not} ~~no infant~~ is born with a narrow chest. Therefore,
the narrow chest, & the attendant low vitality, is
a consequence of defective education. It is
needless to go on: setting aside cases of congenital
disease - even here education may do in-
finitely much - it rests with parents in great measure
to work out the salvation of their children, long
with tears & stumbling, for there are mysteries of
sin & temptation beyond the scope of education.
There is no room to doubt that his education, such as
it was, has been the making of every man, such
as he is; that, not so much his school education
as the bringing-up he got at home. And it is ^{not}

Sense, & that peculiar natural aptitude bestowed by the
Creator which few will venture to deny to the parent. Like
other serious callings, that of the parent requires the preparation
of careful study: the problem of education is not to be solved
by rule of thumb. To quote Mr. Spencer again, "Some
acquaintance with the principles of physiology & the
elementary truths of psychology is indispensable for the
right bringing-up of children." "Indispensable": - yes,
the parent who has not - laid himself out - diligently to
gain some acquaintance with the principles of these two
sciences cannot - conceivably turn out his children at their
very best: at the most, he can but guide himself by
hearsay ~~to follow a course because everybody advises~~
~~it~~ his treatment of his children is empirical uncertainty:
But let parents get an insight into the principles of
education as based upon natural law, & they go to
work with the courage, confidence & consistency which
carry success.
~~are more than half the battle.~~ What is more, "the labour
we delight in physics pain": we delight in doing what
we know how to do: and the ^{task} labour of education, ~~another~~
of being a burden & a puzzle, becomes the engrossing
& delightful occupation of the parent's life.
But what, practically, is education, & on what conditions
does educability depend? These questions are important
as, in the first place, shaping the aims of the rational
parent; & in the next: as determining whether parents
themselves are open to education - that is, whether it
is ~~pragmatic~~ ^{pragmatic} to bring before the average parent the
principles ~~agreements~~ on which he is morally bound
to bring up his child. We are all agreed that
education, even intellectual education, means something
more than the acquisition of knowledge; we know too,
that there is an education of the feelings, of the will, of the
phys

physical powers - in fact, the idea of education spreads about us & above us, vast & nebulous, hardly to be taken in by the mind, much less to be expressed in a sentence or two. The notion is too big for us: it is impracticable; come just-let-it-go, & fall back on the old idea that education is synonymous with 'Schooling'.

The aim of education is easier to define: it is the turning out of a human being at his absolute best, every tendency to evil repressed, every capacity for good that is in him developed into a power. Right learning

whatever goes under the name of 'schooling' will not carry us far here. But more than one educational reformer has come forward with a beautifully perfected method of education providing for the orderly & progressive development of the child's faculties; & yet, always following the lead of Nature & reverently observing her laws. But I need not say a word here of the principles of Froebel, of the methods we owe him for organizing, & rather, for labouring

to perfect, a true conception of education.

But Education is Chameleon-like, & many descriptions are true of it. Let me offer a definition which is very far from being exhaustive, & ~~hardly deserves to be called~~ ^{at yet} ~~a definition~~ in practical working. It will be found to cover the whole ground. It is an aspect of the

subject which ~~seems to me important~~ ~~both because it~~ shows how indispensable to the parent - is some scientific knowledge, & also ~~because it~~ opens up a field

of definite, practical work, with assured results. & there is just as to be like the return of a pound for the ounce of a penny.

Education

Pending the development of the will, which arrives at maturity, if ever, only with the maturity of the man, it ~~appears to me that~~ Habit is the instrument - put into the hands of the educator therewith to supplement the weak will of the child, & to enable him to make with ease & pleasure those good & necessary efforts which human nature is averse. Do a thing a hundred times in succession, without lapse, it becomes as easy to do it as not; do it a thousand, or so, times & it becomes your nature, a habit which you must do violence to yourself to break through. Here it is not that life is made easy to all of us by persistent habits; the labor of decision on all trifling matters of daily living - of the bath, the toilet, the table, the common avocations - would wear us out.

Now this enormous force of habit appears to bridge over the otherwise impassable gulf between the spontaneous development of human nature & the ordered action of the self-disciplined human being. It is possible to form in the child the habit of doing or saying, even of thinking & feeling, that which he should do or say. Think or feel. It is possible (with certain limitations) to form in him the habits of vigorous health, of a good life, of an alert intelligence; & thereby, to ease his way, & spare him much of struggle & disappointment; of the childish despair & self-disgust which causes many a child to give up early the effort to direct life, to 'be good' as a thing beyond his power. If this be so, you will be willing to ~~be patient in ascertaining to the formation of~~ habits a ~~first place in education; consequently, that~~ take care of a child's habits, & the rest will take care of itself; & in this light, it is hardly too much to say that

Ed.

~~Education is the formation of habits.~~ Newbrite

But - this theory of habit as a chief instrument in education will hardly pass ^{unquestioned} ~~uncontested~~. It will be objected that to make much of a mechanical force, a mere trick of doing things, as it were, is to undervalue both human effort, & the divine power, which alone is capable of conquering the inertia of human nature & urging it - into active goodness. On the contrary, education after this sort - requires strenuous human effort; with careful thought - as to the direction - physical, mental, moral - in which lines of habit shall be laid down, so that the course of the child shall be easy as that of a locomotive upon its lines. Here we have no diminution of effort - we have that ~~energizing~~ ^{aid} from above attends human effort - but the heavens helps those who help themselves - but the labour is transferred from the feeble, overworked child to the stronger, more capable parents. And again, education upon these lines has the sanction of law & the blessing of God himself. Common experience found out long ago that that is second nature. In the last generation more than our own, the importance of bringing up a child in good habits was insisted on. But - it is within living memory that physiologists have shown the ^{ground} ~~philosophy~~ of this theory of habit; that there is physical cause why the repetition of an action, or the recurrence of a line of thought - should tend to make that act or that line of thought easy, natural, necessary.

It is well established that the tissues, & muscles & tissue, which are even in a state of reparation & growth, form themselves according

MS. A.9.2v.33

According to the modes of action required of them it is
for this reason that children should be trained to do,
to acquire every form of activity which demands a training of
the muscles, at an early age. The fact being that muscles grow
have not merely to conform themselves to new uses, but to
grow to a modified pattern; & this growth and adaptation
take place with the greatest facility in early youth. Mrs. Meredith
describes a curious illustration of this truth which she came
across in the course of her prison mission work. She noticed
that many of the women discharged from prison had come
hands, a getting onto the confidence of some of their named
wall. ~~The following~~ revelations were made to her ~~women~~
~~starting from among them~~ ^{which Mr. Oliver} Oliver said: "When
"When Aunt Molly bound my fingers with a broad tape,"
made me sit with them for hours in agony. I never once
regretted ~~being determined to do anything that they would~~
~~could do to filch their money from the rich.~~
Wall described the tortures inflicted on her, to make her
hand useful to the profession, as most terrible, but
endurable for the sake of the pence.
"When I was a little girl, I could put my hand anywhere,
it was so small around & pointed like this," closing
her fingers round her thumb forming a wedge-like
weapon. "Spoke locks. They are worth while to understand.
The first lever did, with my little tender hand managed
to get back into the box the bolt-of-a lock & open a door by which
Dick got into the house."
At the time she made these confidences, Wall was under poor
impressions which have proved lasting; but, says Mrs.
Meredith, "her fingers kept-forming, & unforming. The
peculiar instrument into which they had become
moulded." No Wall or Aunt Molly are not reputable
examples, but this bit of their experience is worth knowing;
they found out that the hand keeps through life the pattern &

28proumC318

The habits it is trained to in childhood. But, practically, every ~~body~~^{one} knows that the body, every part of the body, accommodates itself very readily to the uses it is put to, and are careful in not allowing children in any posture, any habit of body which should lead to malformation or disease. What we are less prepared to admit is that the same principle holds good in the delicate organ by means of which we think, feel, love & worship. That is, just as a new muscular growth adapts itself to any new exercise required of it - ~~the picking of locks for instance~~ - so new brain tissue is supposed to 'grow to' any habit of thought in force during the time of growth. Thought, including every exercise of mind & soul. To express in the words of a physiologist what is pretty generally received by men of science - "The cerebrum grows to the modes of thought in which it is habitually exercised."

According to Professor Huxley, "The possibility of education is based upon the existence of this power which the nervous system possesses of referring its conscious actions into more or less unconscious, or reflex operations."

It is unnecessary to dwell upon ^{the} physiological facts, ~~familiar to most of us~~. What ^{we} would urge is, the enormous practical import of this doctrine of habit. If the very conformation of the child's brain depends in no small measure upon the habits which his parents allow, & if the habits of the child ensue in the character of the man, then it follows that this theory of habit becomes the natural basis of a ^{scientific} scheme of education. This is how it works; a child shows a ~~sullen~~^{sultry} temper; it is later on pointed in his family that he is a ~~sullen~~^{sultry} child, that it is a thing not to be helped: today, tomorrow, this week, next week, ~~more~~^{most} sullen it follows another as long as it lasts.

shorter intervals. Every time the ugly thoughts of the sullen child are repeated, they make their mark, in ways hardly yet recognised, in the nervous substance of the cerebrum; now, this nervous tissue is in the act of incessant & most-active growth, & just as the new muscular tissue in the hand of ball adapted itself to the form & uses of the vessel, so the new nervous tissue in the cerebrum of the ^{accident} ~~sullen~~ child is adapted & prepared for ugly thoughts. This is why each new fit of sullenness prepares the way for the next, & makes the next more inevitable. The other side of the medal is, that the parents aware of this extraordinary cooperation of physical & spiritual forces will avert the first or the second leaving following threatened fit of ^{resentment} sullenness as they would avert the possibility of syphilis. The child was born with a sullen tendency no doubt, but the nervous tissue which, so to speak, registered that tendency, is dissipated in the course of the rapid decay & reparation which is now going on in the brain substance. No new tissue bears no such register, because the ~~as it registered state of sullenness to make it,~~ & the child, who would have become, under the first regime, a sullen resentful man, grows up well & pleasant to his belongings.

28p12 on 33 28

to ~~do~~ - not - to leave the other undone - the other, being
the definite training of ~~habits~~. In the more - thoughtful
~~Schemes~~ of education hitherto formulated, the direct
object - is the development of the child's faculties; the forming
of habits is incidental. Now it - is well to put the first
thing ~~first~~ ^{prominent} - make the establishing of habits our immediate
object: for this amongst other reasons, what we have
formed with care & labour we shall guard with
jealousy. we will not allow the child to drop out of those
good ways with which we have endeavoured to set him
on his way in life. Good habits, like other valuables,
do not take care of themselves: a policeman, within or
without, must needs have them under his eye, though
happily, he need do no more. Further, let us see
it - is by giving him the contrary good habit - that you
correct the besetting weakness of the individual child.
It is parents alone who can give the incessant care
necessary for a systematic training in the habits of
health, of the alert - intelligence, of the good life, of spiritual
activity. If parents could but be got to believe in
the omnipotence of habit - in the ease with which a
habit - is formed we should live to see a moral
~~revolution~~ ^{established by the training of good habits} which has put into our hands
a kingdom of heaven amongst men.
Lastly, the laws of habit appear to me precisely the
only scientific basis we have for education. Of the
development of the intellect, the will, the conscience, &
of that within us which apprehends God - whether we
are to call these organs, faculties, functions - there
is much to be said & though I do not set it out - But
here we must go a good deal upon analogy.
That which is put to work thrives; that which is starved
dies - lie idle pines, & in time, perishes, - is an
~~indication~~ ^{axiom} which appears to cover the mysterious
hardly tracked out regions we carry within us. At any
rate, it is a practical principle that lies in a nutshell.
But in the first place, let us get our feet on the strong
scientific basis that underlies this doctrine of habit. ^{Charles M. May, Scientific}

Scientific basis that offers itself - this doctrine of habit, 24

You will perceive that ~~we~~ ^{we are} inviting ^{parents} ~~you~~ ^{not only} to study ^{already} ~~apply~~ principles of which ~~have been long~~ ^{widely taught} ~~freely promulgated~~, but - to advance a new school of thought on the subject of education. Physiologists have long urged the importance of their discoveries to the practical educationalist, but - the latter has hardly yet taken hold, either in theory or practice of facts which should give definiteness & assured success to his labours in a degree hitherto undreamed of. That remains for the Education of the Future. I am again even to indicate the means of the human being ^{thus} to be evolved; but let me say this, from the ^{Christian} point-view; it seems to me that we live infinitely below our possibilities as redeemed beings, not - ~~as we are~~ in lack of purpose, prayer support, as from defects of education - defects to be remedied only by constantly recurring miracles from above, of ~~that~~ the nature of the miracle on the withered hand. ~~I am convinced of the need~~ ^{is not prepared} ~~to show that I do not propose~~ Education ^{as a} ~~substitute~~ ^{we may well believe, it is} ~~for the place of God~~, but ^{I appointed} ~~as a~~ necessary handmaid in developing the complete Christian character.

If children are to be educated in any complete sense, it must be by their parents; & surely there need be no shyness in proposing the serious study of education to parents as a necessary preparation for their work. Nobody expects that the principles of science will be imparted to him by special revelation, & that is what the claim of "parent to bring up his children by the light of nature amounts to

to in these days of advanced research. On the ~~contrary~~ ^{with full} ~~we~~ make our appeal to parents ~~in an act of faith~~ in that parental enthusiasm which will yet carry the science of education forward with boundless leaps towards perfection. Considering all that unimpaired parental love & care effect, who will predict the results when scientific principle is brought to the aid of the parental feeling? The fact is, there has been some tendency to overlook parents in the matter of education. The schoolmaster & schoolmistress are appealed to as the persons with whom the future of the child rests, & very successful efforts have been ^{are} made to give them just liberal views of education. But at least, perhaps, the time has come for organised, persistent efforts to bring the principles of a rational scientific education home to every parent - according to his ~~people~~ - on principles easier for the young artisan & his wife, or more scientific, for the more highly educated. And who is to venture to do this for parents, who, experimentally at any rate, have more knowledge of children than anyone else can lay claim to. In the first place, ample scientific knowledge, as well as experience, is ^{there} ~~in the hands of~~ ^{in the hands of} parents themselves. No doubt, the thing is, to bring parents into association for mutual improvement. Some have much to give, but all have something; & every course of observation, experience & research should be free. Meanwhile, the question is, how are parents to be reached, what practical course is open to them, with a view to further their own education in the principles of education? The immediate answer, though a very insufficient one, is, our ~~first~~ ^{first} ~~is to make them a free school~~ ^{is, our}

Parents' Educational Union.