At 8 30 p.m,, [sic] DR. SCHOFIELD occupied the chair, and introduced MR. A. BURRELL, who read his paper on

HOW TO PRESERVE THE IMAGINATIVE POWER IN CHILDREN.

You have this week been listening to many lectures on the subject of the child and his education, and I, who am a stranger to the Parents' Union, and who have not attended their lectures, may very well in my paper this evening wound some cherished belief or collide with some established prejudice. But I hope if I do this you will not put it down to any want of sympathy with your society and its objects, but rather to the fact that first of all I am concerned indirectly in my daily life with the children in the primary schools; secondly, that now I never teach any children at all, but am occupied in helping to train teachers; and,
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lastly, that I am a bachelor, and, of course, know nothing at all about children. All that I have to say is tentative matter put strongly, and is based on twenty years' experience in a secondary school and three years' experience of primary schools.

I have always thought it a very kind thing when a lecturer takes you into his confidence at the outset and tells you exactly what he is going to talk about. It saves so much time, worry and unnecessary attention. Several times I have listened eagerly to some great man, only to find that what he had to say to me was contained in the last five minutes of his lecture, and several times I have allowed myself to take a quiet doze, only to find that the few minutes thus spent were precisely the minutes during which I should have stayed awake. How much better it would have been for me if the lecturer had analysed his lecture beforehand.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, that is what I intend to do. The title of my paper runs as follows:—"How to preserve the Imaginative Power in Children," and the position I wish to take is—that children possess from an early age this imaginative power—that schools of all sorts, primary and secondary, tend on the whole in their teaching hours to kill this power—that there are methods by which at school and home we can preserve this power—and, lastly, this power is a valuable asset to the child leaving school and going into the world.

And now I may be allowed a word in regard to my audience. If you are the audience which Mrs. Franklin promised me, you are in possession of a very great advantage over many of the distinguished people who write and lecture about children. And the advantage is this—you know the children. If you who live among children and study them all day do not know them, who shall? It is no light thing, this knowledge of the child: it enables you to put your finger on the weak spot in the treatises so often written by men who have never sat successfully at a teacher's desk, or who have never sat there at all. It is true that you do not write treatises, though all of you could do so if you liked. But not every one understands the child. Homer and Herodotus understood him, of course, and possibly some of the writers of the Old Testament. Certainly the one central figure of the
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New Testament did. Chaucer, it seems to me, understood him, and Wordsworth tried hard to understand him, though he added a good deal of Wordsworth. But it is not always so. Are you contented with the children in the literature of your own day? *Sandford and Merton* are gone, it is true—but are the *Heavenly Twins* any better company? The schoolboy in fiction, if we except

one or two notable examples, is a monstrosity, and is the schoolgirl in fiction anything like the real article? To crown all, can we find from the first to the last page more than one child in Shakspeare? True, there are many little men and women whose names figure in the lists of the *dramatis personæ*—but are any of them children? I confess I have made diligent search from the boy and girl in *Richard III*. to the terrible Arthur in *King John*; but I have only found one, and he is cut dismally short with a line and a half. That line and a half, however, is the beginning of a promising story showing the child's imaginative power: "There was a man dwelt by a churchyard, I will tell it softly, yond crickets shall not hear it." But that is all, we never know what the man that dwelt by a churchyard *saw*. By this line and a half, Shakspeare, it seems to me, reveals that though all his children save this one are unnatural, he could if he had wished have turned them into children. But his century passed the child by, and the acted drama, which in its essence is the affectation of the real, cannot in any age find room for the child—for a child is reality. We dare not, if we have any humanity, make him speak upon a stage; if we do, we murder him. And, in our school shows before an admiring audience, we do murder him every day. I suppose it is understood that by "we" in this lecture I do not mean "you," and that when I say "he" I generally mean "she."

Now, under the head of imaginative power I group the faculty of representing images of visible forms and of visible descriptions, and of recalling the past in new shapes and combinations. Thus it is seen at once that imagination has three bases or foodstuffs—one the mere power of taking impressions, the blotting paper power, which we may call receptivity or image-making; secondly, the power which operates on these images and recalls them from a dead past which we call memory; and, thirdly, the power which infuses
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new and original life into these impressions, by isolating, reclothing, rearranging them, and making them something rich and strange—which power we may call originality. Imagination is based on and cannot proceed a step without either attention, receptivity, memory, or originality. Thus it is reproductive or creative. It holds the secret of the day dreamer, the lightning calculator, the novelist, the poet, the inventor, the speculator, the traveller, even the bacteriologist. It is something—wonderful though it be—rather more hum-drum than the poets would have us believe; and it seems to be possessed by men and by nations in very varying degrees.

It is claimed by the books that among the poorer classes in our large towns, a considerable proportion of the children are born old or born tired. Their eyes rarely open with childish wonder, they evince no curiosity, their games are few, and the delights of a flight of imagination are to them unknown—I am quoting from a recognised hand-book. It may be so. But may we not reasonably put it in this way that you will see in schools half-starved children, half-clothed children, beaten children, brow-beaten children, stolid children? If we deny imagination to these children are we not merely saying that the imagination is overlaid with physical discomfort and can scarcely breathe? The child of the slum who, on being taken into the country, described a singing lark as a "bloomin cocksparrer in a fit," was not without imagination. Feed them for a while, clothe them for a while, encourage and smile on them for a while, and say then if the imagination has not long ago been at work registering impressions and, perhaps, sad experiences. Because we, by our civilization and its innumerable mistakes, kill or stunt the imagination, are we to say that it was never there? I have only to read the next line

of the book from which I have been quoting to find the writer on my side—"Children only in name are these little stolid lumps of humanity."

Surely we may maintain that the child is possessed of this power. He *can* attend; he *can* remember; he *can* construct; he *can* invent. We have only to go into a school where some hard-worked teacher is seated on his desk, giving to children of ten years of age a lesson in Roman History. I speak here of what I have seen and of a teacher that I know, a
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mere lad, so modest in his behaviour, so quiet in his ways, that if he were here to-night he would mentally question the truth of my picture. But this is an accurate account of him. He is, as I said, sitting on his desk with a very rough drawing of Italy and Spain on a blackboard near him. He has drawn this as he talks, and the only fidget among his class is when the children move aside to see better. (The books rigidly condemn this.) The teacher does not know what order and discipline mean. He reads about the words and, I suppose, could write an essay on them; but, in actual life, he does not see the things. The past is all spread out before these children; the man's hands, face, eyes, work with him, and the children are swallowing the history. (The books condemn this and call it hypnotism.) The lesson ends, and by the answers you know that, for the time at least, what he has been saying is part of the children. Now this man is not brilliant, he is only a teacher. I do not hold up his lesson or his method as a model—that I have nothing to do with at present. My point is that every child, good, bad and indifferent, has been attending might and main. And this occurs without fret whenever you find a teacher, and you find him (her) in thousands of schools. (The books say, "Involuntary attention," and condemn it.) The answer is, of course, obvious: "Yes, but all lessons are not so interesting as Roman History lessons; some subjects are dry, hard to understand, and the children are listless. And who is to blame? I know and you know many teachers to whose lessons, whatever be the subject, the word dry cannot be applied, and never is applied, and who will talk to children and hold children rapt with attention if they are speaking about compound interest by decimals, or the making of a thermometer, or the geography of Scotland, or the mystic properties of the number three; or even if they are dealing with parsing and analysis of English sentences, subjects (I fear I am heterodox) no more suited for the child than is Differential Calculus. We hear a great deal said about the ways of securing attention, interest; the things are analysed, defined, mystified; and some of us are inclined to answer—"If you want to secure attention, secure your teacher," and then teach him his trade. Please do not misunderstand me; I am not one of those who believe that the teacher
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needs no training; on the contrary, I would give him a far more drastic training than he receives anywhere to-day. Fortunately we have in schools large numbers of teachers who could not be improved upon; but surely, ladies and gentlemen, we have not yet even an inkling of the way of finding out for England those men and women who, by their gifts, their likings, and their personalities, are specially fitted to be taught and trained, and then to teach and train the children of the land. Considering what is at stake within the walls of a school, there ought not to be a dull teacher in England.

And now, when the second step in imagination is taken, who shall say that children are deficient? The step is that of reproducing what children have heard, felt and understood. Children, say all the books, have good memories. This is true, and the books go on to say that

this memory is greatly weakened after the age of thirteen.

This mischievous statement is, I believe, quite untrue; and I doubt if it is wise for the teacher to act on it, either in his own case or that of his pupils. But is it fair to say that children have good memories; is it not right to say that they have marvellous memories? The teacher very often denies it, but the mother and the nurse know that it is a fact, the explanation of course being that in dealing with the mother and the nurse the child is wholly absorbed in what he hears and loves, while very often in dealing with the teacher he sees but does not perceive and hears but does not understand. The truest words yet written to account for the child's power of reproducing are words which I fear I always quote in my lectures on subjects educational.

> "There was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he saw that object he became.
> And that object became part of him for a day, or a certain part of a day,
> Or for long years or stretching cycles of years.
> The early lilacs became part of this child;
> And grass and white and red morning glories, and white and red clover and the song of the phœbe bird,
> And the apple trees covered with blossom, and the commonest weeds by the road,
> And all the changes of city and country wherever he went;
> His own parents, he that had fathered him and she that had birthed him,
> They gave this child more of themselves than that,
> They gave him afterward every day; they became part of him."

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Indeed it is in this particular phase of the imagination, the reproduction phase, that the child's strength lies. And I do not care to draw the line usually made between the verbal memory and the fact or scene memory; the only requisite is that the child shall thoroughly drink in what is to be remembered. Take him to a play that he can understand and he will reproduce it for you. Tell him a story and lo, it is there, and more, it is there with appropriate gesture and appropriate emphasis, aiding the beautiful child-voice. One could talk for an hour on the child's natural superiority to the grown man and the trained actor in voice, intonation and gesture; but only those who have watched perfectly fearless children and who have taught themselves by studying children's gestures will believe that I am not grossly exaggerating. You may even go so far as to show a child a picture and he will make no bad attempt to describe it to you, though of course as in everything else it is that which seizes him the most that is best retained and reproduced. All this he will do for you under certain conditions, and the first condition is that he must be absolutely fearless. It is foolish of school authorities to say that the child cannot tell the story, be the story: the mother and his own schoolfellows know that he can. But at home and in the playground he is not under the formal rule, he is not surrounded by a circle of critics with one big critic in the centre. Difficult I know it is to get children to be natural in the telling of their stories, impossible it is not.

Again, and here I come to the third phase of imagination, will anyone deny that the child possesses inventive power? I am not speaking of the flights into the realm of pure fancy in

which he creates beings that never had any existence or ground plan in fact or in story, if he ever really does this. I am dealing with his power of fusing into a new whole the objects of his impressions and the figures of his story books. In fact, if encouraged, he is in the less criminal sense of the word, a born story teller. You could tell me numberless anecdotes to prove this; but surely, if parents are listening to me, it needs no proof. It is beside the mark to say that he does not show this power in school, just where it is wanted. He will show it out of school, and the book which I have brought with me, a collection of stories written by a
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child of eight and illustrated by the author, no doubt finds its parallel in your own desks at home. The problem then is, supposing this imaginative power to be of use, how are we to lay hold of it and how are we to train it? I wonder how many teachers have tried, not for a day or for a week, but for six solid months to get a class of children into the habit of childlike fearless story telling.

Before trying to solve our problem, we may ask, "How *do* we train the imaginative power?" I hope I am not caricaturing our English methods in the following picture. It does not pretend to be taken from any particular set of schools, primary or secondary; it is taken from all. A child goes to school, bright, comparatively unchecked, possibly full of the stories he has heard or told at home. They may be mere fairy tales or they may be the stories of Homer, Spenser, Cervantes, Bunyan, Chaucer, and the Norse Sagas; or yet again they may be stories of bird and beast, of flower or river. It is not an uncommon thing nowadays to meet with little children who have thus, without any strain and with immense delight to themselves, been introduced early to great things without being made prigs or learned persons. The child at school is ready to learn, ready to know, ready to ask terrible and sometimes very silly questions—supposing of course that he has not been brutally misused at home. He finds that the first thing he has to do is to sit still for a long time—abnormally still. In these days of large classes this is necessary, no doubt. But is it right? and is it right that a young man should have to control and teach 50, 60, 70 children? is it right that he should have even 30 before him in all lessons, and is it right to expect these 30 to be unnaturally still, say, for forty minutes? However it is necessary and all the time that can be spared is taken up in enforcing not discipline, but order. This is the child's first school lesson—a lesson in repression. But do we often hear a teacher give to a class the real reason why they are expected not to sit abnormally still, but to sit as still as they can? (The training in obedience, say the books; the training in voluntary attention, say the books.) The reasonable teacher will explain and will try to get the child's reasoning powers over to his side; the reason of course is that the lesson is interesting and that everyone wants to learn—as indeed,
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with the good teacher, they do. Many of us have seen the comical despairing look come over a good class, not sodden or dead with the monotonous slavery to rules, when an inspector or head master or other interrupting person disturbs the work. But the reasonable teacher will go farther and will allow his class to stretch their legs at reasonable intervals of time. The books tell us all this is wrong, that all movement on the part of the child lessens his power of attention—voluntary attention as it is called; but surely at this stage we care nothing for voluntary attention, we want involuntary attention and a reasonable stillness. It is a trifle: but it is not a trifle that the child should get to think that I am not a repressor, that I am on his side,

that I neither keep abnormally still myself, nor expect him to do so. In every school you may see children whose whole mental activity is directed towards sitting still: they have none left for the lesson. What a delightful contrast to see a person come into a room at home or at school and dump down on a large table a mass of soft clay and proceed under the eager eyes of six or even ten small bystanders to mould it into mountains, talking all the while and getting the bystanders to label these mountains with names written on bits of paper stuck into cleft sticks, and then to see him go on and pour or chalk in his blue river, talking all the while as he traces it from its source, follows it through lake or forest and slowly builds its history and that of the towns and people who once lived or who now live upon its banks, carrying it through its scenery, down its rapids, under its bridges to the sea, and answering as best he may the many questions of his fascinated audience, and finally crashing the whole mass together to the disappointed "Oh!" of the children, who like Oliver ask for more.

Well, the orthodox lessons begin. They are no doubt interesting. It is all new, fine, clear: for the teacher, whatever he does not do, certainly explains his subject in a most lucid manner. But the child is not there to hear the lucid teacher. I maintain that he is there to ask the lucid teacher questions just as he would ask them of his mother or his nurse, who (I beg their pardons) are not generally fully informed enough to answer him. The teacher thinks that the child is there merely to answer questions, and a running fire
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of question and answer goes on throughout, or else closes, the lesson. The questions are admirably chosen: they are necessary, they are informing, they aid intelligence, they certainly find out which of the children have attended to what has been said. But the child who perhaps has failed to grasp one leading point, or who may have wandered off at a tangent, gets little benefit, though he may well be a brilliant person: he is not encouraged to question his questioner. The reply will be that in any class a child may ask a question, but my rejoinder is, "Does he?" Except in the case where children are very small and are therefore less timid, where the teacher is not a professional repressor, and in those cases where he has trained his children to ask questions, and in those rarer cases where the children are as fearless of the man as they are devoted to the teacher, the questioning is all lopsided. A second reply may be given that the value of the lesson depends on the power of the teacher to exact voluntary attention. But my answer is that the child is there to learn. The child gets it into his head that he has come to school to be taught, whereas he might have found out in the first week that this is not true and might have learnt a lesson full of beneficial results to the whole of his after life. There is no difference between the two? at all events, ladies and gentlemen, there is this difference, that the verb to learn, whatever may be its etymology, is now an active verb and the verb to be taught is passive.

A short time ago I was talking to a lady who is a useful member of a School Board, and she told me this story. A girl full of such mad heterodox opinions as those which I have been imperfectly expressing, was put in charge of a class of small children and in process of time the children were moved on and came under the eye of the head master. He was loud in complaint, "Why, the little beggars won't sit still," he said, "I'll teach them." Whether he taught them or not, I do not know, but the little beggars who wouldn't sit still came out, at the end of the year, triumphantly and ridiculously ahead of those others with whom this enthusiastic girl had had nothing to do.

From the point of view of those who would encourage imagination, I do not know anything more dismal and heart-rending than the reading or literature lesson as it is often
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carried on. To begin with, it is chameleon-like in form; it changes from reading to spelling, from spelling to wordbuilding, from wordbuilding to parsing, from parsing to composition and back again to reading, all in fifty minutes; while the poor dull deadened victim wishes all these subsidiary arts at Jericho, so that he may get back to the story. His imagination which longs to be with the writer, picturing some scene, colour, character, fun, tragedy, is bottled and bridled because some person in the class has stumbled over a word, or has left out an 'h' or a 'g' or some other absurd letter. The child if he dared would rise in his place and say to his teacher, "Oh, please don't interrupt: don't you see that we all want to get on? Can't you put down the mistakes with your pencil and deal with them all at the end of the lesson, when we've finished the story?" But no: the teacher is there to do six things at once, spelling, etc., and the interest of the story may go.

The child progresses. He is set to learn poetry. Here we can make no mistake at any rate. We know what is best for him; besides, we are training and encouraging his imagination. Are we? Does the child ever choose his own pieces? Is he allowed to confabulate with his mother and thus bring her and his teacher together in his education? Why, in hundreds of good schools, his mother would cut his teacher in the street. Are the thirty different items in the class allowed to learn thirty different pieces and to deal with them each in his own way? No. Instead we hear a dreary repetition (not, I hope, simultaneous) of one piece by many mouths until the use of the piece has been hammered so thin as to be indistinguishable. But granted that it is impossible to allow the children to learn pieces of their own selection, in what words can we condemn strongly enough the *teaching* of repetition? The child as I understand him is a born story teller, *i.e.*, he has at his command every intonation, gesture and device by which his older friends, the actors on the stage, so often try to catch us and fail because they exaggerate while the child does not exaggerate—*until he is taught*. We need not ask how the child got this power (of course many of us deny that he possesses it); but to my mind he had it in his early days before he came to school. Now this is what the average teacher ignores or
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does not know, and if he is told it he does not believe; and he sets about to pour into the child his notion of the way in which a story should be told. There is a grievous temptation to do this, at least in the primary schools; for the children are expected to read "with expression." The child obeys, imitates, and imitates all the more quickly if the piece is unintelligible to him, as it often is; not knowing, poor soul, that his voice is good enough if let alone, his way of saying an easy piece sweet enough if let alone, and his gesture restrained enough if let alone, to please any critic of a child, except some teachers and some inspectors. This letting alone is one of the hardest things in early education, not for the child, but for the teacher. Whenever I get the chance, which is indeed too seldom, I listen to a child telling a story; but it is little use for me to listen if any guardian of the child is present. The child falters or says something apparently foolish. Instantly the parent, jealous for the child's name as a story-teller, is down on him, correcting him, and thus turning the flow of his imagination into a new direction, while I, who was contentedly listening, perhaps, to an account of a carriage drawn by swans as big as elephants, am pulled back to earth by the guardian, who cannot let the child alone, and I have

to be satisfied with swans that are mere swans.

This is an instance from the art of the story teller, but the fault runs through all our work. We help too much, we teach too much, we allow but little climbing over stiles, and as for falls they are not encouraged. The child grows up on intellectual crutches which he never abandons, except in such subjects as he does not study in school hours.

The British race is said to be practical, lacking imagination. We may ask ourselves whether it was always so; whether it is true, and whether we can deny imagination to the race which has produced our literature and has colonised the world. I suppose, at any rate, we may admit that we have not the same æsthetic imagination as the Frenchman, and the same idealistic imagination as the German. May we not ask ourselves whether a more intelligent method in dealing with deeply interested and expanding minds would not do something to make the growing generations more alert to face the problems of the future?

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I return to my lessons. Granted for a moment that the child cannot supply you with the appropriate gesture, intonation, emphasis, is there any sense in supplying them for him? He no more understands the supplied gesture than he understands the words, and we are making him into a machine—doubly a machine—first, by giving him a task beyond his powers, and next by teaching him in what way the task is tackled by us who know that it is within our powers. Is it not better to lead him from what he knows and what at present he does not realise? Perhaps I may be allowed to take a single verse of a single poem, and illustrate my meaning. I am not sure that the poem can be studied with profit by any children under the age of fifteen, but let that pass. The poem is Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, which, as my class knows, tells the story of a sailor who brought destruction on his mates by a murderous deed which at certain times he has to expiate. If the class have been told anything more about the poem than this, I am sorry, for indeed the world does not know that Coleridge meant anything more by this ballad. The verse runs as follows:—

"God save thee, ancient mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus;
Why look'st thou so? With my crossbow
I shot the albatross."

This is the way the child reads it, fully understanding the words, but nothing more; unless, having followed the lesson very carefully, he connects in his imagination the look of the mariner with the murder of the bird.

Now, something like the following occurs (and please, ladies and gentlemen, do not let us take this lesson to ourselves, because I have no intention of putting this cap on to myself or anyone here).

"That's not the way to read it. You try, Jones."

Jones: "God save thee —— abbartoss."

"Why, you can't even read the words. The word is albatrosss—al-ba-tross. I'll write it on the board. Now spell it."

Jones spells it.

"Now pronounce it." Jones, after three attempts, succeeds.

“*Now then*, read it.” Jones reads it, and again almost falls foul of the bird.

“Well, we’ll try someone else. Robinson.”

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Robinson reads: “God save thee——”

“That’s much better.”

“Now then, attend and I’ll read it for you.”

Teacher reads it.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I maintain that no attempt has been made to get the meaning from the children, and though the method I suggest takes an infinitely longer time, surely it gives the children’s imagination exactly the play that it requires; and if the imagination, whether it be reproductive or inventive, be trained, the child is trained instead of being taught.

The children’s questions regarding this particular part of the poem being temporarily over, Jones is asked to read the first two lines—

“God save thee, ancient mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus,”

and as he understands the lines, he paraphrases them. “But,” says the teacher, “How does the wedding guest know that fiends are plaguing the mariner?” No answer, perhaps. Then we may go on and read the first half of the third line. “Why lookest thou so?” How does he look? The answer now begins to shape itself. Now, if the mariner looks as if fiends are plaguing him, in what way is this question asked, “Why lookest thou so?” With a very little trouble we can get the answer—“Why lookest thou so?”

We return to the first lines, and though we do not get them well said, we have at any rate understood the first half of the verse.

But the difficulty has yet to come—“With my cross-bow I shot the albatross.” Who says this? The mariner. Was this the reason for his looking so haunted? If so, there must have been something terrible in the deed. Why was the deed terrible? Probably only the clever ones will reply (my class are average children). Then, what is the important word if this sentence describes a murder? The answer is, “Shot,” and very few classes indeed would fail to give it. We are now ready after possibly long conversation on these points to read the sentence and, little by little, relying on rules and the children’s own power, we may get a fair reading, and we should do well to be contented with it. Then, and not till then, may the teacher read it.

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If, on the contrary, the children much older go not to a lover of literature, but to a teacher of elocution, or to an actor off the stage, something very different is the result. I hope I do not exaggerate. I only copy what I have heard. (The lecturer here represented the drawing-room elocutionist.)

But the children grow older and we introduce them to a classic, Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, for instance, or Milton’s *L’Allegro*; and here I would like to ask, have they all already been introduced to the *Pilgrim’s Progress, Æsop’s Fables*, the stories of the Old Testament, *Don Quixote, The Story of Ulysses* [sic] *The Faerie Queene, The Stories of Agamemnon and Æneas*, and the other gems in the world’s literature? I fear not; but if they have, may I be allowed to examine? Can they tell me the outlines of these stories? If they can, revision has taken its

proper place in the school; if they can tell the story, but tell it badly, the imagination has not been trained but taught, or they have not been accustomed to do it frankly. But in the school where they tell these well-loved and well-remembered stories in a free unconstrained manner, I feel indeed that I am in a *home of education*. However, they are now going to study Shakespeare—not by reading and re-reading, and by learning the fine passages, but by getting up notes. I need say no more: our English literature means getting up notes, unless indeed it means something else which I may style the worship of the grammar fiend.

O teachers and parents, if you care anything for the imaginations of the children, if you wish them to learn to love and reverence literature, the handmaid of religion, do all that you can to banish notes from your books and the orthodox literature examinations from your schools.

I have said quite enough to show the lines on which imaginative power may be trained in the study of English. But I must not omit that part of the training of the imagination which is based on memory. Why has memory work fallen on such evil days? I feel myself very antiquated and ill-informed in saying a good word for it; and if I insist on a knowledge of a text as a preliminary to the thorough appreciation of it, I am stared at and politely ignored. “I make it a point never to learn a date if I can help it.” “We have such bad memories in our family.” “I once knew the
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23rd Psalm, but I couldn’t say it now—you surely would not ask me to learn a page of French or Greek by heart—why it is so antiquated a thing to do.” These are the answers one meets with. Yet what are we without memories? What are we in literature, in history, in the realm of imagination, without verbal memories? With or without association-links our memories must be loaded with facts, dates, formulæ, statistics, vocabularies, poems, if we are to use our imaginations well. We dare not despise this raw material of thought, and though it is easy enough to make cheap fun of the man who is full of facts, it is really only the man who is full of facts and nothing else, and who never uses these facts, that lends himself to the caricaturing pen of the novelist and the play-wright. From what have the discoveries in medical science and physical science come if not from a thoughtful and very often daring marshalling and remarshalling of facts—seemingly isolated, and I suppose it is not too much to say that a great deal of solid or tentative theory is due to poetic imagination of our scientific men. The scientific man does not like to be labelled imaginative; but it is precisely the epithet which suits the Pasteurs and the Darwins of the last century.

“I care nothing for your verbal memories,” said a gentleman once who was proposing a vote of thanks to me. “I only want the message. Love of knowledge of the word is a useless heritage from our grandfathers’ times.”

Then is the form nothing? Is the sonorous music of Milton, the haunting pathos of *In Memoriam*, the weird beauty of Shelley’s verse nothing? for they all depend on and live by form. Are we to paraphrase our poets and serve them up as dried pellets ready for digestion? Surely not. We lose a great deal if children’s memories are not stored fully with the actual words of such pieces as they can understand, and if we do not continually revise the memory work of our schools.

I do not know why our schools do not always instruct their children to keep memory books. The memory is an excellent servant, but like all excellent servants it wants a word now

and then. We repeat glibly enough the Jesuit's motto, "*Mater repetitio studiorum*," but we scarcely act on it. Everything that is really worth learning by heart, as we say, is worth remembering too; and it would do a school no
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harm if from the very first class to the highest the children were expected to know what had been learnt. One hour or two hours per month would be quite enough to keep this memory work fresh, and though many may sneer at this as a perpetuation of cram, I really do not know that a perpetuation of cram, if what is crammed is good, is a bad thing. You will remember Mr. Redworth in George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways*. He imagines because he knows; he is the person of accurate knowledge; there is nothing flimsy in his education, and yet in his way he is a dreamer. Contrasted with him is the foolish youth whose imagination is fed on chaff and wind. I consider I am the poorer because I have lost so much that I knew thirty years ago, and with a little repetition a great deal would have been at my command which to-day I am without. It is easy to make fun of this, to speak of the definitions, dates, formulæ, which were our bane, and to assure ourselves that we are glad to have got rid of them. Definitions, dates and formulæ, however, if we only know why they are to be remembered, are excellent things, and we dare not get rid of them; we might with equal sense in the physical world be glad to get rid of our skeletons. Beneath the imaginative possessions of the world, beneath the swinging Homeric hexameter, beneath the sonorous swell of the *Faerie Queene* and the *Paradise Lost*, beneath the stately iambics of Sophocles and the jewelled Psalms of David, the lyrics of Shelley's *Prometheus* and the glowing lines of Tennyson's *Princess*, there lies the pavement of exact carefully treasured fact, the land of knowledge, literary, artistic, æsthetic, scientific, and religious.

I think it would be possible to speak of geography as a training ground for the child's imaginative powers. What geography was in the hands of unintelligent people a few years ago need not concern us, and some of us recollect it with terrible shudderings; but what it may be is of vital concern to every one who has the training of children at heart. What is the proper treatment of geography but one long delightful hunting ground for the imagination. The latitude and longitude of the great centres of civilisation, *and the consequent knowledge of their distances*, the power of reproducing at will, not of course in absolute accuracy, but with a certain amount of accuracy the main outlines of the chief countries of the
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world; the knowledge recoverable at will of the courses, scenery, towns, deltas of the great rivers; the look of the countries between their banks; the customs, history, developments of the peoples; the romance of great commercial lives and the mental pictures of the long miles of wharfage; the flowers and trees of the various countries and their place in the economy of man; the meanings of rock and stream and tiny animal life. Properly learnt, what could be a finer training of the imagination which produces pictures of plains never seen and is fired by stories of cities never known? Based on accurate knowledge, fed by enthusiastic description, enlarged by the constant questions from the children, held by systematic revision, the geography lessons of a school are a veritable slice out of fairyland, and those teachers deserve pity who are condemned to parse and analyse, while the world of man, the sea, the clouds, the sailing ships and steamers are waiting to fill the child's life with surpassing interest. But we do not always teach geography thus; our schools are not provided with—I will not say with the

books, but with one-fiftieth of the books, maps, charts, photographs, biographies, models necessary for the proper study of the subject.

We are not provided with the men—though men fitted for this work are all around us; and geography, therefore, retains a good deal of its ancient dulness. Even supposing that when the glamour of the lessons has gone the class has not retained much (though I do not grant that this must be so), yet the habit of mental alertness, which springs from the constant giving and hearing of lively lessons, is one of the best servants that moral and intellectual progress can find. It is impossible for such a habit to exist side by side with constant dulness, stodginess, and sullenness.

Thus we might go through all the studies of a school and show how, properly taken, they train the imagination. Surely no one would deny this in the case of elementary science; and if for a moment we are inclined to deny it to drawing, which depends on certain manual and optical dexterities, yet the newer schools are coming round surely to the theory that a child must be let alone far more than formerly. Perhaps we feel inclined to deny a place to imagination in the study of mathematics. Mathematicians do not, and I have a tract on the cultivation of the mathematical imagination. From it I may read one despairing
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cry of the late James Hinton, which illustrates my main contention:—"You do not mean to tell me," he once said, "that any man on earth exists who would be cruel enough to explain to a boy how to do a quadratic equation?"

It comes then to this; that in school, while continually questioning, we ought also to be continually questioned; instead of having to teach huge unmanageable classes, we ought to work with just as many as our subject will allow; instead of repressing our children, we ought in every way to encourage, lead on, and develop; instead of *making* them learn, we ought to lead them to think, remember, reconstruct, and invent. And for this what is wanted? You know what is wanted, ladies and gentlemen, and you recognise the utter futility of such a lecture and of such a lecturer. Degrees and diplomas we can at a pinch do without. We want many more teachers; we want them better paid and not worked so hard, much more carefully trained, enthusiastic, learned, kind. We want to spend on education three times what is now spent; we want men interested in education on every board that manages a school. And therefore we are crying for the moon. But there is one thing we do not want. We do not want to copy indiscriminately Germany, France, or Switzerland. Our education must be British, and at the basis of it lies our determination to make and train not spectacled savants or fighting students, but British men and women, equipped with that belief in justice, straightforwardness, and stolidity, which we value so highly, and with a little more imagination among the mass of us. We believe in ourselves, in England. The English boy is not objectionable to the German and the French boy because he thinks he is superior to them, or because he vaunts his superiority, but because he knows he is superior and says nothing about it.

I believe it is the fashion to teach history in an interesting way; to make the character live upon the stage; to re-dress him; to divest him of his many dates and appendages, and to make him appear as a man. But very few people would even now consider that the teaching of history, geography, and literature to children demands any very special study; and the history readers and history primers that pour in on us are, I confess, not much superior to the loudly condemned primers of our youth.

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Well, ladies and gentlemen, you will want to know if I have any word to say on the home and on its influence in training the imagination of children. I suppose it is now a trite observation that the school plays very little part in the higher education of man. Who really are our schools and schoolmasters? It is true that in a good school a boy learns a great deal. It is claimed that he learns to keep his temper, to command or obey his fellows, to follow a code of honour, to avoid disgraceful acts, to respect good form and strenuous work when he sees it in his masters or in his mates. It may be so: but after all the boy is the product of the home and not of the school. His faults and his virtues, his omissions and his commissions, came from his home. Even his handwriting and his way of walking, as well as his intonations, his gestures, and his love of particular games and studies, may be traced sometimes to parents, sometimes to kinsfolk whom he never saw and from whom he never had a lesson. It is often true that the people who are most alive are the dead. It certainly seems as if the school had made him; but, as a matter of fact, the school's work on him which the world recognises is only superficial: the real work of the school in him is this—that it has helped him to realize his possibilities. How many times we hear, "He was ruined at school"; but we may doubt whether such a sweeping denunciation of any school was ever true. How often after punishing a child in vain have we teachers in despair sent for a parent, in order to enlist him on our side; and before the parent has uttered a word we have seen who it is that ought to have been punished. And in the same way the schoolmaster often takes credit (no one gives it to him) for having made the bad boy good, whereas he has only had the wit to see latent excellencies. The utmost we can say is this—that the child is full of possibilities, and on these it is our glory to work. But he is also full of limitations.

There is no need, I think, in this audience that I should impress on you the importance of encouragement. The child falters, is curious, does not understand: encouragement sends him ever and again on to a higher plane. The gospel of gospels in the New Testament is the gospel of encouragement; encouragement not given to the good, the clever, the promising, but particularly to the backward, the stupid,

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the unrecognised, even to the socially bad. It is exactly so at home. At school the child is criticised, often laughed at, often reproved, stopped, interrogated, made to feel his ignorance. It may be that all this is necessary, though some of us think there is too much of it; but at home, how different it can be. The child who will not tell a story to his class will, if he be encouraged, tell it in his home. On winter evenings, if the delicate finesse of the mother can accomplish it, if the self-sacrificing character of the poor tired father will endure it, what a pride it might be to read or tell without a book in the glowing firelight the fine stories of the world. Often have I sat, a proud visitor to some happy circle, where boys of twelve and girls of fifteen have read and recited with no audience except those who know them and their peculiarities. Exaggeration cannot enter here; simplicity reigns supreme, when the boy reads his comic extract from "Pickwick" and laughs and spoils the story by laughing, and they all laugh at him: and the girl takes her Longfellow, whom the critics scorn as a school-girl poet, and reads with a timidity that grows less and less, as she loses herself in the "Legend Beautiful." And not only in this way is the real imagination encouraged, but in the practice of every child-like attempt to eat out the interest of life. It is not enough to have a home library; the library must be chosen, added to,

and kept by one who knows what is best and most enduring; by one neither too critical nor too careless, who still retains a memory of what seemed fine and sweet to us when we were young. Can any well ordered home be without its library? And can it be that any well-ordered home is without its hobby-room? Is it possible that in any families the children grow up without this encouragement, this direct incitement to them to allow imagination to have full play? It matters not that a painting may be a daub, that silkworms may be malodorous, that the fretwork would scarcely win a prize, that photographs turn the family into grinning chimney sweeps, and that the hobby-room is only an attic. The child, reproved, will forsake all; encouraged, will try again. I always remember with admiration of the Romish Church that story of Warburton at Stonyhurst. Finding that he would go out of bounds, that he was lost in the contemplation of frogs and tadpoles when

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the college bells were ringing, the authorities invented a new post, and made him ratcatcher to the college, and by an ingenious piece of casuistry his post was deemed to be of such importance that bounds could not be insisted on. There is no end to the activity of an encouraged imagination, whether it be in the direction of composition, of manual dexterity, or of outdoor studies. But what I wish to insist on throughout my paper is this—that encouragement is the basis of success. A child may be thwarted for life by a severe criticism of childish reading; may remember to the grave a mocking intonation from one who loves him; and may resent to far-off years the irony, the petulance and the disgust, which should have been the enthusiasm of a kindred spirit. This is why boys who are troublesome, vexatious, and even bad at home, so often improve in school; not because the teacher there can turn bad to good; not because the laxity of home is changed to rule, routine, and order; but because, perhaps, the child is sighing for order and routine, and he realises himself; because, perhaps, the boy knows there is some good in him, and the teacher has the knack of appealing to it; or perhaps, ladies and gentlemen, and surely this is often the case, because the boy finds the parent in the school and misses him in the home.

But there are other ways by which at home the same results may be obtained. The child loves knowledge, and to the home circle he turns for it. He wants to know what the Japanese alliance is all about, even if his object be only to let out his knowledge in school; he is anxious to learn how wireless telegraphy is accomplished, even though his theory about it may be vague. And this is the main reason surely why parents should continue their own education and make friends of their sons. Said a father to me once about his boy of eight, a shy, quiet, child, "You will find he doesn't know much of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden; but try him on fly-fishing"—but I didn't, because I couldn't. This is the reason, too, why so many chances are missed at home. They don't because they can't. And I take it that one of the objects of this Society is to suggest to parents that, like unofficial schoolmasters, they should be able, not to explain everything, but at any rate to show the child where to go to get the explanation; that they

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should be able to assist the boy, not direct him, in the development of his physical being; and that they should know, not from mere school reports or flaring testimonials, but from their own watchfulness, the progress that children are making in "all religious and useful learning." Such counsels are counsels of perfection, only to be uttered, of course, by a bachelor; but, ladies and

gentlemen, are not all lectures counsels of perfection, and do we not listen to them simply to hear what our friends the lecturers consider possible in their own little Utopias?

But is imagination worth all this trouble? Is it of any use to encourage the child to re-tell his lessons, to tell stories, to use his own gesture, his own intonation; to be fearless in his narrative, natural in his method? Is it of any use to supply him with a commonplace book, in which to write down the verses he learns, the dates and longitudes he knows, the names of the books he admires; is repetition of his work as valuable as our Jesuit schoolmasters would suggest? Is direct encouragement to practise hobbies an educating item in his life at all? And are the results of all this, seen in the stories he weaves, the intelligence he evinces, the many-sided interest in his life as he grows up—are the results worth attaining? Why, ladies and gentlemen, they are everything; and you may give the name of education to anything else, but this is the thing itself.

Objections crowd upon me as I read these words. In the class-room as well as in the State there are Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water; and I frankly confess we have not yet found out how to deal with them, positive drag as they are on the progress of the average child. In the class-room as well as in the State there are children of Belial, a still worse drag on the progress of the community. But the Gibeonites and the children of Belial, under a system of education which encourages and studies the child's bent, are few and will be fewer; and the existence of them does not prove that the encouragement of the rest is wrong. *We know what is better, but alas we follow what is worse*. It is, however, something to know what is better. Perhaps in some distant ages this society will be spoken of by the historian of education as one which did its best to point out to the England of the day the more glaring absurdities of its
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educational system; and the best advice we can give to any teacher, whether he be a parent in a home or a parent in a school, is to go on grumbling.

For the self-satisfied, like the hypocrite in the New Testament, have their reward—their self-satisfaction—but that is all they get; while the teacher knows that he cannot allow himself to be satisfied with himself or with his children. Great indeed will be his cause for delight if he finds the boys whom he encouraged, whom I may say he taught to learn, grow up into intelligent men, who, because they were led to think and imagine in youth can turn their abilities in any quarter and can realise themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am dismally conscious that this lecture, though its subject is a fascinating one, is a mass of platitudes, and that it has only touched on the fringe of the problem. Children must ask questions, children must be encouraged, the dull teacher is the bad teacher—we have all heard it before; we know the advice by heart. I could only wish we carried it out. I could only wish that in my teaching days I had carried it out.

After the paper a short discussion followed, in which the Chairman, Mr. Rice and others took part.