

**THE SCIENCE OF EDUCATION: ITS
GENERAL PRINCIPLES
DEDUCED FROM ITS AIM AND
THE AESTHETIC REVELATION OF
THE WORLD**

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The science of education: its general principles deduced from its aim and The aesthetic revelation of the world by Johann Friedrich Herbart

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JOHANN FRIEDRICH HERBART

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THE SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

J. H. L. Wood
1911

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ITS GENERAL PRINCIPLES DEDUCED
FROM ITS AIM

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THE ÆSTHETIC REVELATION OF THE
WORLD

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION BY
HENRY M. AND EMMIE FELKIN

AND A PREFACE BY

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P R E F A C E .

I COMPLY with the request of Mr. and Mrs. Felkin to write a preface to their translation of Herbart's *Science of Education* and *The Æsthetic Revelation of the World*, not because I think that any words of mine can add to the value of the book, but because I hope that by advocating the scientific training of teachers generally, I may do something to create a public ready to welcome this and similar enterprises. The training of teachers in schools other than elementary, stands in this country in a very peculiar position. Nearly fifteen years ago the Committee of the Head-Masters' Conference took the matter in hand and requested the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge to prepare a scheme of lectures and examinations for the purpose. Oxford declined to take any steps, but Cambridge established lectures and examinations which have continued ever since. The result has been different from what the projectors of the scheme intended. Very few public schoolmasters have submitted themselves to training. On the other hand, women have fully availed themselves of these opportunities, and there are at present five training colleges for women in direct connection with the examinations of the Teachers' Training Syndicate.

It is difficult indeed to see by what argument the absence of training for teachers can be defended. What is required for doctors and clergymen would naturally be demanded for a profession which undertakes the hygiene

both of the mind and the body. It is urged by some that a university graduate who has been at a public school needs no special training, because having had experience of many teachers he can tell for himself what should be imitated and what avoided. It would be as reasonable to assert that an invalid who had passed through the hands of many physicians would make an excellent doctor. A boy is not a fair critic of a master's methods. He is generally struck to an exaggerated degree by some peculiarity which may be a merit or a defect. Indeed, the best teaching and the highest form of education are imparted in such a way that the pupil is unconscious of the process. The greatest merit of the teacher is to secure his own effacement. His greatest honour is when the pupil thinks that he has learnt everything by his own unaided efforts. A young man leaving the University goes to teach in a school with the vague recollections of many teachers in his mind. Perhaps there are one or two whom he extravagantly admires. He will imitate even these faults. He is also determined never to show the awkwardness of this man, the simplicity of that, the temper of one, and the gullibility of another. Notwithstanding these good resolutions, he may when brought face to face with a number of boys exhibit them all in turn. The master whom I most admired at school used to be very careless about the exercises he looked over in form. He used to throw them down upon the floor in a disorderly heap. When I first became a schoolmaster, I naturally imitated the practice, until one day a colleague passed the door of my schoolroom and pointed out to me that I was not only encouraging habits of untidiness, but that I was giving ample opportunity for fraud. After this I carefully collected my exercises, and took them in a neat packet to my house. Indeed, during thirty years of teaching I

have scarcely ever heard a lecture or a lesson given by others from which I have not learnt something either to copy or to avoid. The proper use of the blackboard came to me, if indeed I possess it now, from a lecture heard in quite recent years. I am certain that a competent master of method could teach nine-tenths of our public schoolmasters devices of teaching which would be of great use to them, and could correct many obvious faults.

It may be objected that training of this kind would lead to cold and mechanical uniformity, and undoubtedly this might be the case if it were carried to excess. But it will be time to guard against this evil when the danger appears. At present the balance is all on the other side. Training colleges for elementary teachers may have turned out teachers of too rigid and uniform a type. But the material has been unpromising, and the ordinary pupil-teacher has not the versatility and the independence of mind which is found in the graduate who aspires to be a public schoolmaster. But the trained schoolmaster will always have the advantage in certain points. He will secure the attention and order of a large class without difficulty, and his lessons will be better arranged so as to teach a larger amount in a shorter space of time. The practical certificate of the Teachers' Training Syndicate is given partly on a report of a competent examiner on certain set lessons delivered in his presence. No fair-minded public schoolmaster could read the detailed criticisms of these lessons furnished by the examiner to the Syndicate without admitting that he might have profited largely by the exercise of a similar criticism.

What I have said above refers to the more mechanical parts of the practice of teaching, but the same considerations will apply with equal or greater force to instruction in the theory. The theoretical part of the Cambridge

examination consists of three sections—history, theory, and practice. Each of these has its special value in the education of the teacher. A public school teacher, who takes an interest in his profession, will be struck by the fact that intelligent discussion of methods plays so small a part in the conversation of his colleagues. No body of men are more devoted to their work, probably no class of professional men carry their work so completely into every portion of their life. The details of their profession engage their minds not only in the school time, but in the holidays; they are as urgently present to the members of their family as to themselves. Indeed, the family of a schoolmaster is often as actively engaged in producing the results at which he aims, as the family of a peasant proprietor. He does not, like a lawyer or a doctor, or a man of business, find repose from his anxieties in a family circle whose interests have nothing to do with his avocations. The boy is always with him; yet the fundamental conditions of his work are often unquestioned. The practice of a large school is made up of survivals and traditions, good, bad, and indifferent, often lasting far beyond the need which called the practice into existence. The daily routine demands with pitiless recurrence the execution of tasks which we feel to be useless. Schoolmasters have not the time and still less the desire to review their system periodically so as to bring it into harmony with the needs of the age, or to make a careful apportionment between effort and result. The answer is too often given to a reformer, "Well, well, we must grind on." A narrow and exaggerated sense of duty is frequently the bar to a higher excellence. The study of the history of education, tends to dispose the teacher to an intelligent criticism of methods, or at least to a belief that methods are capable of intelligent criticism. He may learn from

it two important things: first, the means by which the practice of his school has been gradually built up, so that he may learn to appreciate what is essential and what is accidental; and secondly, the ideals which great schoolmasters and thinkers on education have conceived as at some time attainable under happier circumstances. The student of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*, of Sturm, of the Jesuits, will learn something of the *genesis* of the modern public school, the reader of Comenius, of Milton, of Locke, of Rousseau, or Spencer, will have a series of ideals at his command which he may call from time to time into practical use. Also the *ex cathedra* teaching of practice is not without its advantages. The best means of imparting the knowledge of languages, mathematics, history, and geography can be taught by lectures. The best disposition of a time-table, the most important questions of school hygiene, matters so seriously neglected in our public schools, can be imparted in the same manner. The great oculist, Liebreich, visiting Eton College some twenty years ago, discovered that only one class-room in the whole school was constructed on principles which he considered sound, and the new class-rooms, built at a great expense, were in some respects the worst in the place.

But if these pleas are to be admitted for the study of history and practice, surely that of theory is of more urgent importance. The main operations of the schoolmaster are directed towards the mind of the pupil. How is it possible that these operations can be wisely or profitably conducted unless he knows as much of the growing mind as is possible to be known. Hence the study of psychology becomes of the very first necessity. There is, of course, psychology and psychology. I do not say that the best psychologist will prove the best schoolmaster, or that the most abstract psychological training is of the greatest use