

**NATIONAL
EDUCATION AND
NATIONAL LIFE**

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National education and national life by J. E. G. De Montmorency

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BY

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PREFACE

THESE brief essays are chiefly intended to appeal to the large class of which the writer is a member—the class of local educational administrators, who, as Managers of Provided and Voluntary schools, as Governors of Endowed Secondary schools, are intimately in touch with educational conditions. It is true that the Managers of Elementary schools have little direct power, and that the powers of the governing bodies of Secondary schools tend slowly to decrease, as the control of local authorities and of the Board of Education increases ; but, in fact, the power by way of influence of Managers and Governors is very great. This vast class of unknown men and women who give freely of their time to local educational problems, plays, I believe, a part of far-reaching importance in the evolution of national education and national life. Were it not for this class, administration would become purely mechanical and bureaucratic, and the human, as opposed to the official, element would have hardly any place in our educational administrative system. The Managers very often know not only the teachers and the children, but also the parents, and convey to the minds of all directly

concerned in the working of the educational machine, the knowledge that somebody is really interested in them and in the results produced. The great danger that threatens the development of our educational system, is its tendency to become purely mechanical and unconscious of the inspiration that springs out of a mutual esteem existing between administrators and those whom administration affects. If School Managers and School Governors can carry into the actual school buildings both sympathy and high educational ideas and ideals, there is a work done for education that no Legislation could accomplish. I have, therefore, ventured to indicate in these brief essays certain principles that underlie educational advance, and I think, perhaps, that those principles will appeal to some of the many thousands of School Managers who are daily visiting the great and small schools of the land. If any of the questions with which I have dealt reach, through the agency of this little book, the stage of discussion between parents, teachers and managers, the end aimed at will have been attained. I am sure that opportunities should be devised for the meeting together of parents, teachers and managers at fairly frequent intervals. All three classes invariably gather strength and hopefulness from such meetings.

I have ventured to add a final essay dealing with "The Evolution of the Religious Controversy." Public feeling on the question of religious teaching in

schools is at present so heated, that perhaps it was scarcely wise to do so. But it has seemed to me that to many it would probably be useful to have at hand at this time a perfectly unbiassed outline of the course of the long religious controversy. I say unbiassed, for I know that I have set down naught in malice; but I am certainly biassed—if that is the right term—in one respect. I am convinced that any Legislation which renders possible an organic separation between religious and secular teaching, would inflict in no long time a terrible injury upon this nation. I look at the matter from within, and not, as the Legislator must look at it, from without. Both as a Manager of schools in very poor districts, and as a student of the history of English education in relation to the social life of the poor, I am absolutely certain that to divorce religious teaching from the State curriculum in schools would have disastrous results. To my mind this is ultimately not merely a question as to the rights of any religious body, or as to the pricking of any particular conscience—important as rights and consciences must ever be to a great Legislature. The ultimate question is whether the State is prepared to say that, in its capacity as a State, it is no longer the Defender of the Faith. If it is not prepared to say that, it has no right to exclude, or to render it possible for a local authority to exclude, from the curriculum of the State schools the elements of Christianity. The

Government, have, I think, specifically disavowed the doctrine that the State as a State is only concerned with secular matters. If this is so, the country may expect such amendments in the Bill as will secure in all cases (subject to a conscience clause applying equally to parents and teachers), the elements of Revealed Religion as part of the State curriculum. That is one most important matter from the School Manager's point of view. There is another, only less important, that a final and just settlement should be found for the outstanding questions of rights and consciences. While we are quarrelling, other countries are forging ahead. The nation at large cannot afford to have the religious controversy remain open; to have this Government come to one decision, and the next come to another. The scare of uncertainty destroys efficiency in the schools. The educationalist demands as a right some settlement that no great party in the State will feel compelled, on accession to power, to re-open. National life cannot be secure till national education is placed on a permanent basis outside the storm-area of local and imperial politics.

J. E. G. DE M.

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