

**THE EDUCATIONAL
WRITINGS OF
JOHN LOCKE**

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The educational writings of John Locke by John William Adamson

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JOHN WILLIAM ADAMSON

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OF
JOHN LOCKE

EDITED BY

JOHN WILLIAM ADAMSON

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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GENERAL PREFACE

THE belief which inspires the editors of the volumes included in this series is one which should find a ready adherence from all who accept the doctrine of development. That belief may be summed up in the assertion that the present is both the child of the past and the parent of the future. Hence the high value of all forms of historical study. The educational theory and practice of a community are not things which arise *e nihilo*; they are the result of the thoughts, activities, conditions, and circumstances which constituted the community's past life, especially as these were more directly related to the upbringing of the young. This is so far true, that an intelligent and effective comprehension of any existing educational system can only be attained when its antecedent conditions are known and appreciated.

Educational history furnishes a key to the understanding of many of the problems of aim, administration, organization and method, which confront the student to-day. It will also help him to assume a just attitude towards the future, dispose him to avoid routine, to

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beware of prejudice and to keep an open mind with reference to suggested change. History is the true prophylactic against the fogeydom which besets the schoolmaster, the committee-man and the official.

The influence exerted by the lives or writings of individual thinkers is one of many factors of the protracted development of education. But many have written, and written well, on education, whose effect upon practice has been negligible. The aim of the present series is to present only such authors as have shaped subsequent educational history, or who at least have depicted with authority the educational ideas and practice of their own time.

The educational writings of John Locke are of more than professional interest; indeed, their more obvious appeal is to the parent and the young man who consciously sets himself the task of "self-education." But the reader, whether lay or professional, is apt to find the longer treatise somewhat prolix and encumbered by repetitions, while the *Conduct of the Understanding* was not revised by its author. In the present work, the provision of cross-references and the selection of the first edition of *Some Thoughts* as the basal text have, it is hoped, secured an arrangement of Locke's exposition convenient for the purposes of study.

J. W. A.

PREFACE

THE educational writings of an author who died more than two centuries ago may be thought to possess an interest little more than antiquarian at the present day. Unfortunately, the historical study of education, as commonly pursued, serves to confirm rather than to correct such a supposition, since it frequently diverts the student from the development which has taken place in the actual application of educational ideas, and transfers his attention to the biographies, personal opinions, or mere *obiter dicta* of individual men and women, whose influence upon homes, schools, universities, or administration has been either small or quite negligible.

But there have been men and women whose lives or writings or both combined have exerted great influence upon the course of events; the educational situation of the present is to be understood in its completeness only by reference to the past as embodied in their work. John Locke is of the number. He was profoundly dissatisfied with education as practised in his own day, and his criticisms throw light on the aims and methods of