

**EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS,
1700-1850**

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Education and social movements, 1700-1850 by A. E. Dobbs

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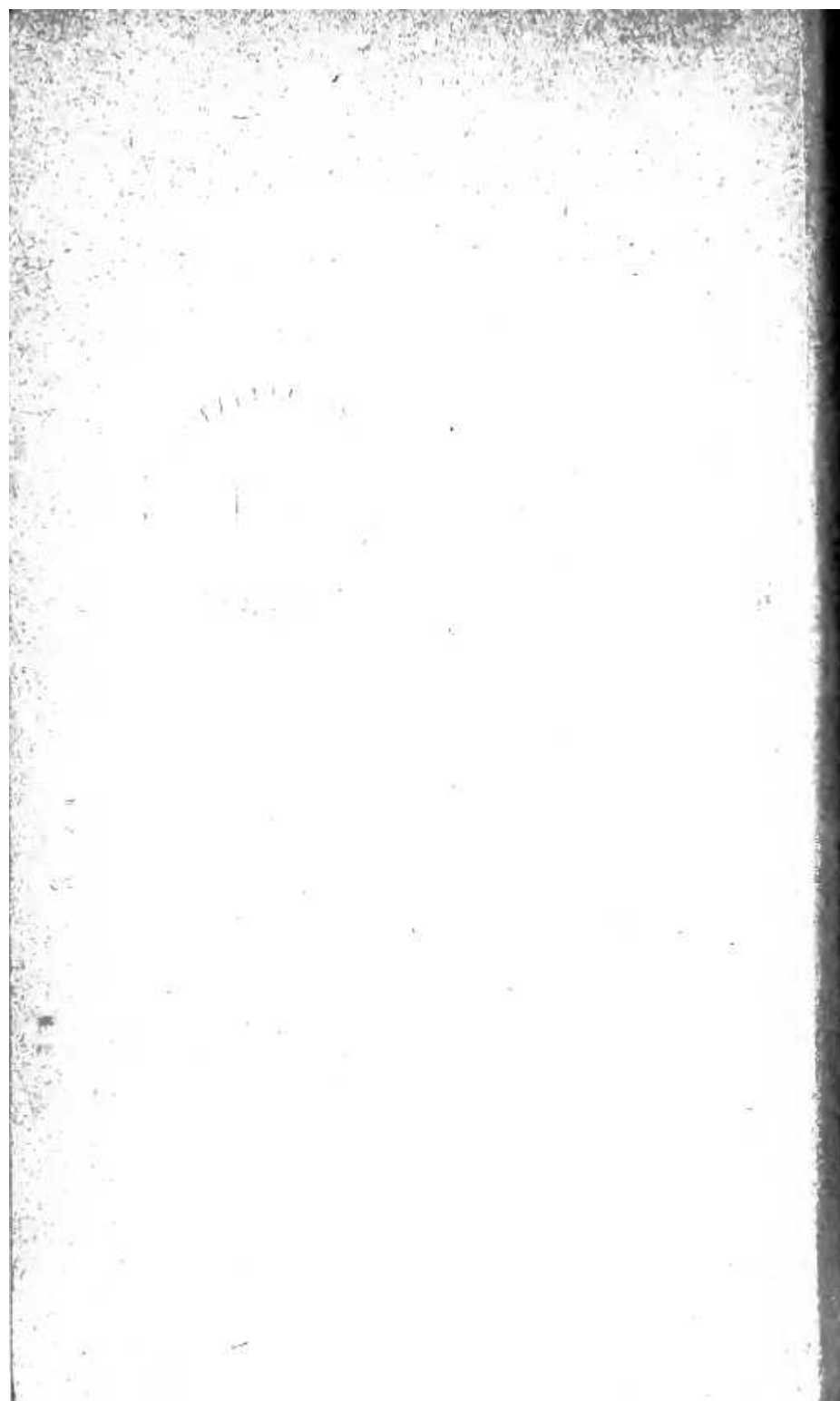
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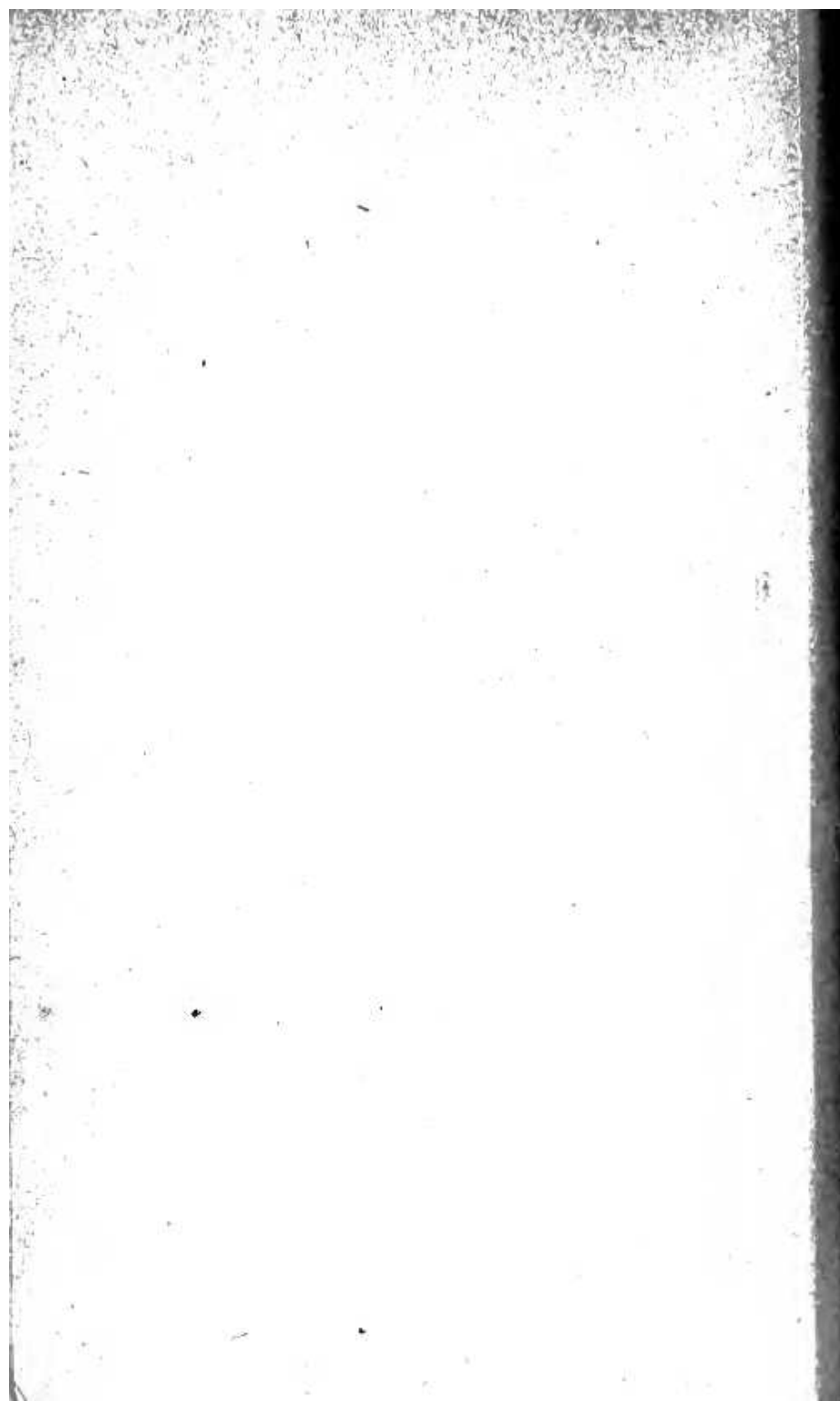
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TO
ALBERT MANSBRIDGE
FIRST GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WORKERS'
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION



PREFACE

THE chapters contained in this volume were intended to form part of a history of English popular education in modern times, with special reference to movements of democratic origin or tendency, the significance of which has received new emphasis in recent years through the rise of the Workers' Educational Association. They were completed before the outbreak of the war, when I was compelled by a breakdown in health and other circumstances to lay aside the task, having done little more than set in order my materials for the remaining and, as I hoped, more important sections. In preparing this part of the work for publication I have thought it best to make few alterations, adding little in the way of fresh matter beyond what was required in order to define more clearly the position reached at the close of the period with which it deals. In a subsequent volume I hope to complete my original design, by continuing the narrative down to the present day.

Though the title may suggest a broader field of inquiry than is commonly associated with the subject of education, the matters discussed in certain passages, especially in the first and third chapters, may be thought more appropriate to a work on economics. Yet there is truth in the paradoxical statement of a modern writer, that progress in English education has owed less

to the zeal of its advocates than to changes in the structure of social life which have often no apparent connection with educational movements. The ideal of universal elementary instruction is at least as old as the Reformation, but the first organised effort to provide schools for the poor of England came at the close of the seventeenth century, when the religious conscience awoke to the problems of social degradation and urban poverty; and the movement which led to the modern system of elementary schools commenced a hundred years later, when society was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution. The sequence of events points clearly to an economic factor underlying the growth of educational demands; and though it is possible to press the analysis too far in assigning motives to the pioneers of popular education, it is both legitimate and necessary to dwell on economic and social tendencies which supplied a practical argument for 'instructing the masses.' From this standpoint one is tempted to define the elementary school as a specialised instrument of training and instruction necessitated by industrial developments which, dissolving the older forms of social life, opened access to a more complex existence along a path beset with difficulties and requiring a higher degree of mental equipment than had sufficed in earlier times.

There are other points of connection between educational and social history. If social changes have given a sanction and impetus to the demand for different forms of instruction, the lines on which their organisation develops are profoundly affected by social tradition. The clue to certain phases of educational controversy must be sought in religious and political divisions which are older than the modern school organisation, and in varieties of social outlook and experience which