INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SERIES: ENGLISH EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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International Education Series: English Education in the Elementary and Secondary Schools by Isaac Sharpless

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ISAAC SHARPLESS

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SERIES

ENGLISH EDUCATION

IN THE ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

BY

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

ACCORDING to our classification of educational books in this series, the present work falls in the first division, under the History of Education.

There are no two nations on exactly the same road, politically or educationally. Hence it is important for the director of schools to clearly understand its national point of view before he attempts to pass judgment on the fitness of a school system or proposes to transplant it to his own country.

England stands in the world-history for the originator of the political system of local self-government. It is a historic growth, and not a theoretical invention hatched in the minds of statesmen or political philosophers. Each of the constituent peoples in the combination—Celt, Roman, Angle, Saxon, Dane, and Norman—was so stubborn as to be invincible within some last citadel of its own, and the struggle for dominion had to end in a compromise. In a compromise two wills are united and victorious; each respects the other and adopts it as its own to a certain extent. In an absolute conquest only one will remains dominant, while one is destroyed.

Out of a manifold compromise arose the British Constitution, each element of the population having

a sphere of self-government within which it was left absolute.

This fact explains the survival of the caste system in England in a form different from that found on the Continent of Europe. In England caste is a means of personal freedom; on the Continent it is a means of oppression. The walls of caste in England are the terms of mutual compromise in which the parties struggling for dominance have finally agreed to recognize one another's invincible might. In France, Italy, Germany, and Austria the lines of caste, except where municipal corporations have secured recognition by military resistance to arbitrary power, are lines not of acknowledged might but of grace conceded by the higher power to the vassal.

Hence we see on the Continent a degree of centralization not possible in England or in English colonies. The local governments in France and Germany hold their powers not by some ancient constitution of the realm, but by the concession of the central power as it now exists.

Witness the central control of the educational systems of France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain! And in what contrast to these stands the English system!

In England not only do all the people possess original rights and powers, but every institution, every piece of property, every franchise, and every existing custom, good or bad, are permitted and expected to claim their privileges and resist aggression. This resistance may appear, first, in the securing of representation in the national Parliament; or, secondly, in the

employment of all the skill of the legal profession to secure favor in the courts that guide the administration of the laws; or, thirdly, in securing the appointment of executive officers who will so administer the law as to protect the interest in question.

In studying the English Government one must remember that every existing element, whether it be persons or property or privilege, never at any time loses its right of self-protection, whether before legislation or after legislation, before the judicial decision or after it. Everything has rights which all others are bound to respect.

This is the deep significance of local self-government in the mother country where it originated.

In Rome, where the principle of contract and the rights of private property and person were formulated into the code of civil freedom, the law is regarded as substantial, and whatever opposes it as of no validity. Hence centralization can coexist with perfect civil freedom in the several countries that inherit from Rome. But the English principle is an advance over the Roman in the evolution of the idea of the state.

The true ideal of a state demands that the central government shall so act on the individual citizen as to continually develop in him the power of self-direction. In England there is a constant pull of the whole state upon each citizen and each local interest, thus challenging its strength. On the other hand, each local interest and each individual pulls constantly on the government to gain its own ends. The Roman system rather tends to encourage cessation of individual effort. Much possible development of individual-

ity rusts unused. There is no other government so stimulative of development in the individual as the English.

In the light of this political tendency we must interpret the facts of English education. Wishing to increase the efficiency of schools and secure the attendance of all classes of children, the Government does not set up a new system over against the school system already in existence, but strives rather to render more efficient the schools already existing, by granting them subsidies and by insisting on inspection. To pay for results means to encourage the production of the results asked for.

Meanwhile, if there are places without schools, these shall establish them. If the Church and individual or corporate enterprise has failed to provide, then there must be board schools established. In this case the power of the whole compels the local power to go with it. But it does not in this override the local power by the national arm, for it is the local power that must establish and govern the school.

The school boards, with city systems of schools very much like those in America, provide for about thirty-eight per cent of the entire enrollment. The national Church system is very strong. Altogether, the private and parochial schools get over sixty per cent of the elementary pupils, while with us in America they get less than ten per cent.

That the board schools are destined to absorb a large portion of the private and parochial pupils is quite evident. It is a struggle for survival of the fittest, and the municipality representing the corporate

strength of the community will be able to excel individuals and Church organizations and private corporations in important particulars. The best endowed schools will remain. There will, in fact, be a sort of citadel of private and Church effort in education where the public-school system will not penetrate.

In the United States we may say that ten per cent of the schools are private and parochial, and that it is better to have something like this proportion for the sake of competition. It makes the public schools better to have a rival.

In Chapter V the author discusses the great endowed schools which in England monopolize the title "public schools." Those schools—Eton, Rugby, Harrow, Winchester, etc.—deserve the most careful study on the part of American high-school teachers, both because of excellent features that can be copied, as well as because of features which can not be copied successfully outside of England. Their success in developing character and in securing physical development may well stimulate us to adopt some of the means which they have invented. But in other respects they are the central hold for the education of the caste to which the nobility belongs. Studied as the conservatory of the higher caste of English society, they, on the one hand, excite our admiration at the completeness of their equipment for this purpose; but, on the other hand, we see the reasons why any imitations of them in British colonies must prove failures, because of the lack of an hereditary aristocracy. What is genuine nobility in England becomes snobbery here. The young lord educated at a pub-

lic school gets a humane training, fitting him for a leader of men. The young American educated at a home school which imitates Eton and Harrow becomes an intellectual "dude," and loses touch with the people among whom he must live.

The most noteworthy feature of the English methods of teaching is the Bell and Lancaster system, or monitorial system, which lingers in the form of the pupil-teacher, or teacher apprentices. It is the basis, too, of the fagging system, for the boys of the highest class are, in fact, monitors.

In my opinion we have something to learn from this monitorial system. The kindergarten and the ungraded school in rural districts can, it seems to me, adopt a form of the Lancasterian system which would serve a good purpose. The cost of the kindergarten may be reduced to one fifth of what it is under the present plan, and the ungraded school may train its higher pupils more effectively as pupil-teachers than by the present stereotyped system.

But in the work of inspection it seems that England has something to learn of our system of city supervision. Our superintendents are not so much employed to inspect and record results as to aid the weak teachers in acquiring the methods of the strong teachers.

W. T. HARRIS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *June, 1892.*