

**PLANS FOR THE GOVERNMENT
AND LIBERAL INSTRUCTION
OF BOYS, IN LARGE NUMBERS;
DRAWN FROM EXPERIENCE**

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Plans for the government and liberal instruction of boys, in large numbers; drawn from experience by Arthur Hill

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ARTHUR HILL

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Mr. C. J. ...

PUBLIC EDUCATION.

PLANS
FOR
THE GOVERNMENT
AND
LIBERAL INSTRUCTION
OF
BOYS,
IN LARGE NUMBERS;

DRAWN FROM EXPERIENCE.

*By Matthew Davenport Hill .
+ Revised*

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Annex

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PREFACE.

THE little work which we now send into the reader's hands cannot boast of much regularity, either in its design or execution. In fact it is published with a very different intention to that in which the greater part of it was written; for our original object was merely to defend our system against the prejudices which naturally, and we had almost said properly, attend innovation.

We found it too great a tax upon our time to answer objections *viva voce*, and thought that by arranging our arguments on paper, we should obtain our purpose more easily and completely to all parties. Fortunately for us, this reason for writing very soon ceased to exist. We then extended our range, proceeded to detail our plans more fully, and to enter more at large into the *rationale* of our system, which itself, as might naturally be expected, was more boldly developed in practice.

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Having satisfied our minds that our general theory was correct, by a long course of experiments, and by the acquiescence of those who are so much interested in a careful and even rigorous examination of our plans, we have latterly proceeded without the trepidation which at first attended us at every step, and rendered the task of reducing the convictions of our minds to practice a tedious and painful operation.

We now feel our system to be sufficiently matured for public inspection; not that it is incapable of infinite improvement. We are far from pretending to a state of perfection, that we should belie daily by the changes which we still find it expedient to introduce; but there is a wide difference between alterations which proceed from the adoption of new principles, and those which are in furtherance of old ones. The latter will become gradually more and more minute, until they cease altogether to affect any of the important features. We never expect, and, indeed, never wish the time to arrive, when changes shall cease to be made; for to learn the art of improving the methods by which the business of a schoolboy is transacted is an excellent means for him to acquire the power of bettering plans in after-life. We have

been astonished to find the ease with which, by practice, boys conform to new modes, without the loss of time and the confusion which may be supposed to attend any changes affecting a large number. It is almost needless to observe, that much good must result from leading boys thus to compare one method with another, or, in other words, to reason for themselves upon the *science* of education; a subject to which the reader will find us often endeavouring to call the attention of our pupils.

The slightest examination of the following pages will show that we have not attempted to lay down a general system of education. Our attention has, both from necessity and inclination, been confined to the instruction and government of *boys at school*. With the education of females, or of boys before the time at which they come under our care, we had obviously nothing to do; yet, as the principles on which we have acted are drawn from a consideration of human nature generally, many of them (if they are true) may undoubtedly be applied without distinction of either age or sex. We have not thought it necessary to dwell on, or in many cases even to advert to, those branches of instruction on which we had nothing new to offer. We have

no ambition to repeat "what oft was said and often *better* expressed." Indeed there was little temptation for us to trench upon the province of others; for numerous and excellent as are the writers on education, they have seldom been practical men, possessing the advantage of trying experiments in the science, and have consequently left us a field sufficiently large. We do not see why the principles of the inductive philosophy should not be as rigidly followed in education, as in any other department of human knowledge. As it respects ourselves, we must honestly confess that we retain hardly a single opinion relating to any part of our profession, which we held in early life; one by one, we have surrendered them all to the force of experience.

Miss Edgeworth, in her life of her father,* very properly considers the value of his services in the cause of education greatly enhanced by their consisting very much in experiments accurately recorded. We hope the path which Mr. Edgeworth struck out will be more frequently trodden than it has been. In one respect we have enjoyed greater advantages than he for making observations. We have

* Vol. ii. p. 187.

had a larger number of pupils, all differing in their natural and acquired powers, and without that family resemblance which must have run through the subjects of his investigations; and therefore likely to furnish more correct *average* results than can be reasonably expected in his case.

The reader will naturally wish to know, before he undertakes the task of reading the following chapters, what is the object which we have had before us in the road that we have chalked out. We shall be able to satisfy his curiosity in a few sentences; and first, let us say what our object is *not*. It is not to change the course of Nature by transmuting boys into *little men*. It is not to enable our pupils to hide the meagreness of their stock, by the dexterity with which they may display their wares; not to lead a boy to imagine that his education is finished, because he has arrived at a certain age; not for him to suppose, that to talk fluently can be any excuse for not thinking deeply; or that manners may be a succedaneum for conduct. On the other hand, what we do aim at effecting may be expressed in a few words. We endeavour to teach our pupils the arts of *self-government* and *self-education*. So far from supposing education to cease at school or at college, we look forward to the moment when our