

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION

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A brief history of education by H. M. Beatty

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BY

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1822-1922

TO

THE SANE AND PERVASIVE INFLUENCE
ON ENGLISH EDUCATION OF
MATTHEW ARNOLD

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK

But be his
My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul
.....
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.

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INTRODUCTORY

HISTORY has in the last seven or eight years lost some of its prestige; the world has been so busy in making history that it has had little leisure or taste for deciphering the annals of past ages, which seemed to offer no stimulus or message to the men of to-day. In any case, the War was hardly required to dim the prestige of the history of education; neither the Immortals of culture nor the mere men of expert research—if I may adapt the Horatian gibe at mediocre poets—have found a place for it in their scheme of things. In the voluminous and monumental *Encyclopædia of Education*, which is at present appearing in London, we search for it in vain under "History" or under "Education"; and the opinion of a statesman of such genial and catholic curiosity in the progress of culture as Lord Morley, who has himself contributed more than once to the literature of education, can be conjectured from this pungent jotting:—

Wasted the three hours of the journey on a book about grammar schools before Ed. VI. An important and laborious book, but bearing on no earthly task of mine (Lord Morley's *Recollections*, ii, 68).

More than half a century ago R. H. Quick found that not merely good educational histories, but all of them, were in some foreign language; and,

although since his day much fruitful work has been accomplished on special periods, it is only within the last couple of years that Professor Adamson has provided a comprehensive history even of English education, while it was only the other day that Dr. Boyd (a Scot, be it noted) gave us at length a general history.¹ This is the more surprising when one considers the large number of general histories which are available in France, Italy, Switzerland, the United States, and especially in Germany—thirty or forty of them in all. There is, it need hardly be said, an advantage in contemplating the progress of a science or an art from a single point of view which cannot be obtained from the study of miscellaneous monographs, and Matthew Arnold long since pointed out how essential is the comparative standpoint in the treatment of popular education.

If, however, a wide survey is to fulfil its purpose, it must portray the course of education with due regard to perspective; and the disregard of this consideration is, it seems to me, largely responsible for the unattractiveness of the subject. My own experience confirms me in my opinion: on recently turning up some hundreds of sheets of good paper, which I had spoiled forty years ago in an attempt to write a history of education, I was astonished at the mass of irrelevant matter with

¹ Davidson's and Boyer's histories are American books re-issued here, while Clough's small volume is merely a repertory of Acts of Parliament and English educational foundations with a prefatory historical sketch.

which Schmidt, Von Raumer, and other learned Germans had stuffed my head. Nor is this irrelevant matter found merely in these erudite Germans of half a century ago. It is really difficult to understand why a thinker and educationist like Dr. Boyd should consider the controversies of the Celtic and Roman Churches over the fashion of the tonsure, or Pope Gregory's delicacy in alluding to the scandalous report that a bishop was conniving at the teaching of grammar in his diocese, worthy of the mention which he does not concede to Matthew Arnold, Lowe, Forster, or Fisher, the Bryce Commission, the local universities, or the recent advances in women's education.

Many historians would defend the disproportionate space given to primitive and semi-barbarous epochs as necessary for tracing the stream of evolution; this is the standpoint chosen especially by Davidson in America and by Letourneau in France, who have accumulated a mass of anthropological, even zoological, details the bearing of which on education is rather remote. Davidson admits that our information is in many cases very meagre, and we cannot accept Letourneau's chimpanzee who could work the capstan or his starling whistling the *Marseillaise* as convincing analogies. In fact, the history of education discloses not an evolution but a series of evolutions, for the reason that it was subject in different regions to varying conditions of race, moral standard, culture, and social order, and was modified accordingly. To take, for instance, Greek education as representative of the stage