

**THE SOCIALIST
LIBRARY-IX, THE
CHILD AND THE STATE**

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The Socialist Library-IX, The child and the state by Margaret McMillan

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MARGARET MCMILLAN

**THE SOCIALIST
LIBRARY-IX, THE
CHILD AND THE STATE**

THE SOCIALIST LIBRARY. IX.

The Socialist Library—IX.

Edited by J. Ramsay MacDonald M.P.

The Child and The State

BY

MARGARET McMILLAN.



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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA
1911.

DEDICATION.

TO MY SISTER.

240051

FOREWORD.

THE book that follows is addressed to all working people, but above all to those who are working for the education of the masses. It divides itself into two parts. The first is concerned with childhood, the second with youth and adult life.

It is now many years since the struggle for a new life for the children of the people—a life to be made possible largely through the primary school—began. Long before there was any Boer war or Inter-Departmental enquiry, this struggle for a new *régime* that would ensure health to children was begun. Yet even now, when the echoes of the war and of the enquiry are growing faint the public halts at the threshold of the new reform movement. Even educational authorities halt and go back weakly on precedent. "Learn by doing," said Froebel. Yet the *opportunities* for doing the things that would free a child while he is yet in the most receptive stage of life are not offered. Words, books, are offered—not the means of action.

It is thus we are allowing tens of thousands to grow out without the mere notion of what it is to have a high standard in physical and moral life. Years pass. The path of deliverance is now firm and broad and bright in front of us. Thousands of voices encourage us to tread it. Other nations lead the way. Still, we hesitate. There can be no new message, and *nothing of any real interest even to record*, till the people and their representatives swing boldly into the new path. The earlier part of this book represents an effort to repeat the old message once more, to say it is possible a little better, or in any case with new earnestness.

With regard to the second part of the book, however, the matter in hand is altogether of another kind. No one, however poor and faltering his work, can write of the higher education of the masses to-day without waking some thrill of interest and hope in everyone who thinks at all of his race or its future. This question is a new one. To-day thousands of workpeople awaken almost as if from sleep. In a single year the number of Tutorial Classes for working people has more than doubled.

Every tutor knows perfectly well that the waking of any one of his working-class students to-day is an event quite other than is the

smooth progress of even the most brilliant undergraduate. To begin with, the worker's eyes are opened in an hour when Science is laying bare the effects of balked youth and despoiled childhood, and is proving that (long hours of labour without mental progress mean nothing more or less than mutilation, and that of the saddest kind. The "prizes" of life beckon the selfish and even the unselfish.) But life itself takes on a different hue to those who *know* at last what they and theirs have paid for our modern civilisation. And meantime every week and month sees the army of serious students growing—sees miners, dockers, railway men, drivers, spinners, and even the unemployed forging their way across barriers that were yesterday believed to be impassable by them. There may be, and indeed there are, two opinions as to whether they are taking the right road. Still they are finding a road—and the goal before them is clear enough. It is Higher Education for all.

The world has never seen a large, highly educated Democracy—a Democracy scorning the notion of slavery. The world has never seen, and I do not pretend to say whether it will ever see it, for Higher Education does not depend merely on leisure, and access to Univer-

sities and tutors, but on the will and power to go through a great deal of hard and long drudgery. One thing, however, is growing clearer every day, viz., that a great number of working people are willing to go through this immense drudgery, and more, to welcome trouble of every kind, in order to win the knowledge that is power. One can think of nothing to compare with such courage, but the stubborn and bold spirit of their own wild forebears who laughed at death and storm. Science is breaking many barriers now. It is showing how *continuous* all growth and development is, so that we cannot disconnect the bold warrior and the bold scholar and believe they have no kinship. On the contrary, we know that they are father and son, root and fruit.

Within the next twenty years the struggle for efficiency will be carried on with a new earnestness in every civilised land. There will be a demand (which we try to re-inforce) for better technical education. But this new efficiency, while it benefits the ruling class may do very little indeed for the people. Efficient workmen have been slaves in the past, and may be worse than slaves in the future. Something more is wanted. If the working class is not to be content to be educated *as a subject race*, then