

A NEW SCHOOL IN BELGIUM

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A New School in Belgium by A. Faria de Vasconcellos

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A. FARIA DE VASCONCELLOS

**A NEW SCHOOL
IN BELGIUM**

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BELGIUM**

A NEW SCHOOL IN BELGIUM

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
BY

A. FARIA DE VASCONCELLOS

HEADMASTER OF THE NEW SCHOOL AT SIBROES-LEZ-WAWELE BELGIUM
PROFESSOR AT THE NEW UNIVERSITY OF BRUSSELS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ADOLPHE FERRIÈRE

DOCTOR IN SOCIOLOGY PROFESSOR AT THE INSTITUT J.-J. ROUSSEAU
DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF NEW SCHOOLS

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C. R. P.

TO
MY FELLOW-WORKERS
AND
TO MY PUPILS AT
BIERGES

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION. <i>By</i> ADOLPHE FERRIÈRE	9
I. ENVIRONMENT—PHYSICAL EDUCATION	23
Foundation of the School, 25 — Site, 27 — Buildings, 30—Bodily Hygiene, 32—Physical Education, 36 — Craft Training, 44 — Agri- cultural Work, 56	
II. MENTAL EDUCATION	68
Man and the Earth, 68 — Development of the Child's Needs, 69 — Development of the Needs of Humanity, 70—Small Classes, 72— Mobile Classes, Individual Time-tables, 73— Length of the Lessons, 75 — Concentration upon a Limited Number of Subjects, 76— Interdependence of the Branches of Study, no Water-tight Compartments, 81 — General Culture and Specialization, 83—Class Work, Preparation, Individual Studies, 87—Lectures and Discussions, 91 — Library, Collections, Archives, Laboratories, Workshops, 92 — Excursions, 96 — Reports, Appraisalment of Work, 102	
III. CERTAIN METHODS OF INSTRUCTION	106
Zoology, Botany, and Geology, 106 — Physics and Chemistry, 126 — Mathematics, 147 — Languages, 152 — Geography, 172 — History, 182	

A NEW SCHOOL IN BELGIUM

CHAPTER

PAGE

IV. MORAL, SOCIAL, AND ARTISTIC TRAINING

190

Material and Social Environment, 191—Self-government, Social Duties, 203—Liberty, Authority, Sanctions, Masters, 212 — Taste, Art, Music, Singing, 222—Sexual Education and Co-education, 226—Summary and Conclusion, 229.

INTRODUCTION

I HAVE often been asked what precisely is meant by a New School, what are the essential characteristics of such an institution. Some time ago I gave a definition which did not succeed in putting an end to misunderstandings.¹ Henceforward I shall only have to refer inquirers to the book written by my friend and colleague, Faria de Vasconcellos. His school at Bierges-lez-Wawre in Belgium, ruined by the War, was a typical New School.

The ideal of the New School may be conveyed in a few propositions. Like other ideals, it is not completely fulfilled by any single specimen, or at least by hardly any personally known to me. That is to say, the thirty characteristics enumerated below need not be all presented by a school that can justly claim the title of New School. But with the maximum programme, a minimum programme may reasonably be contrasted. The school must be in

¹ Cf. "Projet d'École Nouvelle," *Foyer solidariste*, 1909 (Delauchaux and Niestlé, Neuchâtel); "Les Écoles nouvelles," *Éducation*, December 1910; "L'éducation nouvelle théorique et pratique," *Revue psychologique*, June 1910; "Les Écoles nouvelles à la campagne," *Revue illustrée*, September 25, October 10 and 25, 1911; "Coenobiums éducatifs," *Coenobium*, December 1911; "L'éducation nouvelle," *Rapports du Ier Congrès international de pédologie*, Brussels, 1912, vol. ii, p. 470; "Les Principales Écoles nouvelles," *Intermédiaire des éducateurs*, June 1913; etc. |

A NEW SCHOOL IN BELGIUM

the country; the instruction must be based upon experience and enriched by manual work; there must be self-government by the pupils, to some extent at least; and it must possess not less than half of the thirty characteristics. In this commercial age it is more than ever necessary to beware of counterfeits. Let it be clearly understood that our international bureau of New Schools¹ refuses to recognize as a New School any institution unless, while fulfilling the minimum programme just mentioned, it exhibits at least fifteen of the characters shortly to be enumerated.

I may perhaps be asked upon what warrant I issue a 'decree' concerning the essentials of the typical New School. I need hardly say that I do not issue decrees, but merely record facts. An experience extending over more than fifteen years; frequent and lengthy visits to a number of authentic New Schools; much comparison of facts and of methods; a careful study of results among the pupils at school and after leaving school, in examinations and in everyday life, have served to convince me that certain pedagogic methods applied in certain definite conditions are better than

¹ The Bureau international des Écoles nouvelles, inaugurated in 1899 and organized in 1912, has its headquarters at Les Pléiades sur Blonay, Vaux, Switzerland. It aims at bringing into existence relationships of mutual aid between the various New Schools, at centralizing the literature of the subject, and at the utilization of the psychological experiments made in these laboratories of the education of the future.