

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS HOW TO
INCREASE THEIR UTILITY: BEING SIX
LECTURES DELIVERED TO THE
MANAGERS OF THE LONDON
BOARD SCHOOLS IN 1889 AND 1890**

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Elementary Schools How to Increase Their Utility: Being Six Lectures Delivered to the Managers of the London Board Schools in 1889 and 1890 by William Bousfield

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WILLIAM BOUSFIELD

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SIX LECTURES

DELIVERED TO THE MANAGERS OF
THE LONDON BOARD SCHOOLS IN 1889 AND 1890

WITH A PREFACE BY

WILLIAM BOUSFIELD

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVE MANAGERS OF THE LONDON
BOARD SCHOOLS, AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE
LONDON SCHOOL BOARD ON THE SUBJECTS AND MODES
OF INSTRUCTION IN BOARD SCHOOLS

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PREFACE

THE following lectures form a series organized by the Committee of Representative Managers of London Board Schools, and were, by permission of the Board, delivered in the Board Room of the London School Board. They represent, in all cases, the opinions and experience of writers of knowledge and weight on the subjects with which they deal, and it is believed that at the present moment, when public attention is so much directed to the improvement of elementary schools, and many new forms of development of school life are appearing, they will prove valuable, and of interest to a circle of the public and of the teaching profession wider than that to which they were originally addressed.

It is becoming recognized, and not in this country alone, that it is a narrow and short-sighted view of elementary education to hold that it includes only the subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic, or even, in addition, the filling of the child's memory with facts, however useful they may be. In preparing any instrument for its functions, it is necessary to remember what these

functions are. The English child of the industrial classes, whether a boy or a girl, looks forward to a life of activity of body and mind, and in the majority of cases to hard manual work. The happiness of its life will depend on its being capable of performing its duties easily and without undue strain. A strong and active body, fingers deft and able to perform what the will directs, and eyes taught to observe, to measure distance and size, and to compare colours, all acting under the control of a mind acquainted, to some extent, with the world immediately surrounding and the laws governing it, are essential to success in industrial life, and any system of popular education which disregards them must be defective. The change in modern habits of life in large towns makes both the training at school of the bodily powers and manual teaching, under which term I include instruction of the hand and the eye, much more necessary than was formerly the case. The son of the farmer, of the country labourer with a garden to his cottage, and of the old-fashioned town tradesman who did all his own work, had no lack of opportunities at home for physical exercise and useful employment, and of gradually making himself acquainted with and capable of performing the functions of his future calling. Systematic training of girls in cookery and housewifery was formerly given them by

their mothers at home as a natural and necessary part of their bringing up, but has now unfortunately become most rare in practice amongst the working classes. In fact, the home training of girls is often made almost impossible by the nature of their mothers' employments, which take them away the greater part of the day, and by the unsuitability and poverty of their dwellings. It is impossible to give adequate teaching in even the most simple kinds of cookery where there are no proper appliances or fireplace; and habits of order, systematic cleanliness, and punctual arrangements for the family wants cannot be learnt in an overcrowded and ill-furnished room. The old English housewifery does not now exist as a domestic art in the labourer's cottage or rooms, and can only be revived by the results of school-teaching being taken there from the outside. It is necessary to create a higher standard of home comfort in the minds of the working classes themselves, and when this is done a larger amount of their increased earnings will be spent on the household *ménage*.

A sense of the want of adequate good result to the children of the training received in popular schools has caused a number of investigations during the past five years, both into present methods of teaching, and the effect of experimental improvements made in England and abroad.

The report of the late Mr. Matthew Arnold into the instruction of popular schools in Germany, Switzerland, and France, as compared with that of the elementary schools in England, brought to public notice at home the fact that our education was less formative of character, and produced fewer permanent results on the children than that of the other countries, where teaching was less purely mental, or addressed to the memory only.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Elementary Education Acts in England and Wales reported in 1888, after making the most minute and exhaustive investigations into all the circumstances and work of elementary schools. Amongst a very large number of recommendations relating to their formation, maintenance, government, and curriculum, the Commissioners laid stress on the necessity of physical training, and of some elementary instruction in science being given as secondary only in importance to the three elementary subjects. They also considered that the curriculum in the ordinary elementary schools might often include not only instruction in the elementary principles of science, but also, in certain standards, elementary manual instruction in the use of tools; and that in higher schools and evening schools this work might be carried still further. Subject to these views, they stated that "reading, writing, arithmetic, needlework for girls, linear drawing for boys,

singing English, so as to give the children an adequate knowledge of their mother-tongue, English history taught by means of reading-books, geography especially of the British empire, and lessons on common objects in the lower standards, leading up to a knowledge of elementary science in the higher standards," ought to be regarded as essential subjects of elementary instruction.

In 1887 the London School Board appointed a special committee to inquire into the subjects and modes of instruction in the Board Schools, and to report whether such changes could be made as should secure that children leaving school should be more fitted to perform the duties and work of life before them. This committee reported to the Board in 1888, after evidence had been taken from teachers and officers of the London and other School Boards, employers of labour, artisans, and others thoroughly acquainted with or engaged in education. They stated that a great change was necessary to make the schools productive of the civilizing and beneficial results of which they were capable; and that while under the present system great attention was secured and thorough discipline, and the teachers had a power of imparting facts with wonderful facility to the children, there was little to awaken the reasoning faculties, and the effect was to make the boys into mere machines. There was nothing in the curriculum that ennobled