

**OUTLINES OF THE
HISTORY AND
FORMATION OF
THE UNDERSTANDING**

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Outlines of the History and Formation of the Understanding by William Ellis

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WILLIAM ELLIS

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HISTORY AND
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THE UNDERSTANDING**

OUTLINES
OF THE
HISTORY AND FORMATION
OF THE
UNDERSTANDING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"OUTLINES OF SOCIAL ECONOMY."

William Lewis

LONDON:
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THE Publishers have instructions to supply a single copy
for 6d. to any Schoolmaster making a written
application.

TO ALL EARNEST SCHOOLMASTERS.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-LABOURERS,

I am not afraid of being charged with presumption—I am confident that you will do justice to my motives—in thus addressing you. I wish to express, with humility and devotion, the mixed feelings of affection and reverence which I really entertain towards all who are engaged in your arduous and noble calling.

To such of you as are already familiar with discussions on subjects connected with the structure of the Understanding, it need not be said that, in the following pages, it is not pretended to offer anything original. Whatever of good, and useful, and true is in them,

has been freely borrowed from the great lights and leaders of the world—in spirit still with us, though departed in body, and from one mightier than all, inasmuch as he has added to his ample inheritance, the results of his own successful researches and happy combinations, who still lives labouring like a giant to enlighten and improve us, whom for me to attempt to eulogize, would be as arrogant as it would be impertinent.

To those of you, however, whose thoughts have never been directed to such subjects, I would more particularly address myself. I would implore you to devote a portion of that small space of time which is left to you from the performance of your practical duties, for the purpose of perusing and pondering upon what I have attempted to submit to your attention. I have purposely avoided quoting any author, or leaning upon any authority. Upon truth I have wished to lean, and upon nothing but truth do I ask you to lean. Read, study, and judge for yourselves. Give a ready and grateful welcome to what is new, if it be

true and useful. Reject, without ceremony, what is false and useless, whether new or old. Pardon, also, the numerous imperfections of exposition which will force themselves upon your notice; attribute them to my incapacity, not to any difficulty or mystery in the subject, nor to any want of clearness in the great works which I may unintentionally have garbled, and which, I trust, you will hereafter be induced to consult.

A new light is dawning upon the world. Society is daily becoming more and more sensible of the errors of its former ways. The schoolmaster is destined to be ranked, henceforward, among the most instructed, the most useful, and the most revered of mankind. He is, to use the graphic language of a distinguished modern, no longer to be a mere "gerund-grinder," a mere dealer in the husk and shell of knowledge, perversely and ignorantly working so as to prevent his pupils from ever tasting the kernel within.

In a valuable contribution to the cause of education by the Rev. Mr. Dawes, a small

pamphlet filled with the most instructive and suggestive matter, there is a paragraph which bears so forcibly upon the duties and qualifications of a schoolmaster, that I will take the liberty to extract it:—

“The school at Sligo appeared to me a very interesting one, but I had no opportunity of examining it. I had some conversation with the master in the school on the subjects taught, and the manner of teaching them. He was clearly well trained, and took great interest in his work. He had various specimens of the rocks and minerals in the county and neighbourhood, and knew how to take advantage of local circumstances in order to interest his school. This it is in a teacher which insures success; and it cannot be too much impressed upon our schoolmasters to talk to the children of the nature of the things about them, the animals, vegetables, minerals, and in fact to interest them in that part of the creation which is rubbing against them at every step. If a teacher knows well how to do this, the

children will smooth all difficulties with the parents, and it gives a life and action to the whole, which nothing else will do.*

Yes, my friends, talk to your children, freely and perpetually, on all subjects—on the “nature,” not only of some things, but of all things, and among them, of that most curious and interesting of all things, a specimen of which they always have about them,—the human understanding. Above all, as they progressively become, under your parental guidance, more and more acquainted with the nature or laws of things, let them learn how necessary it is for their happiness, that their own conduct should be regulated by these laws. Teach them to observe for themselves, how misery, suffering, and discomfort, are almost always traceable to a disregard of these laws—a disregard sometimes arising from ignorance, sometimes from inattention, sometimes from

* “Hints on an Improved and Self-paying system of National Education,” by the Rev. Richard Dawes, A. M. London: Groombridge and Sons.