

**BISHOP GILBERT BURNET AS
EDUCATIONIST, BEING HIS
THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION,
WITH
NOTES AND LIFE OF THE AUTHOR**

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Bishop Gilbert Burnet as educationist, being his Thoughts on education, with notes and life of the author by Gilbert Burnet & John Clarke

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Bishop Gilbert Burnet

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Notes and Life of the Author

By

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"I look on the education of the youth, as the foundation of all that can be proposed for bettering the next age."

BURNET, *History of my Own Time.*

"Education is of all our advantages the only one immortal and divine."

PLUTARCH, *On Education.*

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PREFATORY NOTE.

Burnet's *Thoughts on Education* is a work little known even to students of education. It was published posthumously in 1761, and as it has never been reissued, copies of it are now scarce. At a time when we are seeking to reconstruct the broken links of educational history and to trace the continuity of its development, it seems worth while to restore to its position a work which in its day formed an interesting contribution to the subject.

The author was a graduate of Marischal College, possibly the most famous of all that ever issued from the University of Aberdeen or from either of its colleges. The local association makes it appropriate that the new edition of the treatise should form a member of the series of Aberdeen University Studies. It is indeed due chiefly to the helpful co-operation of the general editor of the series, Mr. P. J. Anderson,

University Librarian, that the production is now carried through.

The *Thoughts* is not to be regarded as at all a complete, much less an exhaustive, treatise. It consists for the most part of opinions and impressions of an *a priori* nature, based on theoretical considerations more than on actual experience. But it is characterised by vigorous common sense and a lofty spirit of moral and religious sentiment, which are elements of positive value and with which no treatment of education, however scientific, can afford to dispense. Its tone recalls that of the nearly contemporary works, Milton's *Tractate* and Locke's *Thoughts*, from the latter of which many illustrative passages may be drawn.

Besides the *Thoughts* the volume contains some additional matter from the author's writings, especially the *History*, which may, it is hoped, serve to reveal more fully his abiding interest in education and his more mature views on it. His practical activities in the same field are also noted, as well as his own opinions regarding them and his motives in pursuing them.

In order to render the volume more self-

contained and serviceable to those likely to use it, a short Life of the author and other collateral aids have been introduced. The sketch of Burnet's career hardly claims to be a systematic biography. It deals most fully with the earlier part of his life with a view to showing the kind of preparation he had had for writing a work on education. As for the rest, it selects for emphasis those phases of his career which exhibit most clearly his educational interest and efforts. Events and scenes which to the general student, and especially to the historian and the theologian, are of infinitely greater moment, are here passed over very lightly. His life deserves study for its own sake and for the sake of the period to which he belongs, and there are several excellent biographies available for the purpose.

In this connection ample acknowledgment is due and is hereby made to a *Life of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury*, by T. E. S. Clarke, B.D. and H. C. Foxcroft, with an Introduction by C. H. Firth, M.A. (referred to in this work as *Life*): and to Miss Foxcroft's *Supplement to Burnet's History of my Own Time* (referred to as *Supplement*). They have constantly been laid

under contribution, and usually in conjunction with the *History* itself and the appended *Life of the Author* by his son. Much help has been derived from the notes in Dr. Osmund Airy's edition of the *History*, but as it is not yet complete, the references are all to the 1823 edition, with the marginal pagination of the older folio edition. Assistance has also been afforded by Dr. Burnett's *Family of Burnett of Leys* (New Spalding Club), and by the *Cambridge History of English Literature* (vol. ix.), especially the chapter on Education (xv.) by Professor Adamson, in which, however, Burnet's work is not mentioned.¹

In matters of language the *Oxford English Dictionary* has been invaluable and has been constantly referred to. The following additional points have come to light: the spelling "chimerique" (76), "choice" (72) as a verb, "counter-carre [with]" (39): the Dictionary does not seem to afford any parallels to these.

The aim in the notes has been to explain and elucidate everything that could raise difficulty or doubt. If there is error, it is probably by excess

¹ See p. 83.

rather than defect. In elucidating special points two of my colleagues have given assistance, which is acknowledged in its place in the notes. Mr. Anderson has been assiduous with counsel and help throughout. After all, a few of the allusions still remain obscure. In quotations and references Burnet appears to have relied a good deal on his memory, which though extraordinarily capacious may sometimes have played him false.

The text and original preface are an exact reproduction of the edition of 1761.

JOHN CLARKE.

CHANNERY,

October, 1914.