A HISTORY OF EDUCATION

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TO

The Memory of My Father
EDITOR’S PREFACE

The present work by Professor Painter takes up the subject from the standpoint of the history of civilization. The educational ideals that have prevailed have been derived from the principles that have controlled nations and religions. Each State has evolved a system of education in conformity with the fundamental idea of its civilization. It may or may not have had a system of schools, but it has possessed instrumentalities for education in the family, civil society, and religious ceremonial, besides its own direct discipline through the laws and their administration and through its public service, civil and military. In religion, whether Christian or “heathen,” there is implied a definite fundamental view of the world which is referred to in all concrete relations, and by this there is given a sort of systematic unity to the details of life. The first object of parental government is to train the child into habits of conformity to the current religious view. The government seeks to enforce an observance of regulations that establish social relations founded on the view of the world furnished in religion.

We learn, therefore, to look for the explanation of the system of education in the national ideal as revealed in its religion, art, social customs, and form of government. A new phase of civilization demands a new system of education. The school, originally organized as an instru-
mentality of the Church, is needed to reenforce the other institutions, and accordingly in modern times gets expansion and modification for this object. It is in this study of the civilization as a whole that we learn to comprehend the organization of the schools of a country.

The attention of the reader is called, first, to the broad contrast between the spirit of education as it existed in Asia and that in Europe. Subjection to authority is the principle on which most stress is laid in the former. The development of the individual seems to be the constantly growing tendency in the latter, and especially in its colonies. Absolute rulers, castes, parental government, and ethnic codes, form the chief themes of interest in Oriental education. Personal adventure, its celebration in works of art, the growth of constitutional forms of government that protect the individual from the crushing might of paternalism, free thought, its organization into science—these are the features that attract us in the civilization of the Occident, and which explains its educational systems.

Inasmuch as the element of authority continues throughout all history as a necessary strand of civilization, it follows that Oriental civilization has important lessons for all people, even the most democratic. The net result of the life of the race must be summed up and given to the child, so that he shall be saved from repeating the errors that had to be lived through before the wisdom expressed by the ethical code could be generalized. Implicit obedience has to be the first lesson for the child. How he shall gradually become endowed with self-control, and finally have the free management of all his affairs, is the further problem of the educational system.

After the reader has studied the spirit of the Asiatic systems, he will find his interest in fixing as clearly as possible the spirit of Christianity before his mind. The influence of such an idea as that of the Divine-human God condescending to assume the sorrows and trials of mortal life, all for the sake of the elevation of individual souls, the humblest and weakest as well as the mightiest and most exalted, is potent to transform civilization. That the divine history should be that of infinite tenderness and consideration for the individual, even in his imperfections, acts as a permanent cause to affect the relation of the directing and controlling powers in human society to the masses beneath them. The whole policy of the institutions of civilization—family, State, Church—becomes more and more one of tender nurture and development of individuality as the highest object to be sought by humanity.

In the struggle between the study of the “humanities” and the study of the “moderns” (or science, modern languages, modern literature, and history), we have reached the process that still goes on in our own day unadjusted by the discovery of a common ground that conserves the merits of both tendencies. In Chinese education, with its exclusive training of the memory, in the study of Latin and Greek among modern European nations, and, indeed, in such trivial matters as the study of English spelling, with its lack of consistency and its strain on the mechanical memory, we see the same educational effects obtained. Memory is the faculty that subordinates the present under the past, and its extensive training develops a habit of mind that holds by what is prescribed, and recoils from the new and untried. In short, the educational curriculum that lays great stress on memorizing produces a class of conservative people. On the other hand, the studies that develop original powers of observation, and especially
a scientific mind, devoted to Nature and neglecting human
history, produce a radical, not to say revolutionizing,
tendency. It must be obvious that true progress demands
both tendencies, held in equilibrium.

The study of the wisdom of the race, the acceptance
of the heritage of the past life of the race, is essential to
save the new generation from repeating all the steps trave-
led on the way hitherto. This necessitates the ground-
ing of education in a study of the humanities. On the
other hand, if this load of prescription is not to be a
millstone that crushes out all spontaneity from the rising
generation, there must be a counter-movement whose
principle is the scientific spirit, approaching the world of
Nature and the world of institutions with the free atti-
dude of science and individual investigation, which accepts
only the results that can be demonstrated or verified by
its own activity, and enjoys therefore a feeling of self-
recognition in its acquisitions. In science, man is doubly
active: on the one hand, seizing and inventorying the
particular fact or event; on the other hand, subsuming it
under a universal principle that involves causal energy
and a law of action. The act of subsumption gives the
mind special gratification because it feels set free from
the limited instance and elevated to the realm of principle,
wherein it sees the energy that creates all instances, and
contains them all potentially within itself. Hence, the
spirit of revolution that is gaining so powerful a hold of
society in the most recent times. The spirit of science
is contagious, and impels toward complete emancipation
from the past. But science has made comparatively little
progress in the social and political departments, and, be-
sides this, no one is born with science, nor is it possible
for one to attain it in early youth. Hence, it is neces-
sary to retain the prescriptive element in education, and
to insist upon implicit obedience to prescribed rule at
first. There must be a gradual transition over to self-
government and free scientific investigation.

W. T. HARRIS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., September, 1904.
AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It was in the library of the University of Bonn, many years ago, as I sat before an alcove of educational works and leisurely examined the admirable histories by Raumer and Karl Schmidt, that the thought and purpose of preparing this work were first conceived. In view of the poverty of our literature in educational history, it seemed to me that such a work, by exhibiting the pedagogical principles, labors, and progress of the past, might be helpful to teachers in America.

The history of education, viewed from the standpoint of the philosophy of history, has been traced in its relations with the social, political, and religious conditions of each country. While the results of French and German scholarship in this field have been utilized, the original sources of information whenever accessible have been consulted. As far as was consistent with the limits of this volume, the great teachers of all ages have been allowed to speak for themselves—a method that appeared more satisfactory than to paraphrase or epitomize their views.

Avoiding such matters of detail as serve only to confuse and oppress the memory, I have endeavored to present clearly the leading characteristics of each period, and the labors and distinctive principles of prominent educators. Considerable prominence has been given to
Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and other educational reformers, who laid the foundations of the scientific methods now coming into general use. In support or illustration of various statements, recognized authorities have been permitted to speak freely.

In preparing this history my position has been, as I believe, that of conservative progress. While what is valuable in educational theory and practise is to be retained, and novelties are to be subjected to rigid scrutiny, it does not seem wise, in view of the fact that the science of education is yet incomplete, to reject summarily all changes and reforms as unnecessary and hurtful innovations. In the sphere of higher education I have not allied myself either to the humanists or the realists, believing that the truth lies between these two extremes. In every department of education I have been able to discover progress, and it is my confident hope that the agitations of the present will issue in a system more nearly perfect than any yet devised.

Thus far the original preface. After seventeen years—nearly double the life of the average text-book—it has been a delight to take up, with the larger resources time has brought, the work of a thorough revision. The result has been practically a new book. Though the original framework, which left nothing to be desired, has been retained, various improvements have been made. Both friendly and unfriendly criticism has been helpful. Most of the book has been rewritten, and subtitles, which will prove useful both to teacher and student, have been introduced. In nearly all cases the original sources of information have been examined; and I wish to express here my obligation to the Commissioner of Education, Dr. W.

T. Harris, through whose kindness I was able to avail myself of the excellent library of the Bureau of Education. Much new matter, especially studies of Richter, Kant, Herbart, Jacotot, Horace Mann, and Herbert Spencer, has been added. The underlying principles of the present movements in education have been considered. A list of authorities has been appended.

In conclusion, I desire to express my gratitude for the cordial reception accorded the original work, and to add the hope that the present revised and enlarged edition will be found still more acceptable and useful.

F. V. N. Painter.

Salem, Va., September, 1904.
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