The Basis of National Strength

A Liberal Education from a National Standpoint

This pamphlet, originally published in 1912 (not long before the outbreak of World War I), is a thorough treatment of the reasons that a universal liberal education is important for society, benefiting the individual person first, but also the nation as a whole. As always, Charlotte Mason urges that education be based upon knowledge in literary form.

Her continual plea is for us to remember that children need knowledge in the same way that they need bread—to sustain life, but in this case, the life of the mind. There is nothing in this pamphlet that has not been covered earlier in the book, but it is a complete and eloquent synopsis of the work and thought of Ms. Mason and the PNEU.

Of particular interest is her emphasis on the necessity of understanding the wholeness of knowledge, which always has its source in God, regardless of the person who proclaims it. A nation whose citizens are well-fed upon knowledge will be a nation both wise and strong.

I. Knowledge

Children Have Been Offered Inadequate Substitutes for Knowledge

We have from time to time given some attention to the failure of our attempts to educate "The Average Boy," and it may be useful to look into one or two fundamental principles upon which this question and others seem to me to depend.

If we have these grounds for discontent, education is no doubt the culprit at the bar, though there never was, I suppose, a more heroic

and devoted body of teachers at work. They get for themselves the greater blessing of those who give; but the children suffer, poor little souls; "poured into like a bucket," they receive without stint, and little comes of it. There is no lack of zeal on the part of the teaching profession, but there is a tendency amongst us to depreciate knowledge and to depreciate our scholars. Now, knowledge is the material of education, as flour is the material of bread; there are substitutes for knowledge, no doubt, as there are for flour.

Before the era of free meals I heard of a little girl in East London whose mother gave her a penny, to buy dinner for herself and her little sister, when the two set out for school. The child confided to her teacher that a ha'porth [halfpenny's worth] of aniseed drops "stays your stomach" more than a halfpenny bun. Now, our schools are worked more or less upon aniseed drops—marks, prizes, scholarships, blue ribbons, all of which "stay the stomach" of the boy who does not get the knowledge that he needs. That is the point. He needs knowledge as much as he needs bread and milk; his appetite for knowledge is as healthy as his appetite for his dinner; and an abundant regular supply, at short intervals, of various knowledge is a constitutional necessity for the growing youth as well as for the curious child; and yet we stay his hunger pangs upon "aniseed drops."

We do worse. We say, "What is the good of knowledge? Give a boy professional instruction, whether he is to be a barrister or a bricklayer, and strike out from his curriculum Greek or geography, or whatever is not of utilitarian value. Teach him to play the game and handle the ropes of his calling, and you have done the best for him." Now, here is a most mischievous fallacy, an assertion that a child is to be brought up for the uses of society only and not for his own uses. Here we get the answer to the repeated question that suggested itself in a survey of our educational condition. We launch children upon too arid and confined a life. Now personal delight, joy in living, is a chief object of education; Socrates conceived that knowledge is for pleasure, in the sense, not that knowledge is one source, but is the source of pleasure.

Knowledge Appeals to and Nourishes the Mind

If knowledge means so much to us, "What is knowledge?" the reader asks. We can give only a negative answer. Knowledge is not

instruction, information, scholarship, a well-stored memory. It is passed, like the light of a torch, from mind to mind, and the flame can be kindled at original minds only. Thought, we know, breeds thought; it is as vital thought touches our minds that our ideas are vitalized, and out of our ideas comes our conduct of life.

The case for reform hardly needs demonstration, but now we begin to see the way of reform. The direct and immediate impact of great minds upon his own mind is necessary to the education of a child. Most of us can get into touch with original minds chiefly through books; and if we want to know how far a school provides intellectual sustenance for its scholars, we may ask to see the list of books in reading during the current term. If the list be short, the scholar will not get enough mind-stuff; if the books are not various, his will not be an all-round development; if they are not original, but compiled at second hand, he will find no material in them for his intellectual growth. Again, if they are too easy and too direct, if they tell him straight away what he is to think, he will read, but he will not appropriate.

Just as a man has to eat a good dinner in order that his physical energies may be stimulated to select and secrete that small portion which is vital to him, so must the intellectual energies be stimulated to extract what the individual needs by a generous supply, and also by a way of presentation that is not obvious. We have the highest authority for the indirect method of teaching proper to literature, and especially to poetry. The parables of Christ remain dark sayings; but what is there more precious in the world's store of knowledge?

Children Must Read and Appropriate Knowledge for Themselves

How injurious then is our habit of depreciating children; we water their books down and drain them of literary flavour, because we wrongly suppose that children cannot understand what we understand ourselves; what is worse, we explain and we question. A few pedagogic maxims should help us, such as, "Do not explain." "Do not question," "Let one reading of a passage suffice," "Require the pupil to relate the passage he has read." The child must read to know; his teacher's business is to see that he knows. All the acts of generaliza-

tion, analysis, comparison, judgment, and so on, the mind performs for itself in the act of knowing.

The right books are given, but not enough of them. The reading dietary is too meagre for the making of a full man. A score of first-rate books should appear in the school curriculum term by term. Children brought up largely on books compare favourably with those educated on a few books and many lectures; they have generous enthusiasms, keen sympathies, a wide outlook and sound judgment, because they are treated from the first as beings of "large discourse looking before and after."* They are persons of leisure too, with time for hobbies, because their work is easily done in the hours of morning school.

It is not necessary to speak of modern languages and mathematics, field work in natural history, handiwork, etc. Schools are pretty much agreed about the treatment of these subjects. As for Latin and Greek, the teaching of these and the possibility of getting in any work beyond these is a crucial question; but I think it is open to Public Schoolmasters to discover that, given boys who have read and thought, and who have maintained the habit of almost perfect attention that a child begins with, the necessary amount of work in the Classics may be done in a much shorter time, and that the mind of the pupil is the more alert because it is engaged in handling various subjects.

Nations grow great upon books as truly as do individuals. If we would not be left behind by the East and the West we must, as other nations have done, "add to our virtue, knowledge";† and we are still competent, as some of these are not, to mount from the bottom rung of the Apostolic educational ladder. It rests with us to add to our faith, virtue, and to our virtue, knowledge. It is an unheard of thing that the youth of a great nation should grow up without those ideals, slow enough in maturing, which are to be gathered for the most part from wide and wisely directed reading.

II. Letters, Knowledge and Virtue

A Personal Example Which Illustrates How Knowledge Works

The following fragments of a valuable letter illustrate the contention of the foregoing chapter:—

* Quoted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.
† A reference to 2 Peter 1:5b: "...Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."

"There is one thing, however, one note of regret, and that is that one paragraph, that on classical education, was not more expanded. I am satisfied that your central view covers the whole truth; and I am going to give you a small individual experience illustrating this fact—viz., that an early education in the great books of our own language, read, with enjoyment, by children and appropriately given to them from year to year, is the true groundwork of later expansion. Here is the story: My three daughters were suckled on Walter Scott and Shakespeare. Later, about the ages of from ten to twelve, of their own, they took up Plutarch's Lives, Bunyan, Defoe, and in the same period they refused to learn arithmetic and geography, the former on the ground of its monotony, and the latter, because, although they loved it, they held that the existing system of teaching geography was 'rotten,' and that geography ought to be learnt by going to the places. I knew better than to remonstrate. I meekly suggested that perhaps they would substitute something else in their curriculum, and they said at once, in an obviously prepared sentence, 'That's just it, we want to learn Latin and harmony.' Now here comes your point (in that lamentably abbreviated paragraph):

> 'Given boys (or girls) who have read and thought, and who have maintained the habit of almost perfect attention that a child begins with, the necessary amount of work in the classics may be done in a much shorter time, and the mind of the pupil is the more alert because it is engaged in handling various subjects.'*

Six months later these girls knew more Latin than I learnt in six years under distinguished scholars with very eminent names. They could sling passages from Horace appropriately; they knew the first two Eclogues and half the Aeneid by heart; they regarded Cicero's Letters to Atticus as a 'penny post' affair, and were quite unduly familiar with the private life of Seneca. But all this did not interfere with their painting or their horsemanship, and better authorities on cricket and the Turf I don't happen to know. That is the illustrative episode. The point, in my mind, is that an early education from great books with the large ideas and the large virtues is the only true foundation of knowledge—the knowledge worth having."

The Need to Reform Even Classical Schools

This interesting letter brings us straight to a question which I thought had been pretty fully threshed out; and I tackle it with

* Quoted from Part I of this brochure.

diffidence, only because an outsider may see aspects overlooked by experts. The gist of the charges brought against Public Schools is, Classics take up so much time that there is no opportunity for *Litterae Humaniores** in any other form. A little strong meat goes a long way, and even the average Public School boy turns out a capable man. But, alas, if capable, he is also ignorant; he does not know the history and literature of his own country or any other. He has not realised that knowledge is, not a store, but rather a state that a person remains within or drops out of. What is to be done to secure to this average boy some tincture of knowledge and some taste for knowledge?

It is well, by the way, that we should remember that we have as a nation an enormous loss to make good; time was, and not so long ago, when rich and poor were intimately familiar with one of the three great classical literatures. Men's thoughts were coloured, their speech moulded, their conduct more or less governed, by the pastoral idylls called "Genesis," the impassioned poetry of Isaiah, the divine philosophy of John, the rhetoric of Paul—all, writings, like the rest of the Bible, in what Matthew Arnold calls "the grand manner." Here is the well of English undefiled from which men have drawn the best that our literature holds, as well as their philosophy of life, their philosophy of history, and that principal knowledge we are practising to do without—the knowledge of God. And we wonder that the governing classes should forget how to rule as those who serve; and that the working man, brought up on "Readers" in lieu of a great literature, should act with the obstinate recklessness proper to ignorance.

But to return to the main issue. How shall we instruct the ignorance and yet retain the classical culture of the average Public School boy? I should like to suggest, again, with diffidence, that he, like his more brilliant compeer, is driven through a mill the outpour of which should be scholarship. Now, scholarship is an exquisite distinction

which it would be ill for us as a nation to miss; but if all the men in an assemblage were decorated, who would care to wear an order? The thing is not to be done; some men are born to be scholars, as the shape of their heads testifies. The rest of us take pleasure in their decoration, but are not envious, for scholarship is not the best thing, and does not necessarily imply that vital touch of mind upon mind

* A course in the humanities, or humane letters.

out of which is got knowledge. As for erudition, we may leave that out of count, it is hardly even an aim at the present time. The geniuses, as one to some thousands, say, of our best, do not trouble themselves much about the regimen we offer—classics or modern languages, or what not; an idle tale, a puppet show, the meanest flower that blows, is enough for them. Anyway, they take care of themselves, and we come back to the average boy.

A Wide Exposure to Knowledge Should Be Common for All

Something must be done, because Public Schools, with all their splendid records, are not effective in the sense that they turn out the average boy a good all-round man. He would know somewhat of the best that has been written in Greek and Latin, whether through printed translations or through the text itself rendered in the sort of running translation which some masters know how to give. *Pari passu* [at the same time], he would do his share of gerund-grind, and construe the two or three books of his present limited acquaintance.

Meantime his master wilt require him to know pretty intimately a hundred worthy books in addition to the great novels—to be read in class periods, in vacation, and in leisure time—his knowledge of each to be tested by a single bit of oral description or written work in verse or prose.

I say nothing now about the teaching of science, for which most schools provide, except that for our generation, science seems to me to be the way of intellectual advance. All the same, the necessity incumbent upon us at the moment is to inculcate a knowledge of *Letters*. Men and their motives, the historical sequence of events, principles for the conduct of life, in fact, practical philosophy, is what the emergencies of the times require us to possess, and to be able to communicate. These things are not to be arrived at by any short cut of economics, eugenics, and the like, but are the gathered harvests of many seasons' sowing of poetry, literature, history. The nation is in sore need of wise men, and these must be made out of educated boys.

III. Knowledge, Reason, and Rebellion

Knowledge, Not Reason, Shapes Character

We have been very busy about education these sixty years or more diligently digging, pruning, watering; but there is something amiss with our tree of knowledge; its fruits, both good and evil, are of a mean, crabbed sort, with so little to choose between them that superior persons find it hard to determine which is which.

No doubt we are better and not worse than our forefathers; and, where we err, it is through ignorance. "Through ignorance ye did it," was said of the worst crime that men have done; and that appalling offence was wrought for no worse reason than because it is the habit of more or less lettered ignorance to follow specious arguments to logical conclusions. The sapient East knows all about it. Lady Lugard tells us how "the Copts have a saying that 'in the beginning when God created things He added to everything its second.' 'I go to Syria,' said Reason; 'I go with you,' said Rebellion."* We need not follow the other pairs that went forth, but stern Reason is apt to be accompanied by Rebellion when it sets out in search of a logical issue.

For it is a fatal error to think that reason can take the place of knowledge, that reason is infallible, that reasonable conclusions are of necessity right conclusions. Reason is a man's servant, not his master; and behaves like a good and faithful servant. But the will is the man, the will chooses; and the man must *know*, if the will is to make just and discriminating decisions.

A Generous Curriculum Based on Language

Without knowledge, Reason carries a man into the wilderness and Rebellion joins company. The man is not to be blamed: it is a glorious thing to perceive your mind, your reasoning power, acting of its own accord as it were and producing argument after argument in support of any initial notion; how is a man to be persuaded, when he wakes up to this tremendous power he has of involuntary reasoning, that his conclusions are not necessarily right, but rather that he who reasons without knowledge is like a child playing with edged tools?

* This story is taken from *A Tropical Dependency: An Outline of the Ancient History of the Western Soudan* by Flora L. Shaw (Lady Lugard).

If the manners and the destinies of men are shaped by knowledge, it may be well to inquire further into the nature of that evasive entity. Matthew Arnold helps us by offering a threefold classification which appeals to common sense—knowledge of God, knowledge of men, and knowledge of the natural world; or, as we should say, Divinity, the Humanities, and Science. But I think we may go further and say that Letters, if not (as I said before) the main content of knowledge, constitute anyway the container—the wrought salver, the exquisite vase, even the alabaster box to hold the ointment.

If a man cannot think without words, if he who thinks with words will certainly express his thoughts, what of the monosyllabic habit that is falling upon men of all classes? The chatter of many women and some men does not count, for thought is the last thing it is meant to express. The Greeks believed that a training in the use and power of words was the chief part of education, recognising that if the thought fathers the word, so does the word in turn father the thought. They concerned themselves with no language, ancient or modern, save their own, but of that they acquired a consummate appreciation. With the words came the great thoughts, expressed in whatever way the emergencies of the State called for—in wise laws, victorious battles, glorious temples, sculpture, drama. For great thoughts anticipate great works; and these come only to a people conversant with the great thoughts that have been written and said. To say that we as a nation are suffering from our contemptuous depreciation of knowledge is to say that we scorn Letters, the proper vehicle of *all* knowledge.

Science Belongs in a Liberal Education

Let us glance at the three departments of knowledge to see in regard to which of the three we are most in error. Some of us are content with such knowledge of Divinity as is to be picked up from the weekly sermon heard in church, but even with the qualification of a degree in Arts, I wonder do our divines lift us as much as they might into that serener region where words fitly spoken beget thoughts of peace and holy purpose? That worship is the main end of our church services is a sublime ideal, but, "The Way, without which there is no going, the Truth, without which there is no knowing, the Life, without which

there is no living,"* must needs be set before us in "words that burn," and we wait for preachers like those of a bygone day, "Whose pulpit thunders shook a nation's soul."†

But there is a region of apparent sterility in our intellectual life. Science says of literature, "I'll none of it," and science is the preoccupation of our age. Whatever we study must be divested to the bone, and the principle of life goes with the flesh we strip away: history expires in the process, poetry cannot come to birth, religion faints; we sit down to the dry bones of science and say, Here is knowledge, all the knowledge there is to know.

"I think that is very wonderful," a little girl wrote in an examination paper after trying to explain why a leaf is green. That little girl had found the principle—admiration, wonder—which makes science vital, and without wonder her highest value is, not spiritual, but utilitarian. A man might as well collect matchboxes, like those charming people in one of Anatole France's novels, as search for diatoma, unless the wonder of the world be ever fresh before his eyes.

For the most part science as she is taught leaves us cold; the utility of scientific discoveries does not appeal to the best that is in us, though it makes a pretty urgent and general appeal to our lower avidities. But the fault is not in science—that mode of revelation which is granted to our generation, may we reverently say?—but in our presentation of it by means of facts and figures and demonstrations that mean no more to the general audience than the point demonstrated, never showing the wonder and magnificent reach of the law unfolded.

No doubt there are many scientific men who are also men of letters, and some scientific books as inspiring as great poems—but science is waiting for its literature; and, though we cannot live in shameful ignorance and must get what we can out of the sources open to us, science as it is too commonly taught tends to leave us crude in thought and hard and narrow in judgment.

* From *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.
† From *The Saviour of the World* (vol. 3, canto 29) by Charlotte Mason.

IV. New and Old Conceptions of Knowledge

Knowledge Is Unified

I have so far advanced that "knowledge" is undefined and probably indefinable; that it is a state out of which persons may pass and into which they may return, but never a store upon which they may draw; that knowledge-hunger is as universal as bread-hunger; that our best provision for conveying knowledge is marvellously successful with the best men, but rather futile with the second best; that persons whose education has not enriched them with knowledge store up information (statistics and other facts), upon which they use their reasoning powers; that the attempt to reason without knowledge is disastrous; and that, during the present distress, England is, for various economical reasons, in a condition of intellectual inanition [exhaustion from hunger] consequent upon a failure in her food supply, in this case the supply of food proper for the mind. I have glanced at Knowledge under the three headings suggested by one who speaks with authority, and have contended that, even if the knowledge be divisible, the vehicle by which it is carried is one and indivisible, and that it is generally impossible for the mind to receive knowledge except through the channel of letters.

But the medieval mind had, as we know, a more satisfactory conception of knowledge than we have arrived at. Knowledge is for us a thing of shreds and patches, knowledge of this and of that, with yawning gaps between.

The Medieval and Classical Understanding of Knowledge

The scholastic mediaeval mind, probably working on the scattered hints which the Scriptures offer, worked out a sublime *Filosofica della Religione Cattolica* [Philosophy of the Catholic Religion], pictured, for example, in the great fresco painted by Simone Memmi and Taddeo Gaddi. In the picture we get a Pentecostal Descent, first, upon the cardinal virtues and the Christian graces, then, upon prophets and apostles, and below these upon the seven Liberal Arts represented each by its captain figure, Cicero, Aristotle, Zoroaster, etc., none of them Christian, not one of them a Hebrew. Here we get the magnificent idea that all knowledge (undebased) comes from above and is

conveyed to minds which are, as Coleridge says, previously prepared to receive it; and, further, that it comes to a mind so prepared, without question as to whether it be the mind of pagan or Christian; a truly liberal catholic idea, it seems to me, corresponding marvellously with the facts of life. As sublime and even more explicit is the Promethean fable which informed the Greek mind.* With the sense of a sudden plunge we come down to our own random and ineffectual notions, and are tempted to cry with Wordsworth,—

> "Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,"

and know that God had brought gifts of knowledge to men at awful cost, than to sit serene in the vague belief that knowledge arrives in incoherent particles, no one knows how and no one knows whence; or that it is self-generated in a man here and there who gets out of himself new insight into the motions of mind and heart, a new perception of the laws of life, the hint of a new amelioration in the condition of men.

The Florentines of the Middle Ages believed in "the teaching power of the Spirit of God," believed not only that the seven Liberal Arts were fully under the direct outpouring of the Holy Ghost, but that every fruitful idea, every original conception, be it in geometry, or grammar, or music, was directly derived from a Divine source.

The Benefits of a Unified Understanding of Knowledge

Whether we receive it or not, and the Scriptures abundantly support such a theory regarding the occurrence of knowledge, we cannot fail to perceive that here we have a harmonious and ennobling scheme of education and philosophy. Supposing that we accept this medieval philosophy tentatively for present relief, what would be our gains?

1. First, the enormous relief afforded by a sense of unity of purpose, of progressive evolution, in the education of the race.

2. Next, that knowledge, in this light, is no longer sacred and secular, great and trivial, practical and theoretical. All knowledge, dealt out to us in such portions as we are ready for, is sacred; knowledge is, perhaps, a beautiful whole, a great unity, embracing God and man and the universe, but having many parts which are not comparable with

* In Greek mythology, Prometheus was a Titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans.

one another in the sense of less or more, because all are necessary and each has its functions.

3. Next, we perceive that knowledge and the mind of man are to each other as are air and the lungs. The mind lives by means of knowledge; stagnates, faints, perishes, deprived of this necessary atmosphere.

4. That, it is not for a man to choose, "I will learn this or that, the rest is not my concern"; still less is it for parent or schoolmaster to limit a child to less than he can get at of the whole field of knowledge; for, in the domain of mind at least as much as in that of morals or religion, man is under a Divine Master; he has to know as he has to eat.

5. That, there is not one period of life, our school days, in which we sit down to regular meals of intellectual diet, but that we must eat every day in order to live every day.

"With all thy getting, get understanding,"* is the message for our needs, and understanding is, in one sense, the conscious act of the mind in apprehending knowledge, which is in fact relative, and does not exist for any person until that person's mind acts upon the intellectual matter presented to it "Why will ye not understand?" is the repeated and poignant question of the Gospels.

The Great Need for Knowledge

That is what ails us as a nation, we do not understand; not ignorant persons only, but educated men and women, employ fallacious arguments, offer prejudices for principles, and platitudes for ideas. If it be argued that these failures are due less to ignorance than to insincerity, I should reply that insincerity is an outcome of ignorance; the darkened intelligence cannot see clearly. "The day is unto them that know," but knowledge is by no means the facile acquirement of those who, according to Ruskin,† "cram to pass and not to know."

We have, no doubt, arrived at a good starting place, but we may not consider that the journey is accomplished, I need not repeat the charges to which we have laid ourselves open because of our ignorance, but I shall endeavour to take a closer survey of the field of education as regarded from the standpoint of knowledge and the innate

* Proverbs 4:7

† John Ruskin was an English critic of art and society who wrote during Charlotte Mason's lifetime.

affinities existing in the mind with that knowledge which is proper for it. For the present the need is that "abstract knowledge" should present itself to practical persons as the crying demand of the nation; the "mandate," let us say, pronounced by certain general failures to understand the science of relations, and that other neglected form of knowledge, "the science of the proportion of things."

V. Education and the Fullness of Life

A Vital Question—How Ought Men to Live?

We are tired of the man who claims to live his life at the general expense, of the girl who will live hers to her family's annoyance or distress; but there really is a great opportunity open to the nation which will set itself to consider what the life of a man should be and will give each individual a chance to live his life.

We are doing something; we are trying to open the book of nature to children by the proper key—knowledge, acquaintance by look and name, if not more, with bird and flower and tree; we see, too, that the magic of poetry makes knowledge vital, and children and grown-ups quote a verse which shall add blackness to the ashbud, tender wonder to that "flower in the crannied wall," a thrill to the song of the lark. As for the numerous field clubs of the northern towns, the members of which, weavers, miners, artisans, reveal themselves as accomplished botanists, birdmen, geologists, their Saturday rambles mean not only "life," but splendid joy.

In another direction we are doing well; we are so made that every dynamic relation, be it leap-frog or high-flying, which we establish with Mother Earth, is a cause of joy; we begin to see this and are encouraging swimming, dancing, hockey, and so on, all instruments of present joy and permanent health. Again, we know that the human hand is a wonderful and exquisite instrument to be used in a hundred movements exacting delicacy, direction and force; every such movement is a cause of joy as it leads to the pleasure of execution and the triumph of success. We begin to understand this and make some efforts to train the young in the deft handling of tools and the practice of handicrafts.

With the ancient Greeks, we begin to realise that music is a necessary part of education. So, too, of pictorial art; at last we understand that every one can draw, and that, because to draw is delightful, every one should be taught how; that every one delights in pictures, and that education is concerned to teach him what pictures to delight in.

A person may sing and dance, enjoy music and natural beauty, sketch what he sees, have satisfaction in his own good craftsmanship, labour with his hands at honest work, perceiving that work is better than wages; may live his life in various directions, the more the merrier. A certain pleasant play of the intellect attends the doing of all these things; his mind is agreeably exercised; he thinks upon what he is doing, often with excitement, sometimes with enthusiasm. He says, "I must live my life," and he lives it—in as many of these ways as are open to him; no other life is impoverished to supply his fullness, but, on the contrary, the sum of general joy in well-being is increased both through sympathy and by imitation.

Educated Individuals Form a Better Society

This is the sort of ideal that is obtaining in our schools and in the public mind, so that the next generation bid fair to be provided with many ways of living their lives, ways which do not encroach upon the lives of others. Here is the contribution of our generation to the science of education, and it is not an unworthy one; we perceive that a person is to be brought up in the first place for his own uses, and after that for the uses of society; but, as a matter of fact, the person who "lives his life" most completely is also of most service to others because he contains within him provision for many serviceable activities which are employed in living his life; and, besides, there is a negative advantage to the community in the fact that the man is able to live on his own resources.

But a man is not made up only of eyes to see, a heart to enjoy, limbs delightful in the using, hands satisfied with perfect execution: life in all these kinds is open more or less to all but the idly depraved. But what of man's eager, hungry, restless, insatiable mind? True, we teach him the mechanical art of reading while he is at school, but we do not teach him to read; he has little power of attention, a poor vocabulary, little habit of conceiving any life but his own; to add to

the gate-money at a football match is his notion of adventure and diversion.

We are, in fact, only taking count of the purlieus [outskirts] of that vast domain which pertains to every man in right of his human nature. We neglect mind. We need not consider brain; a duly nourished and duly exercised mind takes care of its physical organ provided that organ also receives its proper material nourishment. But our fault, our exceeding great fault, is that we keep our own minds and the minds of our children shamefully underfed. The mind is a spiritual octopus, reaching out limbs in every direction to draw in enormous rations of that which under the action of the mind itself becomes knowledge. Nothing can stale its infinite variety; the heavens and the earth, the past, the present, and future, things great and things minute, nations and men, the universe, all are within the scope of the human intelligence. But there would appear to be, as we have seen, an unsuspected unwritten law concerning the nature of the "material" which is converted into knowledge during the act of apprehension. The idea of the *Logos* did not come by chance to the later Greeks; "The Word" is not a meaningless title applied to the second Person of the Trinity; it is not without significance that every utterance which fell from Him is marked by exquisite literary fitness; in rendering an account of His august commission Christ said: "I have given unto them *the words* which Thou gavest me"; and one disciple voiced the rest when he said, "Thou hast *the words* of eternal life."*

A Living Education Is Founded upon Words and Literature

The Greeks knew better than we that words are more than things, more than events; with all primitive peoples rhetoric appears to have been a power; the grand old sayings which we have scorned as inventions are coming to their own again, because, what modern is capable of such inventions? Men move the world, but the motives which move men are conveyed by words. Now, a person is limited by the number of things he is able to call by their names, qualify by appropriate epithets; this is no mere pedantic ruling, it belongs to that unfathomable mystery we call human nature; and the modern notion of education, with its shibboleth of "things not words," is intrinsically demoraliz-

* John 17:8 and John 6:68, respectively.

ing. The human intelligence demands letters, literature, with a more than bread-hunger.

Faith has grown feeble in these days, hope faints in our heavy ways, but charity waxes strong; we would make all men millionaires if we could, or, at any rate, take from the millionaires to give to the multitude. No doubt some beneficent and venturous Robin Hood of a minister will arise (has arisen?) to take steps in that direction; but when all has been done in the way of social amelioration we shall not have enabled men to "live their lives" unless we have given them a literary education of such sort that they choose to continue in the pleasant places of the mind.

"That is all very well in theory," some one objects, "but look at the Masses, are they able to receive Letters? When they talk it is in journalese and anything in the nature of a book must be watered down and padded to suit their comprehension." But is it not true that working men talk in "journalese" because it is only the newspapers that do them the grace to meet them frankly on their own level? Neither school education nor life has put books in their way, and their adoption of the only literary speech that offers but proves a natural aptitude for Letters. One cannot always avoid appeal to the authority one knows to be final, and I will not apologise for citing the fact, at which no doubt we have wondered, that Christ should expose the profoundest philosophy to the multitude, the "Many," whom even Socrates contemns.

The fact is, Letters make a universal appeal because they respond to certain innate affinities. For working men whose intelligence is in excess of their education, Letters are the accessible vehicle of knowledge; having learned the elements of reading, writing, and summing, it is unnecessary to trouble them with any other "beggarly elements"; their natural intelligence and mature minds make them capable of dealing with difficulties as they occur; and for further elucidation every working men's club should have an encyclopaedia. Some men naturally take to learning, and will struggle manfully with their Latin grammar, and Cicero, their Euclid and trigonometry. Happy they! But the general conclusion remains, that for men and women of all ages, all classes, and all complexions of mind, Letters are an imperative and daily requirement to satisfy that universal mind-hunger, the

neglect of which gives rise to emotional disturbances, and, as a consequence, to evils that dismay us.

VI. Knowledge in Literary Form

Knowledge Must Be Ordered

I have so far urged that knowledge is necessary to men and that, in the initial stages, it must be conveyed through a literary medium, whether it be knowledge of physics or of Letters, because there would seem to be some inherent quality in mind which prepares it to respond to this form of appeal and no other. I say in the initial stages, because possibly, when the mind becomes conversant with knowledge of a given type, it unconsciously translates the driest formulae into living speech; perhaps it is for some such reason that mathematics seem to fall outside this rule of literary presentation; mathematics, like music, is a speech in itself, a speech irrefragibly logical, of exquisite clarity, meeting the requirements of mind.

To consider Letters as the staple of education is no new thing; nor is the suggestion new that to turn a young person into a library is to educate him. But here we are brought to a stand; the mind demands method, orderly presentation, as inevitably as it demands knowledge; and it may be that our educational misadventures are due to the fact that we have allowed ourselves to take up any haphazard ordering that is recommended with sufficient pertinacity.

But no one can live without a philosophy which points out the order, means and end of effort, intellectual or other; to fail in discovering this is to fall into melancholia, or more active madness: so we go about picking up a maxim here, a motto there, an idea elsewhere, and make a patchwork of the whole which we call our principles; beggarly fragments enough we piece together to cover our nakedness and a hundred phrases which one may hear any day betray lives founded upon an ignoble philosophy.

An Ordered Philosophy Will Include Spiritual Knowledge

Human nature has not failed—what has failed us is philosophy, and that applied philosophy which is called education. Philosophy, all the philosophies, old and new, land us on the horns of a dilemma;

either we do well by ourselves and seek our own perfection of nature or condition, or we do well by others to our own loss or deterioration. If there is a mean, philosophy does not declare it.

There are things of which we have desperate need. We want hope. We want a new start. We may be poor things, but we are ready to break forth into singing should the chance open to us of a full life of passionate devotion. Now, all our exigent demands are met by words written in a Book, and by the manifestations of a Person; and we are waiting for a Christianity such as the world has not yet known.

My excuse for touching upon our most intimate concerns is that this matter, too, belongs to the domain of Letters; if we propose to seek knowledge we must proceed in an orderly way, recognising that the principal knowledge is of most importance; the present writer writes and the reader reads, because we are all moved by the spirit of our time; these things are our secret pre-occupation, for we have come out of a long alienation as persons "wearied with trifles," and are ready and anxious for a new age. We know the way, and we know where to find our rule of the road; but we must bring a new zeal and a new method to our studies; we may no longer dip here and there or read a perfunctory chapter with a view to find some word of counsel or comfort for our use. We are engaged in the study of, in noting the development of, that consummate philosophy which meets every occasion of our lives, all demands of the intellect, every uneasiness of the soul.

Let us give at least as profound attention to the teaching of Christ as the disciples of Plato, say, gave to his words of wisdom. Let us read, not for our profiting, though that will come, but for love of that knowledge which is better than thousands of gold and silver. We get new ideas as to the relative worth of things; new vigour, new joy, new hope are ours.

If we believe that knowledge is the principal thing, that knowledge is tri-partite, and that the fundamental knowledge is the knowledge of God, we shall bring up our children as students of Divinity and shall pursue our own life-long studies in the same school. Then we shall find that the weekly sermons for which we are prepared are as bread to the hungry; and we shall perhaps understand how enormous is the demand we make upon the clergy for living, original thought.

It is only as we are initiated that science and "Nature" come to our aid in this chief pursuit; then, they "their great Original proclaim";* but while we are ignorant of the principal knowledge they remain dumb. Literature and history have always great matters to speak of or suggest, because they deal with states or phases of moral government and moral anarchy, and tacitly indicate to us the sole key to all this unintelligible world; and literature not only reveals to us the deepest things of the human spirit, but it is profitable also "for example of life and instruction in manners."

All Kinds of Knowledge Can Be Conveyed in Literary Form

I do not hesitate to say that the whole of a child's instruction should be conveyed through the best literary medium available. His history books should be written with the lucidity, concentration, personal conviction, directness, and admirable simplicity which characterizes a work of literary calibre. So should his geography books; the so-called scientific method of teaching geography now in vogue is calculated to place a child in a somewhat priggish relation to Mother Earth; it is impossible, too, that the human intelligence should assimilate the sentences one meets with in many books for children, but the memory retains them and the child is put in the false attitude of one who offers pseudo-knowledge. Most of the geography books, for example, require to be translated into terms of literature before they can be apprehended. Great confidence is placed in diagrammatic and pictorial representation, and it is true that children enjoy diagrams and understand them as they enjoy and understand puzzles; but there is apt to be in their minds a great gulf between the diagram and the fact it illustrates. We trust much to pictures, lantern slides, cinematograph displays; but without labour there is no profit, and probably the pictures which remain with us are those which we have first conceived through the medium of words; pictures may help us to correct our notions, but the imagination does not work upon a visual presentation; we lay the phrases of a description on our palette and make our own pictures; (works of art belong to another category).

Readings in literature, whether of prose or poetry, should generally illustrate the historical period studied; but selections should

* Quoted from an ode by Joseph Addison, "The Spacious Firmament on High," which appeared in *The Spectator* in 1712.

be avoided; children should read the whole book or the whole poem to which they are introduced. Here we are confronted by a serious difficulty. Plato, we know, determined that the poets in his "Republic" should be well looked after lest they should write matter to corrupt the morals of youth; aware of what happened in Europe when the flood-gates of knowledge were opened, Erasmus was anxiously solicitous on this score, and it is a little surprising to find that here, Rossetti was on the side of the angels.

Will the publishers help us in this matter? They must excise with a most sparing hand, always under the guidance of a jealous scholar; but what an ease of conscience it would be to teachers if they could throw open the world of books to their scholars without fear of the mental and moral smudge left by a single prurient passage!

A Variety of Knowledge Obtained from Books Meets Our Educational Need

In another matter, let that great "remedial thinker," Dr. Arnold, advise us:—"Adjust your proposed amount of reading to your time and inclination; but whether that amount be large or small let it be varied in its kind and widely varied. If I have a confident opinion on any one point connected with the improvement of the human mind it is on this."* Here we get support for a varied and liberal curriculum; and, as a matter of fact, we find that the pupil who studies a number of subjects knows them as well as he who studies a few knows those few.

Children should read books, not about books and about authors; this sort of reading may be left for the spare hours of the dilettante. Their reading should be carefully ordered, for the most part in historical sequence; they should read to know, whether it be *Robinson Crusoe* or Huxley's *Physiography*; their knowledge should be tested, not by questions, but by the oral (and occasionally the written) reproduction of a passage after one reading; all further processes that we concern ourselves about in teaching, the mind performs for itself; and, lastly, this sort of reading should be the chief business in the class room.

If we let the people sink into the mire of a material education our doom is sealed; eyes now living will see us take even a third-rate

* From a letter to C. J. Vaughan which appeared in *The Life of Thomas Arnold* by Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, published in 1844. Thomas Arnold, father of Matthew Arnold, was headmaster of Rugby, a well-known English school.

place among the nations, for it is knowledge that exalteth a nation, because of duly-ordered knowledge proceedeth righteousness and prosperity ensueth.

"Think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well," says our once familiar mentor, Matthew Arnold, and his monition exactly meets our needs.