THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN

PROGRESS IN CHILD AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.

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Productivity in these fields seems to be increasing at the present moment more rapidly in Germany than anywhere else. This is shown partly in the establishment of magazines devoted to the exploitation of new conceptions of child development in either its theoretical or its practical aspects, and partly in the printing of numerous monographs treating of some phase of child or educational psychology. With us there is a steady augmentation in the output of literature relating to the development and training of children, and the principles of education viewed from the psychological standpoint. The suggestion is frequently heard among us now that we are in need of at least two new magazines which should be devoted exclusively to child and educational psychology, and the application of the new views to the detailed processes of teaching.

It is worthy of remark that the greater part of the literature treating of child development and training is being produced in response to the demands of educational organizations of one sort or another. A considerable portion of it is being written with the express view of guiding teachers and parents in the instruction and management of children in and out of school. It will be apparent, then, that this literature is very largely of a 'practical' character. The writer of these notes, in running over the book and magazine literature on child development which has appeared since the special BULLETIN two years ago, has estimated that at least five-sixths of it was written directly for teachers, for parents, for instructors in religious schools, or for women's clubs. Those who are charged with the care and culture of children are to-day asking for help as they have never before

done in any age or country perhaps; and their call is being responded to by persons with the most diverse training and experience in respect to the problems which they undertake to solve. What many of them write is ethically and inspirationally good perhaps (though there are exceptions), but it is scientifically of little or no value. It is based upon sentiment, rather than upon exact knowledge of the native tendencies of the child, or his needs in order that he may attain adjustment to the world of men and things in the most effective way.

It is quite significant that those who are engaged in training the young, whether they be teachers or parents, seem to be much more interested in concrete data pertaining to child life than in logical analyses of ends, values, and processes in education. It would be next to impossible to induce a parents' organization, or a woman's club, or even a typical teachers' association, to study some of the late books on the principles of education, whereas great numbers of such societies everywhere are reading books that discuss the traits and needs of children in a direct, close-at-hand, familiar manner. This latter class of books, while in reality most of them are more or less psychological, yet they do not attempt broad and abstruse generalizations in respect to mental constitution or function. Some of them never refer to the formal processes of sensation, perception, reason, etc. Instead, they treat in a descriptive and objective way (and often in a superficial way) topics such as interests in childhood; the emotional development of children; the social nature of the young; truthfulness among children; obedience; the trend of the 'teens; adolescent love, etc. The analytic and systematic treatment of psychological processes does not seem strongly to attract persons with practical interests, even when 'applications' to the work of training are attempted. To the present writer this is a rather wholesome sign, since it is not easy to see how the formal exposition of psychological principles, which is so common in educational as well as in psychological texts, can be of special service to the art of teaching in any of its forms.

Last summer the writer of these lines listened to a psychologist deliver a few lectures in his field to mature teachers. He devoted the first half-hour of the course to a general criticism of the attempt to make psychology help teaching; and then he proceeded to spend the rest of one week in trying to instruct his auditors how to conduct their work effectively from the psychological standpoint. At the end of the week it was apparent that the lecturer had expressed a profound truth, so far as he was concerned, in the first part of his course. What he taught during the week was probably sound psychology—certainly

it seemed to be in accord with the views of at least one of the leading American psychologists, which was as much as could be expected in the present state of psychological thought. But at the end of the week his class seemed to feel that there was no application to their work which they could make of anything he had said to them. So far as they were concerned the whole thing was mainly verbal. The instructor spent his time expounding the so-called laws of sensation, perception, memory, reason, etc.; but what all he developed had to do with training a living human being, or teaching him cube root, say, or preventing him from whispering to his neighbors in the schoolroom, or encouraging him in doing so if this should be essential to his development, was not in the least apparent.

The present writer came away from those lectures feeling that the lecturer had not the remotest notion of how to apply psychological theory to any of the actual detailed problems of the typical classroom: and yet he was using up the time of teachers for one week, with the result probably that they were rather hindered than helped by his instruction. What was heretofore facile in their art, and more or less instinctive and automatic, would be likely now to become in some measure a matter of conscious effort, and this would be to the detriment of efficiency in practice. These teachers would be feeling that as a matter of conscience they ought in some manner to apply these statements they had written down about the mind, and their attention would in consequence be distracted from the concrete situations before them where their own experience would probably be of chief importance to them. It is a notorious fact that psychologists of the type of this lecturer are in some cases most ineffective teachers. Their familiarity with mental function does not extend to the manifestations thereof occurring under educational stimulation.

As we have not yet devised ways and means for the efficient investigation of the psychology of education considered in all its aspects, so many of us have not yet learned to teach what we do know so that it may affect practice in a vital way. The two things probably go together. If those who expound the psychological foundations of teaching could and would deal in a naturalistic way with actual educative processes as they must occur in the normal development of a human being, the results of such exposition could probably be taught to persons who are making preparation to teach so that their practical bearing would be apprehended. We may as well give up the notion that the study of formal analyses of adult mental function will be of substantial aid in the advancement either of educational theory or of effective practice.

The outlook is brighter in child than in educational psychology, partly because those who are interested in the former field have kept clear of a more or less formal method of procedure such as many of the educationists writing from the psychological standpoint have inherited from the static psychologists from whom they are descended. The students of childhood have come closer to the objects to be investigated than have the educationists of the conventional sort. Their work is more vital, less verbal, more to the point. With all the disadvantages arising from the lack of training of many of them, and from their exuberant enthusiasm and their crude methods, they still accomplish more of real worth than the highly-schooled but technical and formal educationists of the type indicated.

However, it is cause for rejoicing that the principles of education are being developed ever more largely from the standpoint of contemporary concrete and dynamic psychology, in which vital facts are of greater moment than logical system. But while appreciating the advances we are making in treating education as a natural science, still when we compare the little we have achieved with the vast amount left to be done it is not so easy to maintain an optimistic attitude. It would be unsafe to dogmatize in respect to the extent to which we have succeeded in elaborating educational principles according to scientific method, but yet one will run no risk in saying that only a small part of the contemporary literature of education, presented from the psychological standpoint, can be said to have permanent value. Many educational books (not all of them, happily) still treat in one small volume the entire subject of educational ends, values, and processes; and in consequence thereof the treatment is found to be general and more or less verbal. Special studies of merit have been made upon particular phases of education, as in the teaching of reading, for instance; but this sort of work, so much needed at present, has hardly yet got started. There are vast fields of educational theory and practice that have not yet been entered by a psychologist equal to the adventure.

How many competent psychologists, in good and regular standing at home or abroad, have shown any real knowledge of or intelligent interest in the problems of development and education? The fingers on both hands would probably suffice to enumerate them. It is true that a greater number than this have thrown out incidental remarks about 'child study' and teaching, but such observations have not shed much light on the problems in these fields. How many laboratories are there in the world devoted to the study of educational processes accord-

ing to psychological method, and properly equipped to undertake the work in a large and effective way, giving proper attention to normal as well as to sub-normal children? It is doubtful if there is in the whole world one such institution, equipped with proper appliances and well-trained men for psychological investigation, *and with children in every stage of educational development available for observation and experiment.* There are laboratories and competent men in a number of places at home and abroad, and children who are being utilized for experimental purposes in other places; but the writer does not know of any place where the two are brought together, constituting a single unified investigating institution; nor have we forgotten the Practice School at Jena, the laboratories at Crevalcore, Paris, Lyons, and Geneva, the Speyer School in New York, or the Elementary School in Chicago. Of course, educational psychology can be advanced more or less successfully in other ways; but it can never be developed as it should be until men make investigation their main business, and are provided with the essentials thereto, which include *pupils of every type who can be used for experimental purposes.*