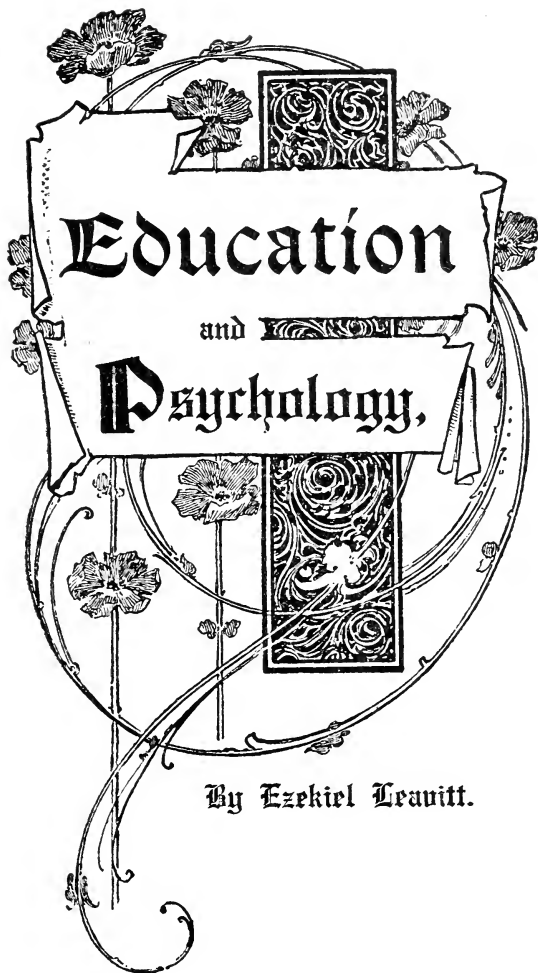


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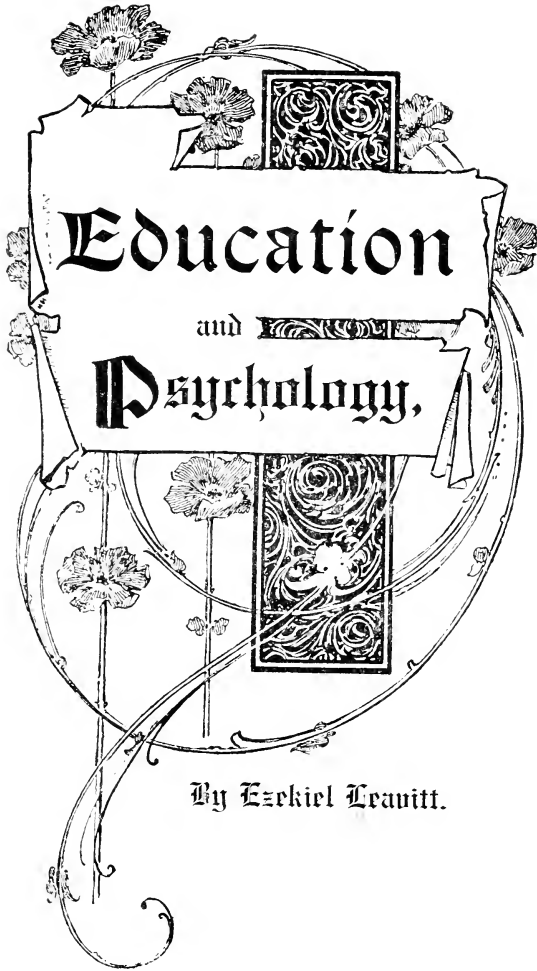
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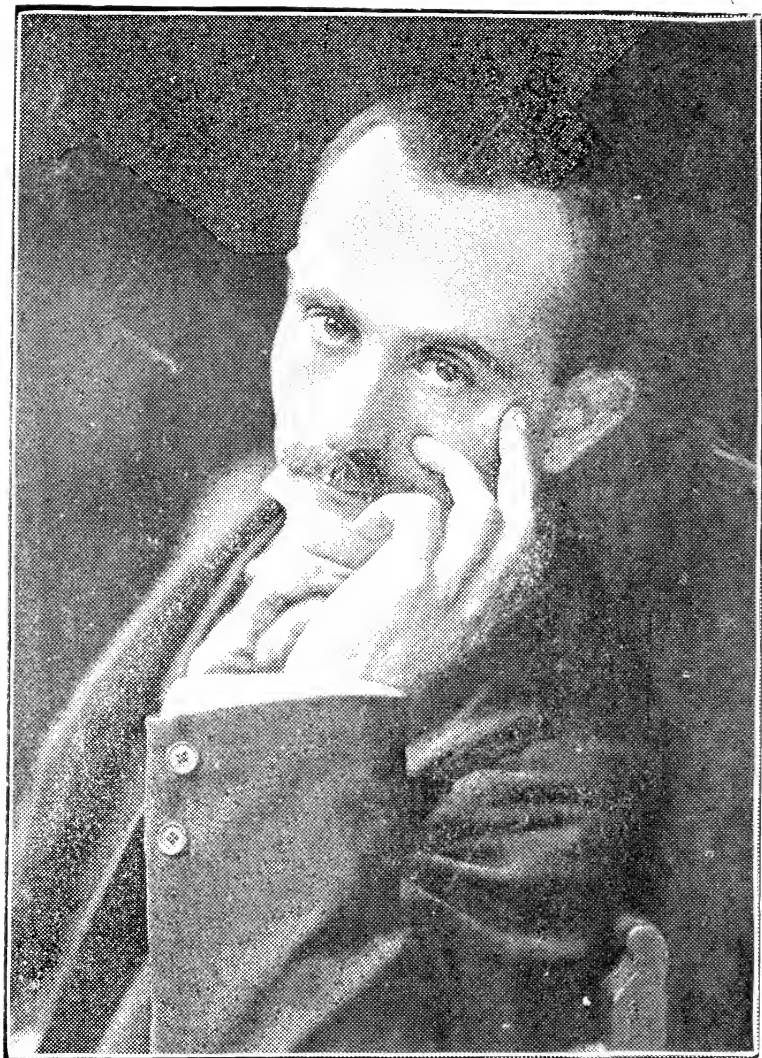
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Psychology,

By Ezekiel Leavitt.

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# EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY.

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"The world is only saved by the breath of the school children."—Talmud.

"No education deserves the name unless it develops thought. A true teacher should penetrate to whatever is vital in his pupil, and develop that by the light and heat of his own intelligence."—E. P. Whipple.

Psychology is a science describing and explaining mental phenomena. Now since Education aims to train the mind, the science of Education ought to make fullest possible use of every branch of Psychology. There is a close interdependence between these two sciences, the purposes of Education still supreme in determining what is to be taught, yet depending upon the results of Psychology to show how and in what order the different subjects shall be taught.

Before proceeding further with my views of the relation between the two sciences, I wish to disclaim any attempt to show that with a full knowledge of Psycholog-

ical theories, would come a full solution of all the perplexing educational problems of the day. I do not expect to attain any formulas tending to simplify and mechanize the work of teachers. Far from this is my position; for I strongly urge that a full appreciation of the relation of the two sciences would tend more than anything else to vitalize the increasing interest of teachers in their pupils.

The fad of the last few years, the great pretensions made for the good derived from the application of Psychology to Education has been extravagant. We ought not, however, to condemn utterly this wild enthusiasm for a fad, if you will; for much good can be seen resulting from it. We must point out its extravagances and abuses, and then more diligently make use of its great truths.

When, in the early eighties of the nineteenth century, it was perceived how widespread was the discontent with the methods of the Normal Schools, investigation showed that a knowledge of the principles of teaching was necessary to get teachers out of their mechanical rut into vital originality of teaching. Psychology was looked upon as being able to give the required help to flexibility and adaptability. Everywhere throughout the country came this tremendous enthusiasm for a science, which dealt with those aspects of mental life connected with the production of changes in human beings by consciously



directed human influences. This was the hope entertained of the educational psychology, which it was believed would provide the teacher with methods obtained from a consideration of psychological laws of learning. There was, however, little practical return from this new enthusiastic attempt.

There are many reasons for this. First of all the psychology taught was erroneous, unfit to bring any practical results. It was the "old faculty psychology," the training of the imagination, the memory, etc. The mind was conceived as made up of so many faculties; and learning dates for instance meant cultivating the memory faculty, learning poetry the imagination. These faculties were supposed to be unified by the self. This was the one great fault which brought about a reaction against the study of psychology as a factor in education. Another difficulty and a more serious one was our discovery that we knew in reality very little about psychology. It was just beginning to get out of the metaphysical and into the scientific field, and was not sufficiently advanced to give man, engaged in the control of human forces, much more useful knowledge than he could obtain by observation of his own special problems, and by common sense inferences from what he sees in daily life. The man who has brought out clearly and forcibly that the field of educational psychology is small, yet very important, is Pro-

fessor James, of Harvard University; but many new facts have been urged since the appearance of his book.

I will now point out what I think educational psychology can and is doing in helping us to improve our school systems of teaching. The aim is (a) to get students to look upon the mind as working according to definite laws. The student is to be the observing naturalist, and the teacher is to look upon the pupil as a reacting mind, working according to definite laws. In other words the aim is that the interest in the human organism would arouse the habit of recognizing laws of mind as well as of matter; (b) educational psychology aims to stimulate interest to find these laws. We are to learn to introspect to find that the important law of association, for instance, will interpret the causes for the sequence of ideas in a reverie as well as in conscious memory. We are to recognize that education can make most important use of this law of association in helping the training and development of the pupil; (c) educational psychology can teach at what period memory for crude facts is best, when the power for abstract thinking comes, what are the periods for the peculiar mental traits of scepticism, melancholy, and the like.

It is the business of the psychologist to investigate, the duty of the teacher to know what has been found out

and to apply such knowledge as it fits his own peculiar conditions. There is a tremendous lot of work to be done to show the importance of the problems, to show how little we know of them, and therefore how important it is to investigate. This, however, is the work of the psychologist, the educational theorist, and not of the teacher. The possession of laws already worked out, the habit of looking upon the child as a living thing working according to laws will give new interest to the teacher in the children as individuals, with their own peculiar traits in conjunction with the characteristics of all.

The teacher needs interest in the mental life of his scholars, from the point of view of interpretation and appreciation of their mental states. The teacher must learn to understand the individual desires and ambitions and characters of his pupils; for without this sympathy there is no interest, and the work is necessarily routine. Psychology offers general recommendations concerning the best ways to get girls and boys to study, to observe, to attend, to understand, remember and apply knowledge. It gives help on how to form habits, develop power and capacity. It forces the teacher to consider the physical conditions, if he wishes the best mental results. The teacher must consider questions of hygiene, of light, of air, of refreshment, of fatigue and other questions of the same bearing, which show that the condition of our

health is a great determining factor in the comprehension of the mental life. Psychology teaches us not to project our own state of consciousness into the child and imagine that we know the child. We want to get what the child is, not what we think it is. Psychology will help in pointing out the true method for the development of the mind of the child.

There are three ways, three special lines of psychological knowledge which can influence the practical working of education.

I. The psychology of children shows facts about instinctive tendencies, the gradual maturing of capacities, tendencies useful and harmful in children's habits of observing, associating, and reasoning, facts concerning the kinds and amount of knowledge children may be expected to possess at different ages and under different conditions. It points out the relation of the mental to the physical well being. Psychology furnishes us with the results of inquiry into nature, and the amount of individual differences. We learn to consider the relative shares of original nature and experience in the formation of human intellect and character. Those who plan educational systems and construct programs of studies for schools and select methods for teaching, now find it to their advantage to take account of the relationship be-

tween various factors in education and certain traits of the human mind. The increased knowledge of individual differences makes the attempt to get every one in class on the same level of achievement futile.

II. The knowledge of psychology teaches the educator the great guide he can be in shaping the characters of scholars. Each one is able to shape mental life; for man is more nearly master of his own intellect than of anything else in nature. The mind is readily influenced for the nervous system is very modifyable. This general law of the modifyability of the mind by every thought and feeling and act of man's life is the most important of practical lessons of psychology. What we are depends on what we were in the past. Psychology shows that every thought, and act of life counts, that we build the ladder by which we climb, that nothing happens by chance. Man not only creates his own future; but in some measure his own present by his power of selecting what features of his surroundings shall influence him. The psychology of attention then teaches that we are as truly rulers as victims of circumstances.

III. Another of the practical problems is to conduct life so as to think and act rightly with as little effort or strain possible. Psychology offers help in two ways: (a) Tension and effort are lessened by arranging circum-

stances that undesirable ideas and impulses will seldom appear. If the child, for instance, finds it hard to study and concentrate the mind in the midst of the family circle, he should have a room where no distracting noises could serve to disturb him.

(b) Intelligent workers soon learn that discretion is the better part of valor—that to avoid temptation is wiser than to resist it. Then it is not always true that the harder work we make of our mental tasks the better we do it. Success is measured by the amount done, not by the feelings experienced in doing it. The best men morally are those who do right without a moral struggle.

Again the relation of psychology to education makes its best practical application, when a system of education finds its best results in making use of the powers of the child according to the order and the strength of their development, and in endeavoring to direct those powers into right directions.

Psychology shows the educator that from its first years until the ages of six or seven the child is more or less the sport of circumstances, that the mind is passive, that there is very little voluntary attention. From this time until about fourteen the mind becomes more and more

active. It is not only acted upon by environment, but reacts upon it. Sensation and perception are now stored in a working memory. A thing well learned at this age is rarely forgotten. The judgment gradually becomes more reliable, the reasoning begins, and the feelings are kept more under control. The will develops rapidly often causing self assertiveness at this age. From this time until the ages of twenty or thereabout, the mind becomes more subjective, it systematizes the knowledge of previous years. The verbal memory is weak. The aid of judgment is now invoked to memory. The spontaneous feelings are more and more subject to will and intellect. Man is less and less influenced by environment. Development leads from dependence to independence. Education in promoting the development of the mind will accomplish most by following the path of least resistance—that is by making use of the psychological analysis of the development of the mind.

This leads us to a consideration of the educational value of voluntary and involuntary attention; for herein lies the difference between the old and the new school of education. Once effort was everything, interest nothing; but it is found that will power implied in effort is lacking in young children. Keeping this in mind, teachers now rely on interest for securing attention, because little children, it is found, have little will power, and are incapable

of prolonged effort. We also know that the feelings of children are fairly well developed, and it is therefore easier to excite the feelings by interest than by trying to make them put forth effort. It is the degree and not the cause of attention which gives the depth of an impression. It is seen that we now attempt to make our teaching interesting by working in harmony with the characteristics of the child's mind at the respective stages of development. I will grant, however, that many have embraced the new system too thoroughly and are overlooking the fact that we must inculcate habits of attention. We must always guard, therefore, against the dangers of the too easy education which excludes effort.

Psychology shows us that interest may be promoted by a changing or enlarging environment, and by increasing the knowledge of things already in the environment. It is then a problem of discovering at what age the pupil is sensitive to certain phases of his surroundings; and to determine what methods would increase the knowledge of things in his environment.











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