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for a World Adrift

Sir Richard Livingstone

Frontmatter

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ON EDUCATION

THE FUTURE IN EDUCATION
AND
EDUCATION FOR A WORLD ADRIFT



BY
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 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS

Preface to this edition *page ix*

THE FUTURE IN EDUCATION

Preface to the first edition 3

I The Educational Problem 7

The achievement and the failure of our educational system, p. 7:
 Most of the population withdrawn from all education at 15: this
 an absurdity and a disaster, p. 8

II An Ignored Educational Principle 12

A vital principle of education, p. 12: Aristotle on the unfitness of the
 young for political or philosophical study, p. 13: Newman on two
 kinds of apprehension, p. 14: Illumination of literature by experience
 illustrated from Thucydides, Tacitus, Shakespeare, p. 17: Chesterfield
 on cross-fertilisation of theory and experience, p. 20: Application of
 this to education, p. 21: The value and limitations of the study of
 history, politics and kindred subjects at school and university,
 p. 22: Inert ideas in education, p. 31

III The Way Out 33

How is the mass of the population to be educated? Inadequacy of
 raising the school-age or of 'secondary education for all', p. 33:
 The way out lies through part-time continued education followed
 by Adult Education, p. 37: Capacity for intellectual and artistic
 interests widespread; this illustrated by recent developments, p. 39:
 The model of the Danish People's High Schools, p. 41: Their three
 secrets; they are (a) for adults, (b) residential and social institutions,
 (c) inspired by spiritual ideals, p. 44: Their influence on Danish
 agriculture and politics, p. 52: Can their system be adapted to our
 conditions? p. 54: How Adult Education might develop here, p. 57

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for a World Adrift

Sir Richard Livingstone

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

IV Cultural Studies in Adult Education *page* 59

Liberal education defined, p. 59: Scientific and Humanist elements in it, p. 63: Problem of interesting the average man in history and literature; history as treated in the Danish P.H.S. and in the Bible, p. 65: Literature as (a) enlargement of experience, (b) interpretation of life, p. 69: Adult Education and our spiritual chaos, p. 74

V Adult Education for the Educated 76

The absurdity of ceasing systematic education on leaving school or university, p. 76: Bad effects of our present practice, p. 78: How to keep the middle-aged young, p. 80: Need to study religion, morals and politics in later life, p. 81: Is Adult Education for the educated practicable? Recent experiments in it, p. 83: The part to be played in it by (a) the Universities, (b) the State and Public Bodies, p. 85: Value of such study to the Social Sciences; Nuffield College, p. 88

Postscript. Secondary Education: 92
A Criticism

Moral and intellectual chaos of Western Civilisation, p. 92: Due to the weakening of Christianity and Hellenism, the two influences from which it draws its spiritual life, p. 94: How can education help? Its present chaos and need of co-ordination, p. 95: Importance in education of distinguishing Means and Ends, p. 97: Literature and history as sources of Ends, p. 100: Philosophy of life to be derived from study of Greek thought and of Christianity, p. 102

EDUCATION FOR A WORLD ADRIFT

Preface to the first edition 109

I The Problem 115

An age of change, p. 115: Its double problem, material and spiritual, p. 118: Democracy may not help us, p. 120: Lack of standards in the pre-war world, p. 121: Our double revolution, political and spiritual, p. 126: The weakening of spiritual influences by the spirit of criticism; contrast between the Victorian and post-Victorian ages, p. 127: A balance-sheet, p. 131: Need of the 'science of good and evil', p. 133

Cambridge University Press

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for a World Adrift

Sir Richard Livingstone

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

- II Character and its Training** *page* 135
 The virtues and defects of our education, p. 135: Its failure to impart values and its unconscious utilitarianism, p. 137: Inadequate suggestions for integrating it, p. 141: The residential school—its success and failure in training character, p. 143: The triple task of education, p. 148: Importance of its spiritual side, p. 149: Need of a vision of the first-rate, p. 151
- III The Training of Character through History and Literature** 156
 Education as spiritual training, p. 156: Use of history for this purpose, p. 158: Triple strand in progress—political, scientific, spiritual, p. 159: Different types in spiritual life, p. 162: Use of literature, p. 163: Corrupting influences in history and literature, p. 168: Necessity of moral judgements in history, p. 172: Moral judgements in literature; objections to expurgation; Fitzgerald and Housman, p. 173
- IV From Atmosphere to Reason** 182
 Plato on early education as a training in right habits, p. 182: Need of a definite philosophy; but what philosophy? p. 183: Common elements in the spiritual life of Western civilisation; Greek thought and Christianity creators of the soul of our civilisation, p. 184: Greek thought as an introduction to natural religion and morals; the ideal of ‘virtue’, p. 186: Religious education; the teaching of Christianity, p. 193: W. Lippmann on the weakness in modern education, p. 196: Danger of ‘tyrannising’ over the mind, p. 198
- V Two Dragons in the Road** 203
 Hindrances to education; (a) bad effect of examinations on teacher and pupil, p. 203; and on the curriculum, p. 205: Their importance tends to increase; essential to diminish it, p. 207: (b) bad effect of specialisation, p. 209: Dewey criticised, p. 211: The remedy, p. 212
- VI Education for Citizenship** 214
 Greece the mother of education for citizenship; our neglect of it, p. 214: Citizenship defined; need for training in it, p. 217: Three elements in such training: (a) ‘civics’; its limitations; need for it at the adult stage, p. 218: (b) a vision of the ideal; Thucydides on patriotism, Plato on the State as a family, p. 223: (c) citizenship learnt by living as a citizen; education in it given to the British by religion, history and other agencies, p. 226: The influence of the residential school, p. 228: The nursery school, day school and newer universities, p. 229: Future provision for training in citizenship, p. 231

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[More information](#)

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PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

This volume contains two books which were originally published separately. A few minor changes have been made to bring statistics, etc. up-to-date.

Education for a World Adrift is an attempt to consider what education can do to remedy the lack of standards and clear beliefs which is the most dangerous weakness of the Western world. *The Future in Education* was the fruit of reflection on the results of our present educational system. We might with advantage more often consider how far it misses or achieves its aims. As it is, we are like doctors who administer doses from a number of stock medicines but never ask what effect they have on the health of their patients. The treatment is reasonably successful with a small minority, but the rest leave our surgeries with no desire to take any more of the medicines which we think indispensable to their health, and often with a strong aversion to them. The real benefit of school life—and it is a great benefit—is its effect on the character, the result of living an ordered life under discipline and in good conditions. But the other aims for which schools are supposed to exist are very imperfectly attained by most of their pupils. It is not a question of what the ordinary boy or girl knows or does not know, when they leave school; it is a question of the interests and tastes which they carry with them into life. Here our education fails. If anyone thinks this too pessimistic a view, let him consider the cheaper London newspapers and the average film, which presumably reflect the tastes of the ordinary citizen; let him note the appeal of ‘the comics’; let him observe what passengers in trains are reading, and ask what percentage

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[More information](#)

PREFACE

of the population ever read anything worth while; let him listen to the complaints of the Workers' Educational Association that the number of those working men who wish to attend their classes is diminishing. We have got a political democracy, but not yet an educated one. That is our problem. It cannot be solved without adult education.

The public as a whole does not yet realise this. It regards education as something for childhood and adolescence and perhaps for a few years more, and fancies that all will be well if we extend and improve our school system. That no doubt is desirable, but the example of America where the school leaving-age is 16 and often 18, and where some two and a half millions attend College, shows that such remedies do not cure the disease; for, to put it mildly, the American nation is not better educated than our own.

But the tide is slowly changing. Perhaps the most striking educational development in Britain since the war is the foundation of more than twenty Residential Colleges for Adult Education, most of them sponsored by Local Education Authorities, some by universities, some by bodies like the Y.M.C.A. and the Women's Institutes, one or two by private enterprise. In view of the difficulties of finance and building, this is remarkable. And outside the residential field, there is the much larger volume of work carried on by voluntary bodies, and by Local Education Authorities under the provisions for 'Further Education' in the Butler Act. Though there is far to go and progress is slow, we are moving on the road which leads to an educated democracy.

R. W. LIVINGSTONE

4 June 1953