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EDUCATION**

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF A  
BRAVE AND ABLE SOLDIER AND DEAR SON  
GILBERT EDGAR ADAMSON, M.C.  
LIEUTENANT MIDDLESEX REGIMENT  
WHO WAS  
KILLED IN ACTION BEFORE CROISILLES  
AUGUST 24TH 1918

*ἀνδρίζεσθε*

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# A SHORT HISTORY OF EDUCATION

BY

JOHN WILLIAM ADAMSON,  
PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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## PREFACE

A TITLE-PAGE bearing the words *A Short History of Education* would seem either to promise an ambitious work or to imply a narrow conception of education. The author hopes that neither alternative can be fairly ascribed to this book. He would be the last to regard education as a close preserve which solely concerns schools, colleges and universities; he would urge rather that these are but the agents of the national life which makes them, and employs them, amongst many other educative instruments, in accordance with its own genius and ideals. On the other hand, his powers are not equal to producing a history of civilization, or of culture, or even the story of all the influences which, through the ages, have been brought to bear upon the young within the daily life of some particular community. His book makes no pretence to be a "History of Education," if the term denotes a survey of the evolution of human culture generally and in particular of the schools of all known civilizations, ancient and modern, European and Asiatic. He even ventures to doubt whether the material for a trustworthy history of that comprehensive sort is yet available. In any case, such a work could not profitably be "short."

Yet, while recognizing to the full the restricted sphere in education occupied by schools and their like, it still remains true that these institutions exist and that they have a history. By their very nature, they tend to reflect the life, especially the social, economic and political life, of the larger world about them. The several communities of that world exhibit so many and such important differences in their national development, that perforce the historian must run his matter into national moulds, giving us not "History," but a history of Greece, of England, of France, of some particular nation. Similarly, the history of education is best narrated under national forms, an arrangement which is also convenient for study and indispensable for research. This book, therefore, treats primarily of English education and its agencies.

Nevertheless, much of western history forms one connected story. No one of its societies, however distinct, has lived its life entirely apart; and from time to time the unity of the forces at work amongst them has become manifest. There are periods in our own history, for example, which are unintelligible, if contemporary foreign history is ignored. In like manner, the fortunes of our

educational institutions can only be followed with understanding, when due attention is paid to what was happening to contemporary education abroad, and to those foreign tendencies, ideas and activities which affected later educational history in this and other countries. The effect of English principles and practice upon those of our neighbours belongs to the same story.

The present work, then, attempts to set forth briefly the progress of English educational institutions, taking account of such domestic and foreign conditions as have had a direct bearing upon English education. All western education to-day bears the impress of two great powers, the Roman Empire and the Christian Church; and through these a third power, the intellectual life of Greece, has operated. The fact gives a certain unity to the education of Christendom which is the more striking in times when the various nations were less self-conscious than they are to-day. The earlier chapters of the book are therefore less specifically English than the later. But, beginning with the fifteenth century, the narrative becomes increasingly English in its survey; it closes at the opening of the twentieth century.

The references which have been freely given in the footnotes do not of course fully discharge the author's debt to others, who are indeed too many for separate mention. But students of English education will recognize that the book owes much to the late Arthur Francis Leach, who was one of the first to make us understand that the History of Education is not coincident, point for point, with the history of opinions concerning what education ought to be. Nor is it constituted by a loosely-knitted collection of biographies of eminent theorizers or practical teachers, however "inspiring" to their readers these biographies may chance to prove. Mr Leach did very much by his own writings and by his editorial labours to reveal the past of our educational institutions, to correct mistakes as to their history and to help students to trace the process of educational development. The author believes that this is not only a truer view of what constitutes the history of education, but that it is also a much more instructive one.

J. W. A.

LONDON,  
*August, 1919.*

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