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978-1-316-63321-2 — Steps towards Educational Reform
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STEPS TOWARDS
EDUCATIONAL REFORM

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR
IMPROVING OUR NATIONAL SYSTEM

by

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Cambridge:
at the University Press
1913

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316633212

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First published 1913

First paperback edition 2016

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-316-63321-2 Paperback

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PREFACE

WE are promised in the King's Speech (March 1913) a Bill for the development of a National System of Education. The Bill is eagerly expected, and much is hoped from it. The object of this little book of essays is to show that unless the Bill succeeds in making the most of the movement for reform springing from the schools themselves, it can but grant opportunities which will be incompletely utilised; and will fail to produce the Utopia some people conceive as likely to be created by it. What is required is to give a new energy, and a liberal support to the whole work of Education in all its grades; to inspire it with higher ideals; to lend encouragement to what is now good and suggestive in it; to inhibit and restrain what is now injudicious and ineffective.

There is a mistaken idea in the community that State organisation and subsidy can do this and all things else beside. The writer wishes to show how mistaken this view is. Further, that there is a distinct danger in increasing bureaucratic control; and that without more light and life in the schools themselves, further educational facilities will certainly mean more complicated organisation, but will not necessarily bring increased efficiency. There is always the danger of getting by legislation "the contortions of the Sibyl, without the inspiration."

It is strongly held by many well able to judge, that the general vigour of English Education has not increased with increased administrative activity. Some of the best features of a less highly organised state of affairs have disappeared. English Education requires at the present time something to increase its vitality and freshness. It is like a patient who is somewhat stale in tone, and requires change of air, nourishment and a tonic ; but may get instead of these merely more visits from the doctor. Its immediate needs are a health-giving faith from the general public, the nourishment of increased State aid and the tonic of a better knowledge of Educational Science ; let us hope that it will not get instead of these a further development of officialdom.

An experience bringing the writer into contact with schools of varying types and with teachers of all classes may, it is hoped, be considered some excuse for his rushing in with certain definite practical proposals where others display a more angelic reticence. He hopes that the Bill will give the craftsman a new sense of power, the idealist further scope for activity ; but he believes that in Reform from within is to be found the only effective guarantee that additional national expenditure will result in a better national system of Education.

C. W. B.

10 *May* 1913

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TO JOHN M_{Ac}CUNN