

A PHILOSOPHY OF
EDUCATION

by Charlotte Mason

ANNOTATED
EDITION

ANNOTATED BY RACHEL LEBOWITZ

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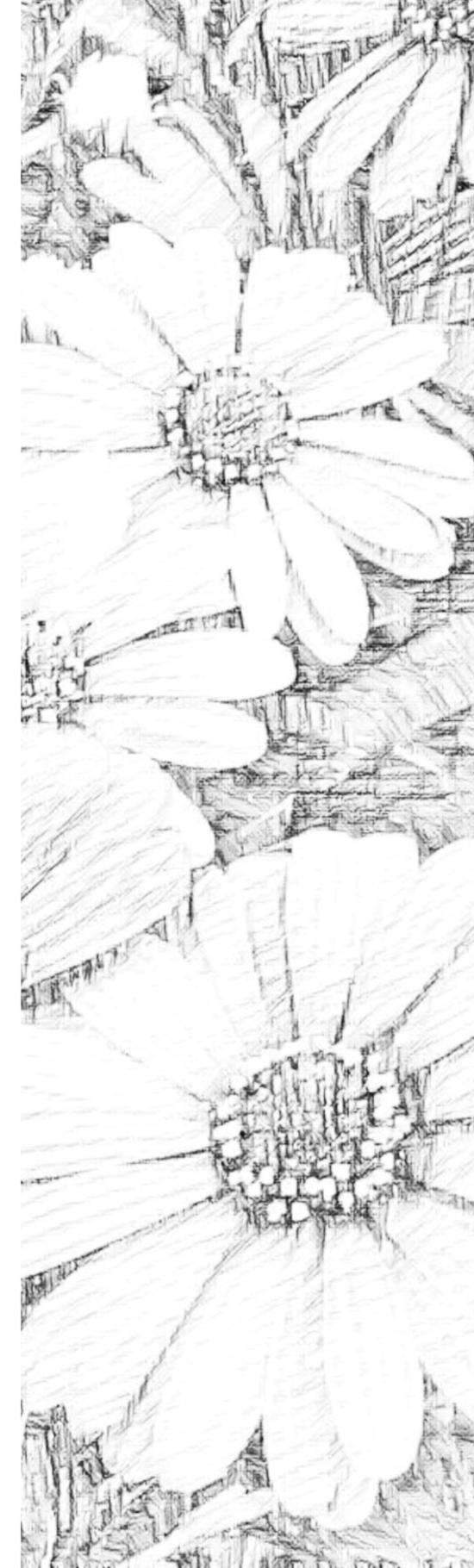
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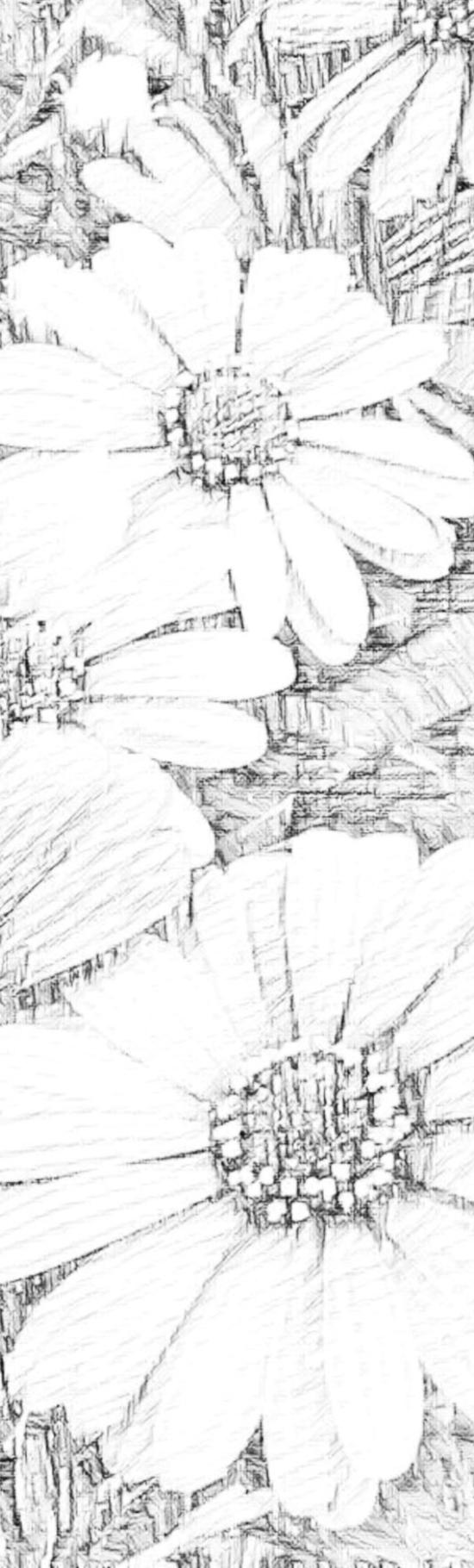
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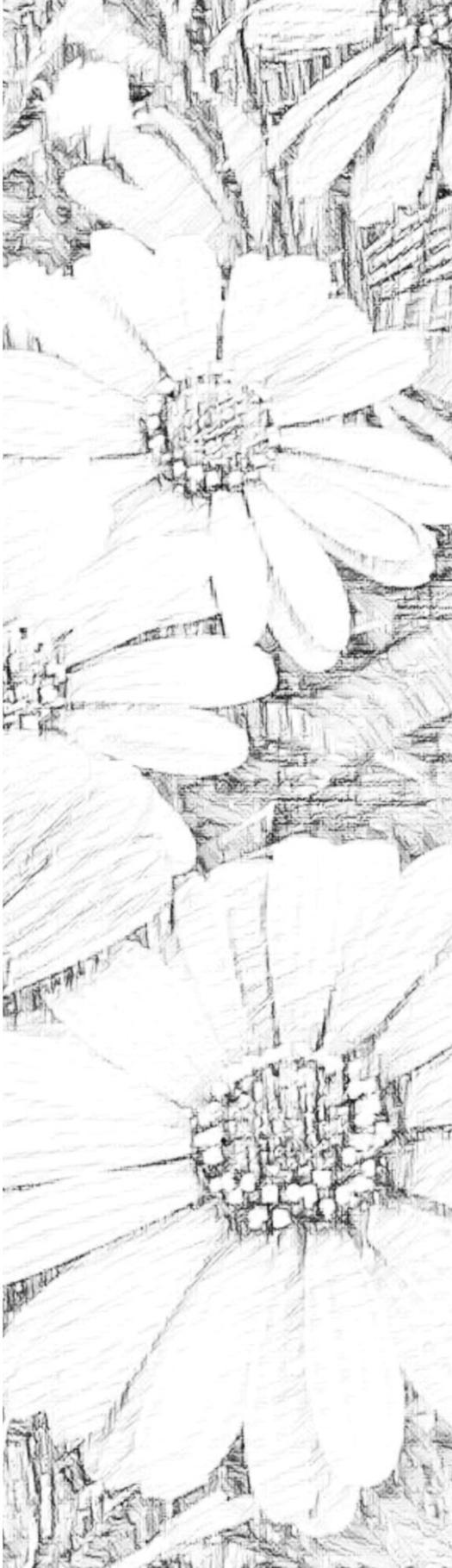
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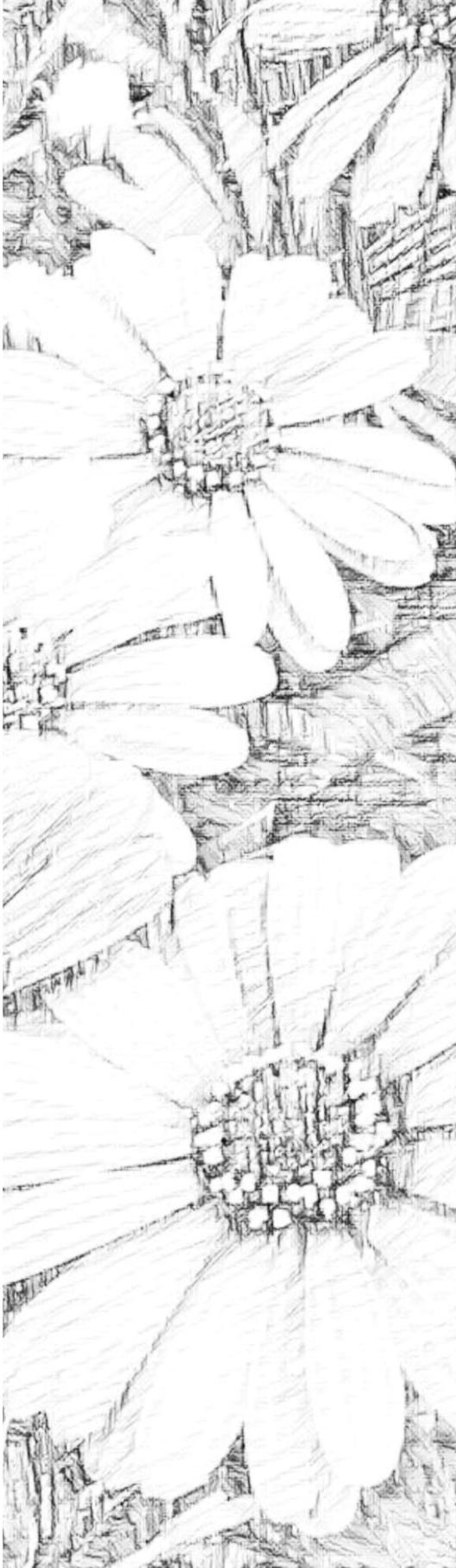
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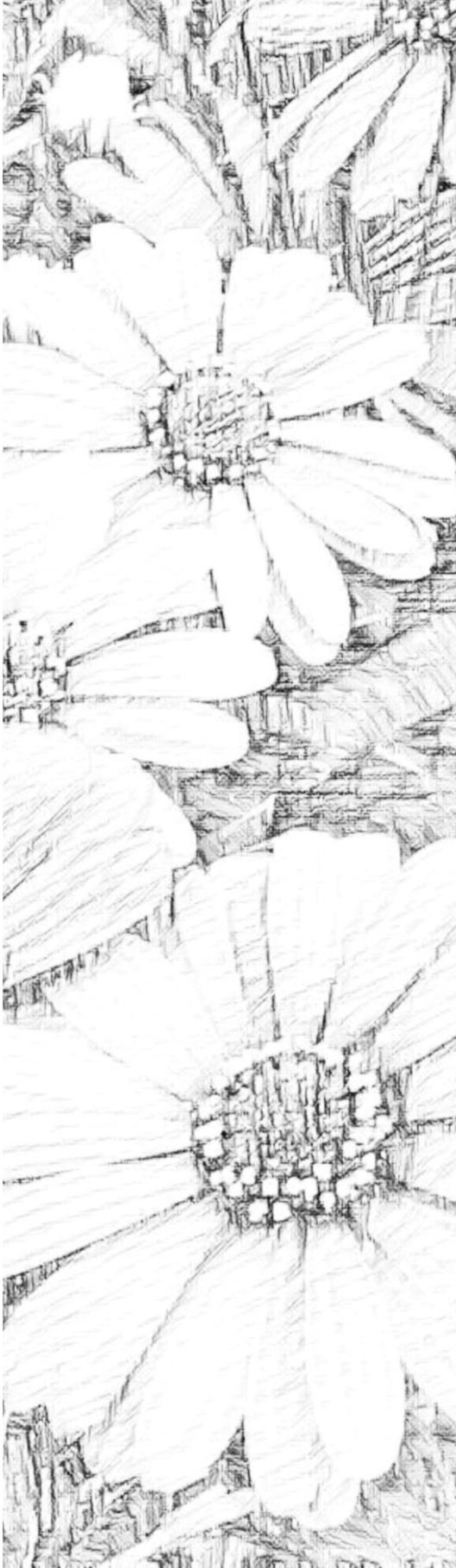


Introduction

from

A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY





Introduction from

A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY

Thank you for choosing the Annotated Edition of Charlotte Mason's sixth Volume, *A Philosophy of Education* published by A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY.

This edition includes the full, unabridged text of Charlotte Mason's original Volume. All her words and wisdom have been retained while, at the same time, certain updates have been made for modern readers.

The text has been updated with a modern font that is easier to read.

American spellings, not British, are used throughout.

The original page numbers, as published in earlier editions of Charlotte's volumes, are in the margins so you can easily cross-reference other editions or study guides.

Annotations have been added.

The annotations provide context to help you better understand Charlotte's frequent references to the people, events, and culture of her time. The annotations also define obscure vocabulary and phrases.

For ease of reading, Charlotte's text is in the inner column and THE PLENARY annotations are in the outer column.

Charlotte wrote her six volumes of the *Home Education Series* from 1885-1921. Her frequent references can leave today's reader a bit frustrated, as she assumed that her readers would understand the context for each person, event, or book that she mentions. Without that context, the wisdom of her words can seem veiled and inaccessible for many readers.

My goal in adding annotations is to highlight Charlotte’s text and make it easier to read so that you gain a deeper understanding of her words and meaning. Once you understand the references and the context, it is like the “a-ha” moment or the key to unlocking the gate. You are no longer bogged down with unfamiliar terminology and references. The words soar.

However, in keeping with Charlotte’s principles, I did not think it correct to interpret her words, so you will not find any opinions or speculations as to her meanings. I want you to make your own connections with her writing; to make the connections that are personal and meaningful to you. As with living books and narration, what you connect with may be different than what I might connect with, and that is the beauty of Charlotte’s method. It is personal to *you*.

CHARLOTTE MASON YOUR WAY

My motto at THE PLENARY is “CHARLOTTE MASON YOUR WAY” because the method will, and should, look different in every home. It’s important to understand that it is a *method* and not a system. I hope you will find this Annotated Edition helpful in understanding and implementing Charlotte’s method in a way that is *personally meaningful to you and your family*.

A Charlotte Mason education is so life-giving, so peaceful, relaxing, and joyful. My wish for you is that you and your children find room to breathe, to think, and to contemplate as you sit down to the feast of this education. May you have unhurried, uncomplicated, “smooth and easy days.”

These are the things we owe our children; the things we owe ourselves. And these are the things that I love about a Charlotte Mason education; that this style of life is simple, relaxed, unhurried, and brings peace of mind. It gives us room to find the path; our *own* path.





INTRODUCTION TO THE ANNOTATED EDITION

To that end, this resource was created with much love and respect for Charlotte and for you; to make it easier to enjoy the beautiful education that is the Charlotte Mason method. It comes from my home to yours with much love and appreciation. I hope you will enjoy using it as much as I have enjoyed creating it.

VOLUME 6 AUDIOBOOK

To make things even easier for you, I have recorded an audiobook of Charlotte's *Philosophy of Education*. As busy parents, we all know how difficult it can be to find the time to actually sit down and read. Now you can listen to Charlotte's words on-the-go or while multi-tasking!

The audiobook includes most of the annotations listed in the Annotated Edition. I narrate the audiobook myself, so please forgive the occasional mispronunciation of names, places, and any phrases in foreign languages!

You can find the Volume 6 Audiobook on The Plenary website and at other audiobook retailers.

CHARLOTTE MASON RESOURCES

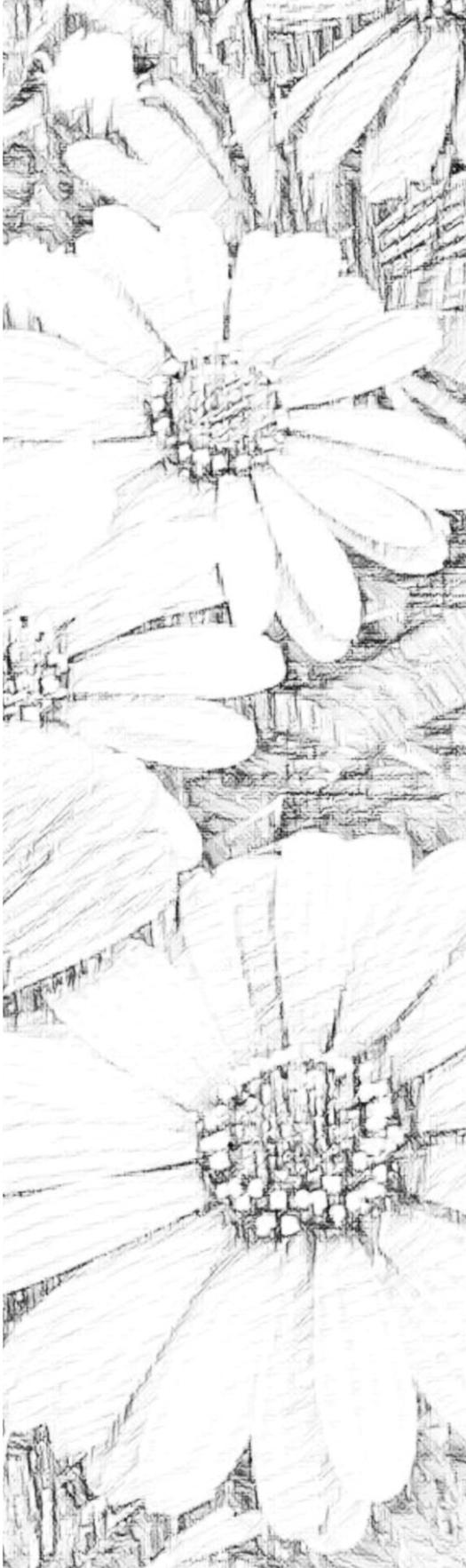
For a complete, up-to-date list of books and study guides, or for more information about the Charlotte Mason method of education, please see THE PLENARY website at CMPLINARY.COM.

With much love,

Rachel Lebowitz

A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY





A Special Invitation

FROM A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY

THE VOLUME 6 COMPANION COURSE & ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUP

You are invited to join a special COMPANION COURSE AND ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUP as you read *A Philosophy of Education*, which will help you get the most out of your time with Charlotte's last, and final, book.

The VOLUME 6 COMPANION COURSE includes additional resources such as:

- Overview videos for each chapter
- Videos on using the CM method with special needs children
- Downloadable PDF Study Guide
- Links to resources mentioned in the Annotated Edition
- Private Online Facebook group for discussion and questions

The content of the course is organized based on each chapter within *A Philosophy of Education*, making it easy for you to find what you need to enhance your understanding of Charlotte's philosophy and method. I hope you will join me.

For more information or to join the Companion Course, visit the following link:

CMPLINARY.COM/COURSES



Preface

Preface

It would seem a far cry from *Undine* to a 'liberal education' but there is a point of contact between the two; a soul awoke within a water-sprite at the touch of love; so, I have to tell of the awakening of a 'general soul' at the touch of knowledge. Eight years ago the 'soul' of a class of children in a mining village school awoke simultaneously at this magic touch and has remained awake. We know that religion can awaken souls, that love makes a new man, that the call of a vocation may do it, and in the age of the Renaissance, men's souls, the general soul, awoke to knowledge: but this appeal rarely reaches the modern soul; and, notwithstanding the pleasantness attending lessons and marks in all our schools, I believe the ardor for knowledge in the children of this mining village is a phenomenon that indicates new possibilities. Already many thousands of the children of the Empire had experienced this intellectual conversion, but they were the children of educated persons. To find that the children of a mining population were equally responsive seemed to open a new hope for the world. It may be that the souls of all children are waiting for the call of knowledge to awaken them to delightful living.

This is how the late Mrs. Francis Steinthal, who was the happy instigator of the movement in Council Schools, wrote, "Think of the meaning of this in the lives of the children – disciplined lives, and no lawless strikes, justice, an end to class warfare, developed intellects, and no market for trashy and corrupt literature! We shall, or rather they will, live in a redeemed world." This was written in a moment of enthusiasm on hearing that a certain County Council had accepted a scheme of work for this pioneer school; enthusiasm sees in advance the fields white to the harvest, but indeed the event is likely to justify high expectations. Though less than nine years have passed

Undine is a book by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué in which a water spirit must marry a human in order to gain a soul. An English translation of the story was published in 1909 by William Leonard Courtney and illustrated by Arthur Rackham. Author George MacDonald once said that *Undine* was "the most beautiful" of all fairy tales.

The mining village Charlotte speaks of was in Drighlington, England. Emeline Steinthal first proposed that the school there might help its students by adopting Charlotte's method of education. Steinthal stayed to oversee its implementation.

since that pioneer school made the bold attempt, already many thousands of children working under numerous County Councils are finding that “Studies serve for delight.”

No doubt children are well taught and happy in their lessons as things are, and this was specially true of the school in question; yet both teachers and children find an immeasurable difference between the casual interest roused by marks, pleasing oral lessons and other school devices, and the sort of steady avidity for knowledge that comes with the awakened soul. The children have converted the school inspectors: “And the English!” said one of these in astonishment as he listened to their long, graphic, dramatic narrations of what they had heard. During the last thirty years we (including many fellow workers) have had thousands of children, in our schoolrooms, home and other, working on the lines of Dean Colet’s prayer for St. Paul’s School – “Pray for the children to prosper in good life and good literature”; probably all children so taught grow up with such principles and pursuits as make for happy and useful citizenship.

John Colet (1467-1519) was an English clergyman and educational reformer. He was the Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, where he established the St. Paul’s School for boys. He instructed that the school’s priest should pray daily for the students of the school to “prosper in good life and good literature.” Charlotte used this quote on the front of every PNEU Programme.

Effectual (adj.) - success in producing a desired result

I should like to add that we have no axe to grind. The public good is our aim; and the methods proposed are applicable in any school. My object in offering this volume to the public is to urge upon all who are concerned with education a few salient principles which are generally either unknown or disregarded; and a few methods which, like that bathing in Jordan, are too simple to commend themselves to the ‘general.’ Yet these principles and methods make education entirely effectual.

I should like to add that no statement that I have advanced in the following volume rests upon opinion only. Every point has been proved in thousands of instances, and the method may be seen at work in many schools, large and small, Elementary and Secondary.

Terminus (noun) - the final point; final outcome

I have to beg the patience of the reader who is asked to approach the one terminus by various avenues, and I cannot do so better than in the words of old Fuller:

“Good Reader, I suspect I may have written some things twice; if not in the same words yet in sense, which I desire you to pass by favorably, forasmuch as you may well think, it was difficult and a dull thing for me in so great a number of independent sentences to find out the repetitions ... Besides the pains, such a search would cost me more time than I can afford it; for my glass of life running now low, I must not suffer one sand to fall in waste nor suffer one minute in picking of straws ... But to conclude this, since in matters of advice, Precept must be upon Precept, Line upon Line, I apologize in the words of St. Paul, ‘To write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.’”

I am unwilling to close what is probably the last preface I shall be called upon to write without a very grateful recognition of the cooperation of those friends who are working with me in what seems to us a great cause. The Parents’ National Educational Union has fulfilled its mission, as declared in its first prospectus, nobly and generously. “The Union exists for the benefit of parents and teachers of *all classes*,” and, for the last eight years it has undertaken the labor and expense of an energetic propaganda on behalf of Elementary Schools, of which about 150 are now working on the Programmes of the Parents’ Union School. During the last year a pleasing and hopeful development has taken place under the auspices of the Hon. Mrs. Franklin. It was suggested to the Head of a London County Council School to form an association of the parents of the children in that school, offering them certain advantages and requiring a small payment to cover expenses. At the first meeting one of the fathers present got up and said that he was greatly disappointed. He had expected to see some three hundred parents and there were only about sixty present! The promoters of the meeting were, however, well pleased to see the sixty, most of whom became members of the Parents’ Association, and the work goes on with spirit.

We are deeply indebted to many fellow-workers, but not even that very courteous gentleman who once wrote a letter to the Romans could make suitable acknowledgments to all of

“Old Fuller” is Thomas Fuller (1654-1734), an English physician and writer. This quote is an excerpt from his book *Introduction ad Prudentiam: Or, Directions, Counsels, and Cautions Tending to Prudent Management of Affairs in Common Life*.

Charlotte wrote *A Philosophy of Education* in 1921 at the age of 79. She died two years later. The book was published posthumously in 1925.

The Parents’ National Educational Union, or the PNEU, was established in 1887 as the overarching organization for Charlotte’s method. The Programmes listed each term’s curriculum for students enrolled in the Parents’ Union School, or PUS.

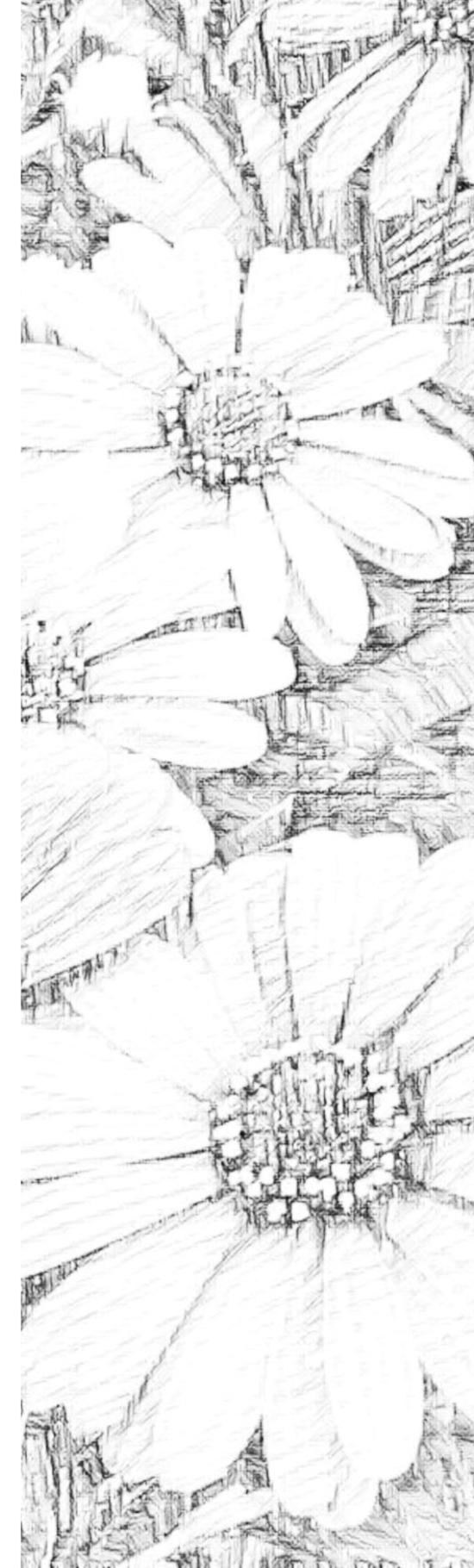
The Honorable Mrs. Franklin is Henrietta Franklin, a Jewish woman who was one of Charlotte’s most trusted friends. She is credited with taking Charlotte’s idea to a national audience. She became the Secretary of the PNEU in 1894 and embarked on a speaking tour to major cities in the United States, Europe, and South Africa.

those to whom we owe the success of a movement the *rationale* of which I attempt to make clear in the following pages.

CHARLOTTE M. MASON

House of Education, Ambleside, 1922

Charlotte's *House of Education* was her teacher training college located in Ambleside, England. It is now known as the University of Cumbria.



*Charlotte Mason's
20 Principles*

*A Short Synopsis of
the Educational Philosophy
Advanced in this Volume*

“No sooner doth the truth ... come into the soul’s sight, but the soul knows her to be her first and old acquaintance.”

“The consequence of truth is great; therefore the judgment of it must not be negligent.” (Whichcote)

- 1) Children are born *persons*.
- 2) They are not born either good or bad, but with possibilities for good and for evil.
- 3) The principles of authority on the one hand, and of obedience on the other, are natural, necessary and fundamental; but –
- 4) These principles are limited by the respect due to the personality of children, which must not be encroached upon, whether by the direct use of fear or love, suggestion or influence, or by undue play upon any one natural desire.
- 5) Therefore, we are limited to three educational instruments – the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas. The P.N.E.U. Motto is: “Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life.”
- 6) When we say that “*education is an atmosphere,*” we do not mean that a child should be isolated in what may be called a ‘child-environment’ especially adapted and prepared, but that we should take into account the educational value of his natural home atmosphere, both as regards persons and things, and should let him live freely among his proper conditions. It stultifies a child to bring down his world to the ‘child’s’ level.

This is a quote from the book *Moral and Religious Aphorisms* by Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683).

Charlotte lists the 20 Principles of her method of education.

Note that when Charlotte originally wrote *Home Education* (Vol. 1) in 1885, the list only contained 18 Principles. But by the time she wrote this book, *A Philosophy of Education*, in 1921, the list had been better reorganized to clearly state her 20 Principles.

7) By "*education is a discipline*," we mean the discipline of habits, formed definitely and thoughtfully, whether habits of mind or body. Physiologists tell us of the adaptation of brain structures to habitual lines of thought, *i.e.*, to our habits.

8) In saying that "*education is a life*," the need of intellectual and moral as well as of physical sustenance is implied. The mind feeds on ideas, and therefore children should have a generous curriculum.

9) We hold that the child's mind is no mere *sac* to hold ideas; but is rather, if the figure may be allowed, a spiritual *organism*, with an appetite for all knowledge. This is its proper diet, with which it is prepared to deal; and which it can digest and assimilate as the body does foodstuffs.

10) Such a doctrine as *e.g.* the Herbartian, that the mind is a receptacle, lays the stress of Education (the preparation of knowledge in enticing morsels duly ordered) upon the teacher. Children taught on this principle are in danger of receiving much teaching with little knowledge; and the teacher's axiom is "what a child learns matters less than how he learns it."

11) But we, believing that the normal child has powers of mind which fit him to deal with all knowledge proper to him, give him a full and generous curriculum; taking care only that all knowledge offered him is vital, that is, that facts are not presented without their informing ideas. Out of this conception comes our principle that, –

12) "*Education is the Science of Relations*"; that is, that a child has natural relations with a vast number of things and thoughts: so we train him upon physical exercises, nature lore, handicrafts, science and art, and upon *many living* books, for we know that our business is not to teach him all about anything, but to help him to make valid as many as may be of

–

"Those first-born affinities
That fit our new existence to existing things."

The Herbartian doctrine was an applied educational theory created by Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) which stated there should be five formal steps in teaching: preparation, presentation, association, generalization, and application.

Those first-born affinities is a line from a poem called "The Prelude" by William Wordsworth (1770-1850).

13) In devising a SYLLABUS for a normal child, of whatever social class, three points must be considered:

a) He requires *much* knowledge, for the mind needs sufficient food as much as does the body.

(b) The knowledge should be various, for sameness in mental diet does not create appetite (*i.e.*, curiosity).

(c) Knowledge should be communicated in well-chosen language, because his attention responds naturally to what is conveyed in literary form.

14) As knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced, children should 'tell back' after a single reading or hearing: or should write on some part of what they have read.

15) A *single reading* is insisted on, because children have naturally great power of attention; but this force is dissipated by the re-reading of passages, and also, by questioning, summarizing, and the like.

Acting upon these and some other points in the behavior of mind, we find that *the educability of children is enormously greater than has hitherto been supposed*, and is but little dependent on such circumstances as heredity and environment.

Nor is the accuracy of this statement limited to clever children or to children of the educated classes: thousands of children in Elementary Schools respond freely to this method, which is based on the *behavior of mind*.

16) There are two guides to moral and intellectual self-management to offer to children, which we may call 'the way of the will' and 'the way of the reason.'

17) *The way of the will*: Children should be taught,

(a) to distinguish between 'I want' and 'I will.'

(b) That the way to will effectively is to turn our thoughts from that which we desire but do not will.

(c) That the best way to turn our thoughts is to think of or do some quite different thing, entertaining or

interesting.

(d) That after a little rest in this way, the will returns to its work with new vigor.

(This adjunct of the will is familiar to us as *diversion*, whose office it is to ease us for a time from will effort, that we may 'will' again with added power. The use of *suggestion* as an aid to the will *is to be deprecated*, as tending to stultify and stereotype character. It would seem that spontaneity is a condition of development, and that human nature needs the discipline of failure as well as of success.)

18) *The way of reason*: We teach children, too, not to 'lean (too confidently) to their own understanding'; because the function of reason is to give logical demonstration

(a) of mathematical truth,

19)(b) of an initial idea, accepted by the will.

20) In the former case, reason is, practically, an infallible guide, but in the latter, it is not always a safe one; for, whether that idea be right or wrong, reason will confirm it by irrefragable proofs.

19) Therefore, children should be taught, as they become mature enough to understand such teaching, that the chief responsibility which rests on them *as persons* is the acceptance or rejection of ideas. To help them in this choice we give them principles of conduct, and a wide range of the knowledge fitted to them. These principles should save children from some of the loose thinking and heedless action which cause most of us to live at a lower level than we need.

20) We allow no separation to grow up between the intellectual and 'spiritual' life of children, but teach them that the Divine Spirit has constant access to their spirits, and is their continual Helper in all the interests, duties and joys of life.

Stultify (verb) - to cause to lose enthusiasm, especially as a result of a tedious or restrictive routine

Irrefragable (adj) - indisputable



Introduction

Introduction

These are anxious days for all who are engaged in education. We rejoiced in the fortitude, valor, and devotion shown by our men in the War and recognize that these things are due to the Schools as well as to the fact that England still breeds “very valiant creatures.” It is good to know that “the whole army was illustrious.” The heroism of our officers derives an added impulse from that tincture of ‘letters’ that every Public schoolboy gets, and those “playing fields” where boys acquire habits of obedience and command. But what about the abysmal ignorance shown in the wrong thinking of many of the men who stayed at home? Are we to blame? I suppose most of us feel that we are: for these men are educated as we choose to understand education, that is, they can read and write, think perversely, and follow an argument, though they are unable to detect a fallacy. If we ask in perplexity, why do so many men and women seem incapable of generous impulse, of reasoned patriotism, of seeing beyond the circle of their own interests, is not the answer, that men are enabled for such things by education? These are the marks of educated persons; and when millions of men who should be the backbone of the country seem to be dead to public claims, we have to ask – Why then are not these persons educated, and what have we given them in lieu of education?

Our errors in education, so far as we have erred, turn upon the conception we form of ‘mind,’ and the theory which has filtered through to most teachers implies the out-of-date notion of the development of ‘faculties,’ a notion which itself rests on the axiom that thought is no more than a function of the brain. Here we find the sole justification of the scanty curricula provided in most of our schools, for the tortuous processes of our teaching, for the mischievous assertion that “it does not matter

Charlotte is referring to World War I, which had just concluded several years earlier in 1918.

Perversely (adj) - contrary to the accepted or expected standard or practice

what a child learns but only how he learns it.” If we teach much and children learn little, we comfort ourselves with the idea that we are ‘developing’ this or the other ‘faculty.’ A great future lies before the nation which shall perceive that knowledge is the sole concern of education proper, as distinguished from training, and that knowledge is the necessary daily food of the mind.

Teachers are looking out for the support of a sound theory, and such a theory must recognize with conviction the part mind plays in education and the conditions under which this prime agent acts. We want a philosophy of education which, admitting that thought alone appeals to mind, that thought begets thought, shall relegate to their proper subsidiary places all those sensory and muscular activities which are supposed to afford intellectual as well as physical training. The latter is so important in and for itself that it needs not to be bolstered up by the notion that it includes the whole, or the practically important part, of education. The same remark holds good of vocational training. Our journals ask with scorn, “Is there no education but what is got out of books at school? Is not the lad who works in the fields getting education?” and the public lacks the courage to say definitely, “No, he is not,” because there is no clear notion current as to what education means, and how it is to be distinguished from vocational training. But the people themselves begin to understand and to clamor for an education which shall qualify their children for life rather than for earning a living. As a matter of fact, it is the man who has read and thought on many subjects who is, with the necessary training, the most capable whether in handling tools, drawing plans, or keeping books. The more of a person we succeed in making a child, the better will he both fulfill his own life and serve society.

3

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher; Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) was a German politician; and Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849-1930) was a Prussian general who wrote a book called *Germany and the Next War* in 1911.

Much thoughtful care has been spent in ascertaining the causes of the German breakdown in character and conduct; the war scourge was symptomatic, and the symptoms have been duly traced to their cause in the thoughts the people have been taught to think during three or four generations. We have heard much about Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardi and the rest; but

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Professor Muirhead did us good service in carrying the investigation further back. Darwin's theories of natural selection, the survival of the fittest, the struggle for existence, struck root in Germany in fitting soil; and the ideas of the superman, the super state, the right of might – to repudiate treaties, to eliminate feebler powers, to recognize no law but expediency – all this appears to come as naturally out of Darwinism as a chicken comes out of an egg. No doubt the same *dicta* have struck us in the *Commentaries* of Frederick the Great; “they shall take who have the power, and they shall keep who can,” is ages older than Darwin, but possibly this is what our English philosopher did for Germany – There is a tendency in human nature to elect the obligations of natural law in preference to those of spiritual law; to take its code of ethics from science, and, following this tendency, the Germans found in their reading of Darwin sanction for manifestations of brutality.

4 Here are a few examples of how German philosophers amplify the Darwinian text: “In matter dwell all natural and spiritual potencies. Matter is the foundation of all being.” “What we call spirit, thought, the faculty of knowledge, consists of natural though peculiarly combined forces.” Darwin himself protests against the struggle for existence being the most potent agency where the higher part of man's nature is concerned, and he no more thought of giving a materialistic tendency to modern education than Locke thought of teaching principles which should bring about the French Revolution; but men's thoughts are more potent than they know, and these two Englishmen may be credited with influencing powerfully two world-wide movements. In Germany, “prepared by a quarter of a century of materialistic thought,” the teaching of Darwin was accepted as offering emancipation from various moral restraints. Ernst Haeckel, his distinguished follower, finds in the law of natural selection sanction for Germany's lawless action, and also, that pregnant doctrine of the superman. “This principle of selection is nothing less than democratic; on the contrary it is aristocratic in the strictest sense of the word.” We know how Büchner,

Professor John Henry Muirhead (1855-1940) wrote a book titled *German Philosophy in Relation to the War*, published in 1915.

Dicta (pl. noun) - a formal pronouncement from an authoritative source

Treitschke wrote a book about Frederick the Great, King of Prussia (r. 1740-1786), called *The Confessions of Frederick the Great*, which is most likely the book that Charlotte mentions here.

Charlotte continues to quote from the book *German Philosophy in Relation to the War* by Muirhead.

In these several lines, Muirhead is quoting from several books published prior to WWI by German philosophers: *Force and Matter* by Ludwig Büchner (1824-1899), *Der Kreislauf des Lebens* by Jacob Moleschott (1822-1893), and *Freedom in Science and Teaching* by Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919).

again, simplified and popularized these new theories, "All the faculties which we include under the name of psychical activities are only functions of the brain substance. Thought stands in the same relation to the brain as the gall to the liver."

What use, or misuse, Germany has made of the teaching of Darwin would not (save for the War) be of immediate concern to us, were it not that she has given us back our own in the form of that "mythology of faculty psychology" which is all we possess in the way of educational thought. English psychology proper has advanced if not to firm ground, at any rate to the point of repudiating the 'faculty' basis. "However much assailed, the concept of a 'mind' is," we are told, "to be found in all psychological writers."¹ But there are but mind and matter, 5 and when we are told again that "psychology rests on feeling," where are we? Is there a middle region?

CM FOOTNOTE 1: I quote from the article on Psychology in the Encyclopedia Britannica as being the most likely to exhibit the authoritative position.

II

We fail to recognize that as the body requires wholesome food and cannot nourish itself upon any substance, so the mind too requires meat after its kind. If the War taught nothing else it taught us that men are spirits, that the spirit, mind, of a man is more than his flesh, that his spirit is the man, that for the thoughts of his heart he gives the breath of his body. As a consequence of this recognition of our spiritual nature, the lesson for us at the moment is that the great thoughts, great events, great considerations, which form the background of our national thought, shall be the content of the education we pass on.

The educational thought we hear most about is, as I have said, based on sundry Darwinian axioms out of which we get the notion that nothing matters but physical fitness and vocational training. However important these are, they are not the chief thing. A century ago when Prussia was shipwrecked in the Napoleonic wars it was discovered that not Napoleon but Ignorance was the formidable national enemy; a few philosophers took the matter in hand, and history, poetry, philosophy, proved the salvation of a ruined nation, because such studies

The Napoleonic Wars were a series of conflicts between France, led by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), Great Britain, and Britain's various allies from 1803-1815.

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6 make for the development of personality, public spirit, initiative, the qualities of which the State was in need, and which most advance individual happiness and success. On the other hand, the period when Germany made her school curriculum utilitarian marks the beginning of her moral downfall. History repeats itself. There are interesting rumors afloat of how the students at Bonn, for example, went in solemn procession to make a bonfire of French novels, certain prints, articles of luxury and the like; things like these had brought about the ruin of Germany and it was the part of the youth to save her now as before. Are they to have another Tugendbund?

We want an education which shall nourish the mind while not neglecting either physical or vocational training; in short, we want a working philosophy of education. I think that we of the P.N.E.U. have arrived at such a body of theory, tested and corrected by some thirty years of successful practice with thousands of children. This theory has already been set forth in volumes¹ published at intervals during the last thirty-five years; so I shall indicate here only a few salient points which seem to me to differ from general theory and practice –

(a) The children, not the teachers, are the responsible persons; they do the work by self-effort.

(b) The teachers give sympathy and occasionally elucidate, sum up or enlarge, but the actual work is done by the scholars.

(c) These read in a term one, or two, or three thousand pages, according to their age, school and Form, in a large number of set books. The quantity set for each lesson allows of only a single reading; but the reading is tested by narration, or by writing on a test passage. When the terminal examination is at hand so much ground has been covered that revision is out of the question; what the children have read they know, and write on any part of it with ease and fluency, in vigorous English; they usually spell well.

7 Much is said from time to time to show that 'mere book-learning' is rather contemptible, and that "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." May I point out that whatever dis-

The University of Bonn in Germany was established in 1818. Notable students include Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Heinrich Heine, Pope Benedict XVI, and Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria.

Tugendbund was a secret society founded in Prussia in 1808 which was known for their uprisings and revolts. The group's objective was to revive Prussia after their defeat by Napoleon.

CM FOOTNOTE 1: The Home Education Series

Elucidate (verb) - to make something clear; clarify

This quote is from a poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), an American writer.

credit is due to the use of books does not apply to this method, which so far as I can discover has not hitherto been employed. Has an attempt been made before on a wide scale to secure that scholars should know their books, many pages in many books, at a single reading, in such a way that months later they can write freely and accurately on any part of the term's reading?

(d) There is no selection of studies, or of passages or of episodes, on the ground of interest. The best available book is chosen and is read through perhaps in the course of two or three years.

(e) The children study many books on many subjects, but exhibit no confusion of thought, and 'howlers' are almost unknown.

(f) They find that, in Bacon's phrase, "Studies serve for delight"; this delight being not in the lessons or the personality of the teacher, but purely in their 'lovely books,' 'glorious books.'

(g) The books used are, whenever possible, literary in style.

(h) Marks, prizes, places, rewards, punishments, praise, blame, or other inducements are not necessary to secure attention, which is voluntary, immediate and surprisingly perfect.

(i) The success of the scholars in what may be called disciplinary subjects, such as Mathematics and Grammar, depends largely on the power of the teacher, though the pupils' habit of attention is of use in these too.

(j) No stray lessons are given on interesting subjects; the knowledge the children get is consecutive.

The unusual interest children show in their work, their power of concentration, their wide, and as far as it goes, accurate knowledge of historical, literary and some scientific subjects, has challenged attention and the general conclusion is that these are the children of educated and cultivated parents. It was vain to urge that the home schoolroom does not usually produce remarkable educational results; but the way is opening to prove that the power these children show is common to all children; at last there is hope that the offspring of working-class

Howler (noun) - a glaring mistake

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was an English philosopher and writer. He also served as a legal advisor for Queen Elizabeth I, but is best known for his series of *Essays*.

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parents may be led into the wide pastures of a liberal education.

Are we not justified in concluding that singular effects must have commensurate causes, and that we have chanced to light on unknown tracts in the region of educational thought? At any rate that Golden Rule of which Comenius was in search has discovered itself, the Rule: "WHEREBY TEACHERS SHALL TEACH LESS AND SCHOLARS SHALL LEARN MORE."

Let me now outline a few of the educational principles which account for unusual results.

III

Principles hitherto unrecognized or disregarded I have enumerated some of the points in which our work is exceptional in the hope of convincing the reader that unusual work carried on successfully in hundreds of schoolrooms – home and other – is based on principles hitherto unrecognized. The recognition of these principles should put our national education on an intelligent basis and should make for general stability, joy in living, and personal initiative.

May I add one or two more arguments in support of my plea:

9 The appeal is not to the clever child only, but to the average and even to the 'backward' child. This scheme is carried out in less time than ordinary schoolwork on the same subjects. There are no revisions, no evening lessons, no cramming or 'getting up' of subjects; therefore, there is much time whether for vocational work or interests or hobbies. All intellectual work is done in the hours of morning school, and the afternoons are given to field nature studies, drawing, handicrafts, etc. Notwithstanding these limitations, the children produce a surprising amount of good intellectual work.

No homework is required.

It is not that 'we' (of the P.N.E.U.) are persons of peculiar genius; it is that, like Paley's man who found the watch, "we

Commensurate (adj) - equal; corresponding in size or degree

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was a philosopher, theologian, and educational reformer. He is considered to be the father of modern education.

Backward (adj) - having made less than normal progress

William Paley (1743-1805) was an English clergyman who wrote *Natural Theology: or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*. He is known for his *watch-maker analogy* in that a design implies a designer.

“No gain that I experience must remain unshared” is a line from a poem titled “Christmas Eve and Easter Day” by Robert Browning (1812-1889).

have chanced on a good thing.”

“No gain that I experience must remain unshared.”

We feel that the country and indeed the world should have the benefit of educational discoveries which act powerfully as a moral lever, for we are experiencing anew the joy of the Renaissance, but without its pagan lawlessness.

Let me trace as far as I can recall them the steps by which I arrived at some of the conclusions upon which we are acting. While still a young woman I saw a great deal of a family of Anglo-Indian children who had come ‘home’ to their grandfather’s house and were being brought up by an aunt who was my intimate friend. The children were astonishing to me; they were persons of generous impulses and sound judgment, of great intellectual aptitude, of imagination and moral insight. These last two points were, I recollect, illustrated one day by a little maiden of five who came home from her walk silent and sad; some letting alone, and some wise openings brought out at last between sobs – “a poor man – no home – nothing to eat – no bed to lie upon,” – and then the child was relieved by tears. Such incidents are common enough in families, but they were new to me. I was reading a good deal of philosophy and ‘Education’ at the time for I thought with the enthusiasm of a young teacher that Education should regenerate the world. I had an Elementary School and a pioneer Church High School at this same time so that I was enabled to study children in large groups; but, at school, children are not so self-revealing as at home. I began under the guidance of these Anglo-Indian children to take the measure of a *person* and soon to suspect that children are *more* than we, their elders, except that their ignorance is illimitable.

10

Charlotte wrote a grammar book called *First Grammar Lessons* that was published after her death.

One limitation I did discover in the minds of these little people; my friend insisted that they could not understand English Grammar; I maintained that they could and wrote a little Grammar (still waiting to be prepared for publication!) for the two of seven and eight; but she was right; I was allowed to give the lessons myself with what lucidity and freshness I could com-

mand; in vain; the Nominative 'Case' baffled them; their minds rejected the abstract conception just as children reject the notion of writing an "Essay on Happiness." But I was beginning to make discoveries; the second being, that the mind of a child takes or rejects according to its needs.

From this point it was not difficult to go on to the perception that, whether in taking or rejecting, the mind was functioning for its own nourishment; that the mind, in fact, requires sustenance as does the body, in order that it increase and be strong; but because the mind is not to be measured or weighed, but is spiritual, so its sustenance must be spiritual too, must, in fact, be ideas (in the Platonic sense of images). I soon perceived that children were well equipped to deal with
 11 ideas, and that explanations, questionings, amplifications, are unnecessary and wearisome. Children have a natural appetite for knowledge which is informed with thought. They bring imagination, judgment, and the various so-called 'faculties,' to bear upon a new idea pretty much as the gastric juices act upon a food ration. This was illuminating but rather startling; the whole intellectual apparatus of the teacher, his power of vivid presentation, apt illustration, able summing up, subtle questioning, all these were hindrances and intervened between children and the right nutriment duly served; this, on the other hand, they received with the sort of avidity and simplicity with which a healthy child eats his dinner.

The Scottish school of philosophers came to my aid here with what may be called their doctrine of the desires, which, I perceived, stimulate the action of mind and so cater for spiritual (not necessarily religious) sustenance as the appetites do for that of the body and for the continuance of the race. This was helpful; I inferred that one of these, the Desire of Knowledge (Curiosity) was the chief instrument of education; that this desire might be paralyzed or made powerless like an unused limb by encouraging other desires to intervene between a child and the knowledge proper for him; the desire for place – emulation; for prizes – avarice; for power – ambition; for praise – vanity,

CHARLOTTE'S WISE WORDS

"The mind of a child takes or rejects according to its needs."

Plato was an ancient Greek philosopher who's theory of Forms, or Images, denies the reality of the material world, considering it only an image or copy of the real world.

The Scottish Enlightenment of the 18th century created intellectual and scientific accomplishments and included ideas such as: "Due cultivation of the mind involves filling it with sound opinion regarding our duty, learning to judge well the objects which commonly stimulate our desires, and acquiring rational control of our passions."

The use of capitalization for the phrase "the Desire of Knowledge (Curiosity)" indicates that Charlotte is referencing Volume 4: *Ourselves* (see *Ourselves*, pgs 77-78).

might each be a stumbling block to him. It seemed to me that we teachers had unconsciously elaborated a system which should secure the discipline of the schools and the eagerness of the scholars – by means of marks, prizes, and the like – and yet eliminate that knowledge-hunger, itself the quite sufficient incentive to education.

Then arose the question – Cannot people get on with little knowledge? Is it really necessary after all? My child-friends supplied the answer: their insatiable curiosity showed me that the wide world and its history was barely enough to satisfy a child who had not been made apathetic by spiritual malnutrition. What, then, is knowledge? was the next question that occurred; a question which the intellectual labor of ages has not settled; but perhaps this is enough to go on with – that only becomes knowledge to a person which he has assimilated, which his mind has acted upon.

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Children's aptitude for knowledge and their eagerness for it made for the conclusion that the field of a child's knowledge may not be artificially restricted, that he has a right to and necessity for as much and as varied knowledge as he is able to receive; and that the limitations in his curriculum should depend only upon the age at which he must leave school; in a word, a common curriculum (up to the age of say, fourteen or fifteen) appears to be due to all children.

Feudal (adj) - outdated or old-fashioned

We have left behind the feudal notion that intellect is a class prerogative, that intelligence is a matter of inheritance and environment; inheritance, no doubt, means much, but everyone has a very mixed inheritance; environment makes for satisfaction or uneasiness, but education is of the spirit and is not to be taken in by the eye or effected by the hand; mind appeals to mind and thought begets thought and that is how we become educated. For this reason we owe it to every child to put him in communication with great minds that he may get at great thoughts; with the minds, that is, of those who have left us great works; and the only vital method of education appears to be that children should read worthy books, many worthy

books.

13 It will be said on the one hand that many schools have their own libraries or the scholars have the free use of a public library and that children do read; and on the other that the literary language of first-rate books offers an impassable barrier to working-men's children. In the first place, we all know that desultory reading is delightful and incidentally profitable but is not education whose concern is *knowledge*. That is, the mind of the desultory reader only rarely makes the act of appropriation which is necessary before the matter we read becomes personal knowledge. We must read in order to know or we do not know by reading.

Desultory (adj) - lacking a plan or purpose; random

As for the question of literary form, many circumstances and considerations which it would take too long to describe brought me to perceive that delight in literary form is native to us all until we are 'educated' out of it.

It is difficult to explain how I came to a solution of a puzzling problem – how to secure attention. Much observation of children, various incidents from one's general reading, the recollection of my own childhood and the consideration of my present habits of mind brought me to the recognition of certain laws of the mind, by working in accordance with which the steady attention of children of any age and any class in society is insured, week in, week out – attention, not affected by distracting circumstances. It is not a matter of 'personal magnetism,' for hundreds of teachers of very varying quality, working in home schoolrooms and in Elementary and Secondary Schools on this method,¹ secure it without effort; neither does it rest upon the 'doctrine of interest'; no doubt the scholars are interested, sometimes delighted; but they are interested in a great variety of matters and their attention does not flag in the 'dull parts.'

CM FOOTNOTE 1: In connection with the Parents' Union School.

14 It is not easy to sum up in a few short sentences those principles upon which the mind naturally acts and which I have tried to bring to bear upon a school curriculum. The fundamental idea is, that children are persons and are therefore moved by the same springs of conduct as their elders. Among these is

the Desire of Knowledge, knowledge-hunger being natural to everybody. History, Geography, the thoughts of other people, roughly, the humanities, are proper for us all, and are the objects of the natural desire of knowledge. So too, are Science, for we all live in the world; and Art, for we all require beauty, and are eager to know how to discriminate; social science, Ethics, for we are aware of the need to learn about the conduct of life; and Religion, for, like those men we heard of at the Front, we all 'want God.'

The *Front* refers to the position where British troops were engaged in warfare during WWI.

In the nature of things then the unspoken demand of children is for a wide and very varied curriculum; it is necessary that they should have some knowledge of the wide range of interests proper to them as human beings, and for no reasons of convenience or time limitations may we curtail their proper curriculum.

Perceiving the range of knowledge to which children as persons are entitled the questions are, how shall they be induced to take that knowledge, and what can the children of the people learn in the short time they are at school? We have discovered a working answer to these two conundrums. I say discovered, and not invented, for there is only one way of learning, and the intelligent persons who can talk well on many subjects and the expert in one learn in the one way, that is, *they read to know*. What I have found out is, that this method is available for every child, whether in the dilatory and desultory home school-room or in the large classes of Elementary Schools.

Dilatory (adj) - unhurried; slow to act

Desultory (adj) - lacking a plan or purpose; random

Children no more come into the world without provision for dealing with knowledge than without provision for dealing with food. They bring with them not only that intellectual appetite, the desire of knowledge, but also an enormous, an unlimited power of attention to which the power of retention (memory) seems to be attached, as one digestive process succeeds another, until the final assimilation. "Yes," it will be said, "they are capable of much curiosity and consequent attention but they can only occasionally be beguiled into attending to their lessons." Is not that the fault of the lessons, and must not these be

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Beguile (verb) - to charm or enchant, sometimes in a deceptive way

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regulated as carefully with regard to the behavior of mind as the children's meals are with regard to physical considerations?

Let us consider this behavior in a few aspects. The mind concerns itself only with thoughts, imaginations, reasoned arguments; it declines to assimilate the facts unless in combination with its proper pabulum; it, being active, is wearied in the passive attitude of a listener, it is as much bored in the case of a child by the discursive twaddle of the talking teacher as in that of a grown-up by conversational twaddle; it has a natural preference for literary form; given a more or less literary presentation, the curiosity of the mind is enormous and embraces a vast variety of subjects.

I predicate these things of 'the mind' because they seem true of all persons' minds. Having observed these, and some other points in the behavior of mind, it remained to apply the conclusions to which I had come to a test curriculum for schools and families. Oral teaching was to a great extent ruled out; a large number of books on many subjects were set for reading in morning school-hours; so much work was set that there was only time for a single reading; all reading was tested by a narration of the whole or a given passage, whether orally or in writing. Children working on these lines know months after that which they have read and are remarkable for their power of concentration (attention); they have little trouble with spelling or composition and become well-informed, intelligent persons.¹

16 But, it will be said, reading or hearing various books read, chapter by chapter, and then narrating or writing what has been read or some part of it – all this is mere memory work. The value of this criticism may be readily tested; will the critic read before turning off his light a leading article from a newspaper, say, or a chapter from Boswell or Jane Austen, or one of Lamb's Essays; then, will he put himself to sleep by narrating silently what he has read. He will not be satisfied with the result but he will find that in the act of narrating every power of his mind comes into play, that points and bearings which he had not observed are brought out; that the whole is visualized and

Pabulum (noun) - bland or insipid intellectual fare; entertainment

Twaddle (adj) - insignificant or worthless speech or writing

CM FOOTNOTE 1: The small Practicing School attached to the House of Education (ages of scholars from six to eighteen) affords opportunities for testing the Programmes of work sent out term by term, and the examinations set at the end of each term. The work in each Form is easily done in the hours of morning-school.

James Boswell (1740-1795), Jane Austen (1775-1817), and Charles Lamb (1775-1834) were all well-known British authors.

brought into relief in an extraordinary way; in fact, that scene or argument has become a part of his personal experience; he knows, he has assimilated what he has read. *This is not memory work.* In order to memorize, we repeat over and over a passage or a series of points or names with the aid of such clues as we can invent; we do memorize a string of facts or words, and the new possession serves its purpose for a time, but it is not assimilated; its purpose being served, we know it no more. This is memory work by means of which examinations are passed with credit. I will not try to explain (or understand!) this power to memorize; it has its subsidiary use in education, no doubt, but it must not be put in the place of the prime agent which is *attention*.

Axiom (noun) - a statement or proposition which is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true

In the Socratic use of questioning, teachers will respond to a student's question by asking a question. According to Plato, Socrates believed that "the disciplined practice of thoughtful questioning enables the scholar/student to examine ideas and be able to determine the validity of those ideas."

Congerie (noun) - a collection

Long ago, I was in the habit of hearing this axiom quoted by a philosophical old friend: "The mind can know nothing save what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put to the mind by itself." I have failed to trace the saying to its source, but a conviction of its importance has been growing upon me during the last forty years. It tacitly prohibits questioning from without; (this does not, of course, affect the Socratic use of questioning for purposes of moral conviction); and it is necessary to intellectual certainty, to the act of knowing. For example, to secure a conversation or an incident, we 'go over it in our minds'; that is, the mind puts itself through the process of self-questioning which I have indicated. This is what happens in the narrating of a passage read: each new consecutive incident or statement arrives because the mind asks itself – "What next?" For this reason it is important that only one reading should be allowed; efforts to memorize weaken the power of attention, the proper activity of the mind; if it is desirable to ask questions in order to emphasize certain points, these should be asked after and not before, or during, the act of narration.

Our more advanced psychologists come to our support here; they, too, predicate "instead of a congerie of faculties, a single subjective activity, attention"; and again, there is "one

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common factor in all psychical activity, that is attention.”¹ My personal addition is that attention is unflinching, prompt and steady when matter is presented suitable to a child’s intellectual requirements, *if* the presentation be made with the conciseness, directness, and simplicity proper to literature.

Another point should be borne in mind; the intellect requires a moral impulse, and we all stir our minds into action the better if there is an implied ‘must’ in the background; for children in class, the ‘must’ acts through the certainty that they will be required to narrate or write from what they have read with no opportunity of ‘looking up,’ or other devices of the idle. Children find the act of narrating so pleasurable in itself that urgency on the part of the teacher is seldom necessary.

18 Here is a complete chain of the educational philosophy I have endeavored to work out, which has, at least, the merit that it is successful in practice. Some few hints I have, as I have said, adopted and applied, but I hope I have succeeded in methodizing the whole and making education what it should be, a system of applied philosophy; I have, however, carefully abstained from the use of philosophical terms.

This is, briefly, how it works:

A child is a person with the spiritual requirements and capabilities of a person.

Knowledge ‘nourishes’ the mind as food nourishes the body.

A child requires knowledge as much as he requires food.

He is furnished with the desire for Knowledge, i.e., Curiosity; with the power to apprehend Knowledge, that is, attention; with powers of mind to deal with Knowledge without aid from without – such as imagination, reflection, judgment; with innate interest in all Knowledge that he needs as a human being; with power to retain and communicate such Knowledge; and to assimilate all that is necessary to him.

He requires that in most cases Knowledge be communicated to him in literary form; and reproduces such Knowledge touched by his own personality; thus, his reproduction becomes

CM FOOTNOTE 1: I again quote from the article on Psychology in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Innate (adj) - inborn; intrinsic

original.

The natural provision for the appropriation and assimilation of Knowledge is adequate and no stimulus is required; but some moral control is necessary to secure the act of attention; a child receives this in the certainty that he will be required to recount what he has read. 19

Children have a right to the best we possess; therefore, their lesson books should be, as far as possible, our best books.

They weary of talk, and questions bore them, so that they should be allowed to use their books for themselves; they will ask for such help as they wish for.

They require a great variety of knowledge – about religion, the humanities, science, art; therefore, they should have a wide curriculum, with a definite amount of reading set for each short period of study.

The teacher affords direction, sympathy in studies, a vivifying word here and there, help in the making of experiments, etc., as well as the usual teaching in languages, experimental science and mathematics.

Pursued under these conditions, “Studies serve for delight,” and the consciousness of daily progress is exhilarating to both teacher and children.

The reader will say with truth, “I knew all this before and have always acted more or less on these principles”; and I can only point to the unusual results we obtain through adhering not ‘more or less,’ but strictly to the principles and practices I have indicated. I suppose the difficulties are of the sort that Lister had to contend with; every surgeon knew that his instruments and appurtenances should be kept clean, but the saving of millions of lives has resulted from the adoption of the great surgeon’s antiseptic treatment; that is from the substitution of exact principles scrupulously applied for the rather casual ‘more or less’ methods of earlier days.

Whether the way I have sketched out is the right and the only way remains to be tested still more widely than in the 20

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thousands of cases in which it has been successful; but assuredly education is slack and uncertain for the lack of sound principles exactly applied. The moment has come for a decision; we have placed our faith in 'civilization,' have been proud of our progress; and, of the pangs that the War has brought us, perhaps none is keener than that caused by the utter breakdown of the civilization which we have held to be synonymous with education. We know better now and are thrown back on our healthy human instincts and the Divine sanctions. The educable part of a person is his mind. The training of the senses and muscles is, strictly speaking, training and not education. The mind, like the body, requires quantity, variety and regularity in the sustenance offered to it. Like the body, the mind has its appetite, the desire for knowledge. Again, like the body, the mind is able to receive and assimilate by its powers of attention and reflection. Like the body, again, the mind rejects insipid, dry, and unsavory food, that is to say, its pabulum should be presented in a literary form. The mind is restricted to pabulum of one kind: it is nourished upon ideas and absorbs facts only as these are connected with the living ideas upon which they hang. Children educated upon some such lines as these respond in a surprising way, developing capacity, character, countenance, initiative and a sense of responsibility. They are, in fact, even as children, good and thoughtful citizens.

Pabulum (noun) - bland or insipid intellectual fare; entertainment

I have in this volume attempted to show the principles and methods upon which education of this sort is being successfully carried out, and have added chapters which illustrate the history of a movement the aim of which is, in the phrase of Comenius, "All knowledge for all men." As well as these I have been permitted to use the criticisms¹ of various teachers and Directors of education and others upon the practical working of the scheme.

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was an educational reformer. Charlotte discusses his ideas further in chapter 3.

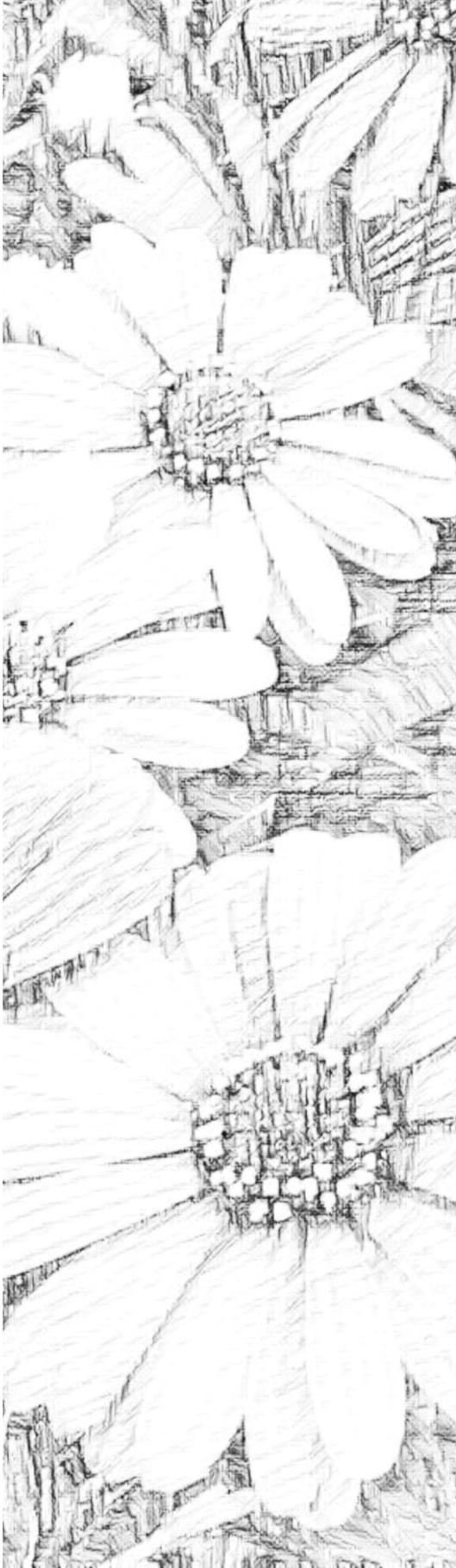
CM FOOTNOTE 1: See *Some Discussions of the Method*.

It is a matter of rejoicing that the way is open to give to all classes a basis of common thought and common knowledge, including a common store of literary and historic allusions, a possession which has a curious power of cementing bodies of

Magnanimity (noun) - the condition of being magnanimous; generosity; kindness, especially toward a less powerful person

men, and, in the next place, it is an enormous gain that we are within sight of giving to the working-classes, notwithstanding their limited opportunities, that stability of mind and magnanimity of character which are the proper outcome and the un-failing test of A LIBERAL EDUCATION.

I shall confine myself in this volume to the amplification and illustration of some of the points I have endeavored to make in this introductory statement.



Book 1

CHAPTER I

Self-Education

23 The title of this chapter may awaken some undeserved sympathy; gratifying visions of rhythmic movements, independent action, self-expression in various interesting ways, occur to the mind – for surely these things constitute ‘self-education’? Most of these modern panacea are desirable and by no means to be neglected; limbs trained to grace and agility, a hand, to dexterity and precision, an eye made to see and an ear to hear, a voice taught to interpret, – we know today that all these possibilities of joy in living should be open to every child, and we look forward even too hopefully to the manner of citizen who shall be the outcome of our educational zeal.

Now, although we, of the Parents’ Union, have initiated some of these educational outworks and have gladly and gratefully adopted others, yet is our point of view different; we are profoundly skeptical as to the effect of all or any of these activities upon character and conduct. A person is not built up from without but from within, that is, he is *living*, and all external educational appliances and activities which are intended to mold his character are decorative and not vital.

24 This sounds like a stale truism; but, let us consider a few corollaries of the notion that ‘a child is a person,’ and that a person is, primarily, living. Now no external application is capable of nourishing life or promoting growth; baths of wine, wrappings of velvet have no effect upon physical life except as they may hinder it; life is sustained on that which is taken in by the organism, not by that which is applied from without.

Perhaps the only allowable analogy with the human mind is the animal body, especially the human body, for it is that which we know most about; the well-worn plant and garden analogy

Parents’ Union is the PNEU, or the Parents’ National Educational Union.

Truism (noun) - a statement that is obviously true and says nothing new or interesting

is misleading, especially as regards that tiresome busybody, the gardener, who will direct the inclination of every twig, the position of every leaf; but, even then apart from the gardener, the child-garden is an intolerable idea as failing to recognize the essential property of a child, his personality, a property all but absent in a plant. Now, let us consider for a moment the parallel behavior of body and mind. The body lives by air, grows on food, demands rest, flourishes on a diet wisely various. So, of the mind, (by which I mean the entire spiritual nature, all that which is not body), it breathes in air, calls for both activity and rest and flourishes on a wisely varied dietary.

We go round the house and round the house, but rarely go into the House of Mind; we offer mental gymnastics, but these do not take the place of food, and of that we serve the most meagre rations, no more than that bean a day! Diet for the body is abundantly considered, but no one pauses to say, "I wonder does the mind need food, too, and regular meals, and what is its proper diet?"

I have asked myself this question and have labored for fifty years to find the answer, and am anxious to impart what I think I know, but the answer cannot be given in the form of 'Do' this and that, but rather as an invitation to 'Consider' this and that; action follows when we have thought duly.

The life of the mind is sustained upon ideas; there is no intellectual vitality in the mind to which ideas are not presented several times, say, every day. But 'surely, surely,' as 'Mrs. Proudie' would say, scientific experiments, natural beauty, nature study, rhythmic movements, sensory exercises, are all fertile in ideas? Quite commonly, they are so, as regards ideas of invention and discovery; and even in ideas of art; but for the moment it may be well to consider the ideas that influence life, that is, character and conduct; these, it would seem, pass directly from mind to mind, and are neither helped nor hindered by educational outworks. Every child gets many of these ideas by word of mouth, by way of family traditions, proverbial philosophy – in fact, by what we might call a kind of oral literature.

The *House of Mind* refers to a concept Charlotte uses in Volume 4: *Ourselves*.

The House of Mind is one of the Four Chambers, or houses of government. The other chambers include the House of Body, the House of Heart, and the House of Soul. Here is a quote from *Ourselves*, Book 2, page 2:

"The House of Mind is amazingly ordered with a view to the getting of knowledge."

Mrs. Proudie is a literary character in *Barchester Towers* written by Anthony Trollope (1815-1882).

But, when we compare the mind with the body, we perceive that three 'square' meals a day are generally necessary to health, and that a casual diet of ideas is poor and meagre. Our schools turn out a good many clever young persons, wanting in nothing but initiative, the power of reflection and the sort of moral imagination which enables you to 'put yourself in his place.' These qualities flourish upon a proper diet; and this is not afforded by the ordinary schoolbook, or, in sufficient quantity by the ordinary lesson. I should like to emphasize *quantity*, which is as important for the mind as for the body; both require their 'square meals.'

It is no easy matter to give its proper sustenance to the mind; hard things are said of children, that they have 'no brains,' 'a low order of intellect,' and so on; but many of us are able to vouch for the fine intelligence shown by children who are fed with the proper mind-stuff; but teachers do not usually take the trouble to find out what this is. We come dangerously near to what Plato condemns as "that lie of the soul," that corruption of the highest truth, of which Protagoras is guilty in the saying that, "Knowledge is sensation." What else are we saying when we run after educational methods which are purely sensory? Knowledge is not sensation, nor is it to be derived through sensation; we feed upon the thoughts of other minds; and thought applied to thought generates thought and we become more thoughtful. No one need invite us to reason, compare, imagine; the mind, like the body, digests its proper food, and it must have the labor of digestion or it ceases to function.

But the children ask for bread and we give them a stone; we give information about objects and events which mind does not attempt to digest but casts out bodily (upon an examination paper?). But let information hang upon a principle, be inspired by an idea, and it is taken with avidity and used in making whatsoever in the spiritual nature stands for tissue in the physical.

"Education," said Lord Haldane, some time ago, "is a matter of the spirit," – no wiser word has been said on the subject, and yet we persist in applying education from without as a bodily

Plato's *lie of the soul* is a falsehood in which we mistakenly believe to be true.

Protagoras was an Ancient Greek philosopher who is credited with the idea of Relativism.

Richard Haldane (1856-1928) was a British politician who advocated for education reform. He wrote several books, including *Education and Empire*.

CHARLOTTE'S WISE WORDS

"There is no education but self-education."

"The best thought the world possesses is stored in books."

Pap-meat (noun) - bland, tasteless, soft food usually fed to infants

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was an Irish playwright and political activist. Some of his more popular plays are *Pygmalion*, *Man and Superman*, and *Saint Joan*.

Like those lepers is a reference to a story in the Bible in the second book of Kings.

CM FOOTNOTE 1: The *Home Education Series*

activity or emollient. We begin to see light. No one knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him; therefore, there is no education but self-education, and as soon as a young child begins his education he does so as a student. Our business is to give him mind-stuff, and both quality and quantity are essential. Naturally, each of us possesses this mind-stuff only in limited measure, but we know where to procure it; for the best thought the world possesses is stored in books; we must open books to children, the best books; our own concern is abundant provision and orderly serving.

I am jealous for the children; every modern educational movement tends to belittle them intellectually; and none more so than a late ingenious attempt to feed normal children with the pap-meat which may (?) be good for the mentally sick: but, "To all wildly popular things comes suddenly and inexorably death, without hope of resurrection." If Mr. Bernard Shaw is right, I need not discuss a certain popular form of 'New Education.' It has been ably said that education should profit by the divorce which is now in progress from psychology on the one hand and sociology on the other; but what if education should use her recovered liberty to make a monstrous alliance with pathology? 27

Various considerations urge upon me a rather distasteful task. It is time I showed my hand and gave some account of work, the principles and practices of which should, I think, be of general use. Like those lepers who feasted at the gates of a famished city, I begin to take shame to myself! I have attempted to unfold (in various volumes¹) a system of educational theory which seems to me able to meet any rational demand, even that severest criterion set up by Plato; it is able to "run the gauntlet of objections, and is ready to disprove them, not by appeals to opinion, but to absolute truth." Some of it is new, much of it is old. Like the quality of mercy, it is not strained; certainly it is twice blessed, it blesses him that gives and him that takes, and a sort of radiancy of look distinguishes both scholar and teacher engaged in this manner of education; but

there are no startling results to challenge attention.

28 Professor Bompas Smith remarked in an inaugural address at the University of Manchester that, "If we can guide our practice by the light of a comprehensive theory we shall widen our experience by attempting tasks which would not otherwise have occurred to us." It is possible to offer the light of such a comprehensive theory, and the result is precisely what the Professor indicates, – a large number of teachers attempt tasks which would not otherwise have occurred to them. One discovers a thing because it is there, and no sane person takes credit to himself for such discovery. On the contrary, he recognizes with King Arthur – "These jewels, whereupon I chanced Divinely, are for public use." For many years we have had access to a sort of Aladdin's cave which I long to throw open 'for public use.'

Let me try to indicate some of the advantages of the theory I am urging: It fits all ages, even the seven ages of man! It satisfies brilliant children and discovers intelligence in the dull. It secures attention, interest, concentration, without effort on the part of teacher or taught.

Children, I think, all children, so taught express themselves in forcible and fluent English and use a copious vocabulary. An unusual degree of nervous stability is attained; also, intellectual occupation seems to make for chastity in thought and life. Parents become interested in the schoolroom work, and find their children 'delightful companions.' Children show delight in books (other than story books) and manifest a genuine love of knowledge. Teachers are relieved from much of the labor of corrections. Children taught according to this method do exceptionally well at any school. It is unnecessary to stimulate these young scholars by marks, prizes, etc.

After all, it is not a quack medicine I am writing about, though the reader might think so, and there is no 1s. 1 ½d. a bottle in question!

Over thirty years ago I published a volume about the home

Henry Bompas Smith (1867-1953) was a British professor who specialized in the theory of education. He wrote *Education as the Training of Personality* and *Boys and Their Management in School*. He also wrote the arithmetic book that Charlotte assigned to Form 2 students, *A New Junior Arithmetic*.

The "seven ages of man" is a reference to *As You Like It*, a play by William Shakespeare. At the end of the play, the character Jacques describes the seven ages of man in his "All the world's a stage" monologue.

1s. 1 ½d. = 1 shilling and 1.5 pence

Charlotte is referring to *Home Education*, which was published in 1885.

CHARLOTTE'S WISE WORDS

"I am, I can, I ought, I will"

Children are born persons is the first of Charlotte's 20 Principles.

Credo (noun) - a statement of beliefs which guides one's actions

Like Francis Bacon, Thomas De Quincy (1785-1859) was a British essayist. Charlotte assigned several of De Quincy's essays to Form 5 students such as *Revolt of the Tartars*.

Charles James Fox (1749-1806) and Edmund Burke (1729-1797) were both Members of the British Parliament.

education of children and people wrote asking how those counsels of perfection could be carried out with the aid of the private governess as she then existed; it occurred to me that a series of curricula might be devised embodying sound principles and securing that children should be in a position of less dependence on their teacher than they then were; in other words, that their education should be largely self-education. A sort of correspondence school was set up, the motto of which, "I am, I can, I ought, I will," has had much effect in throwing children upon the possibilities, capabilities, duties and determining power belonging to them as persons.

"Children are born persons," is the first article of the educational *credo* in question. The response made by children (ranging in age from six to eighteen) astonished me; though they only showed the power of attention, the avidity for knowledge, the clearness of thought, the nice discrimination in books, and the ability to deal with many subjects, for which I had given them credit in advance. I need not repeat what I have urged elsewhere on the subject of 'Knowledge' and will only add that anyone may apply a test; let him read to a child of any age from six to ten an account of an incident, graphically and tersely told, and the child will relate what he has heard point by point, though not word for word, and will add delightful original touches; what is more, he will relate the passage months later because he has visualized the scene and appropriated that bit of knowledge. A rhetorical passage, written in 'journalese,' makes no impression on him; if a passage be read more than once, he may become letter-perfect, but the spirit, the individuality has gone out of the exercise. An older boy or girl will read one of Bacon's Essays, say, or a passage from De Quincey, and will write or tell it forcibly and with some style, either at the moment or months later. We know how Fox recited a whole pamphlet of Burke's at a College supper though he had probably read it no more than once. Here on the very surface is the key to that attention, interest, literary style, wide vocabulary, love of books and readiness in speaking, which we all feel

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should belong to an education that is only begun at school and continued throughout life; these are the things that we all desire, and how to obtain them is some part of the open secret I am laboring to disclose 'for public use.'

I am anxious to bring a quite successful educational experiment before the public at a moment when we are told on authority that "Education must be ... an appeal to the spirit if it is to be made interesting." Here is Education which is as interesting and fascinating as a fine art to parents, children, and teachers.

During the last thirty years, thousands of children educated on these lines have grown up in love with Knowledge and manifesting a 'right judgment in all things' so far as a pretty wide curriculum gives them data.

I would have children taught to *read* before they learn the mechanical arts of reading and writing; and they learn delightfully; they give perfect attention to paragraph or page read to them and are able to relate the matter point by point, *in their own words*; but they demand classical English and cannot learn to read in this sense upon anything less. They begin their 'schooling' in 'letters' at six, and begin at the same time to learn mechanical reading and writing. A child does not lose by spending a couple of years in acquiring these because he is meanwhile 'reading' the Bible, history, geography, tales, with close attention and a remarkable power of reproduction, or rather, of translation into his own language; he is acquiring a copious vocabulary and the habit of consecutive speech. In a word, he is an educated child from the first, and his power of dealing with books, with several books in the course of a morning's 'school,' increases with his age.

But children are not all alike; there is as much difference between them as between men or women; two or three months ago, a small boy, not quite six, came to school (by post); and his record was that he could read anything in five languages, and was now teaching himself the Greek characters, could find his way about the Continental Bradshaw, and was a

Bradshaw's Continental Railway Guide was published by British cartographer George Bradshaw (1800-1853).

chubby, vigorous little person. All this the boy brings with him when he comes to school; he is exceptional, of course, just as a man with such accomplishments is exceptional; but I believe that all children bring with them much capacity which is not recognized by their teachers, chiefly intellectual capacity, (always in advance of motor power), which we are apt to drown in deluges of explanation, or dissipate in futile labors in which there is no advance.

People are naturally divided into those who read and think and those who do not read or think; and the business of schools is to see that all their scholars shall belong to the former class; it is worthwhile to remember that thinking is inseparable from reading which is concerned with the content of a passage and not merely with the printed matter.

The children I am speaking of are much occupied with things as well as with books, because 'Education is the Science of Relations,' is the principle which regulates their curriculum; that is, a child goes to school with many aptitudes which he should put into effect. So, he learns a good deal of science, because children have no difficulty in understanding principles, though technical details baffle them. He practices various handicrafts that he may know the feel of wood, clay, leather, and the joy of handling tools, that is, that he may establish a due relation with materials. But, always, it is the book, the knowledge, the clay, the bird or blossom, he thinks of, not his own place or his own progress.

I am afraid that some knowledge of the theory we advance is necessary to the open-minded teacher who would give our practices a trial, because every detail of schoolroom work is the outcome of certain principles. For instance, it would be quite easy without much thought to experiment with our use of books; but in education, as in religion, it is the motive that counts, and the boy who reads his lesson for a 'good mark' becomes word-perfect, but does not *know*. But these principles are obvious and simple enough, and, when we consider that at present education is chaotic for want of a unifying theory, and

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CHARLOTTE'S WISE WORDS
"Education is the Science of Relations"

that there happens to be no other comprehensive theory in the field which is in line with modern thought and fits every occasion, might it not be well to try one which is immediately practicable and always pleasant and has proved itself by producing many capable, serviceable, dutiful men and women of sound judgment and willing mind?

In urging a method of self-education for children in lieu of the vicarious education which prevails, I should like to dwell on the enormous relief to teachers, a self-sacrificing and greatly overburdened class; the difference is just that between driving a horse that is light and a horse that is heavy in hand; the former covers the ground of his own gay will and the driver goes merrily. The teacher who allows his scholars the freedom of the city of books is at liberty to be their guide, philosopher and friend; and is no longer the mere instrument of forcible intellectual feeding.

CHARLOTTE'S WISE WORDS

“The teacher who allows his scholars the freedom of the city of books is at liberty to be their guide, philosopher and friend.”



About the Author

RACHEL LEBOWITZ is the owner of A Charlotte Mason Plenary. She and her husband have always homeschooled their two children using the Charlotte Mason method of education. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Houston where she studied Communications and Political Science. Before attending college, she travelled as a member of Up With People, a performing arts organization with a mission to transcend cultural barriers and create global understanding through music. After college, she spent many years working as a Radio and Television Journalist. She currently resides in Texas with her husband, two children, two dogs, and one guinea pig.

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