Excerpts from Charlotte Mason's Writings

Philosophy of Education Chapter 2: Children are Born Persons

1. The Mind Of A Child

"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."

It should not surprise the reader that a chapter, designed to set forth a startling truth, should open with the weighty words of an old Divine (Whichcote). But truths get flat and wonders stale upon us. We do not care much about the starry firmament, the budding trees, the cunning architecture of the birds; and to all except young parents and young brothers and sisters a baby is no longer a marvel. The completeness of the new baby brother is what children admire most, his toes and his fingers, his ears and all the small perfections of him. His guardians have some understanding of the baby; they know that his chief business is to grow and they feed him with food convenient for him. If they are wise they give free play to all the wrigglings and stretchings which give power to his feeble muscles. His parents know what he will come to, and feel that here is a new chance for the world. In the meantime, he needs food, sleep and shelter and a great deal of love. So much we all know. But is the baby more than a 'huge oyster'? That is the problem before us and hitherto educators have been inclined to answer it in the negative. Their notion is that by means of a pull here, a push there, a compression elsewhere a person is at last turned out according to the pattern the educator has in his mind.

The other view is that the beautiful infant frame is but the setting of a jewel of such astonishing worth that, put the whole world in one scale and this jewel in the other, and the scale which holds the world flies up outbalanced. A poet looks back on the glimmering haze of his own infancy and this is the sort of thing he sees,—

> "I was entertained like an angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory . . . Is it not strange that an infant should be heir of the whole world and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold? . . . The corn was orient and immortal wheat which never should be reaped nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious gold. The green trees transported and ravished me. Their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap . . . Boys and girls tumbling in the streets were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born or should die . . . The streets were mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it." [Thomas Traherne]

It takes a poet like Traherne to retain and produce such vivid memories, though perhaps we can all recall the sense that we were spectators at the show of life, and we can recollect a sunny time before we were able to speak or tell what we knew. *Punch* amused us at one time with a baby's views of his nurse and his surroundings and especially of the unwarranted pulls and pushes to which he was subject; but probably an infant is no critic. His business is to perceive and receive and these he does day in and day out.

We have an idea that poets say more than they know, express more than they see, and that their version

of life must be taken *cum grano*, but perhaps the fact is that no labour of the mind enables them to catch and put into words the full realities of which they are cognisant, and therefore we may take Wordsworth, Coleridge, Vaughan and the rest as witnesses who only hint at the glory which might be revealed. We are not poets and are disposed to discount the sayings of the poets, but the most prosaic of us comes across evidence of mind in children, and of mind astonishingly alert. Let us consider, in the first two years of life they manage to get through more intellectual effort than any following two years can show. Supposing that much-discussed Martian were at last able to make his way to our planet, think of how much he must learn before he could accommodate himself to our conditions! Our notions of hard and soft, wet and dry, hot and cold, stable and unstable, far and near, would be as foreign to him as they are to an infant who holds out his pinafore for the moon. We do not know what the Martian means of locomotion are but we can realise that to run and jump and climb stairs, even to sit and stand at will must require fully as much reasoned endeavour as it takes in after years to accomplish skating, dancing, skiing, fencing, whatever athletic exercises people spend years in perfecting; and all these the infant accomplishes in his first two years. He learns the properties of matter, knows colours and has first notions of size, solid, liquid; has learned in his third year to articulate with surprising clearness. What is more, he has learned a language, two languages, if he has had the opportunity, and the writer has known of three languages being mastered by a child of three, and one of them was Arabic; mastered, that is, so far that a child can say all that he needs to say in any one of the three—the sort of mastery most of us wish for when we are travelling in foreign countries.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu tells us that in her time the little children of Constantinople prattled in five tongues with a good knowledge of each. If we have not proved that a child is born a person with a mind as complete and as beautiful as his beautiful little body, we can at least show that he always has all the mind he requires for his occasions; that is, that his mind is the instrument of his education and that *his education does not produce his mind*.

Who shall measure the range of a child's thoughts? His continual questions about God, his speculations about 'Jesus,' are they no more than idle curiosity, or are they symptoms of a God-hunger with which we are all born, and is a child able to comprehend as much of the infinite and the unseen as are his self-complacent elders? Is he 'cabined, cribbed, confined,' in our ways and does the fairy tale afford a joyful escape to regions where all things are possible? We are told that children have no imagination, that they must needs see and touch, taste and handle, in order to know. While a child's age is still counted by months, he devotes himself to learning the properties of things by touching, pulling, tearing, throwing, tasting, but as months pass into years a *coup d'oeil* suffices for all but new things of complicated structure. Life is a continual progress to a child. He does not go over old things in old ways; his joy is to go on. The immensity of his powers brings its own terrors. Let me again quote Traherne,—

> "Another time in a lowering and sad evening being alone in the field when all things were dead and quiet a certain wanton horror fell upon me beyond imagination. The unprofitableness and silence of the place dissatisfied me: its wildness terrified me. From the utmost ends of the earth fear surrounded me . . . I was a weak and little child and had forgotten there was a man alive on the earth. Yet also something of hope and expectation comforted me from every border."

Traherne never loses the lessons that come to him and he goes on,—

> "This taught me that I was concerned in all the world . . . that the beauties of the earth were made to entertain me . . . that the presence of cities, temples and kingdoms, ought to sustain me and that to be alone in the world was to be desolate and miserable."

Reason is present in the infant as truly as imagination. As soon as he can speak he lets us know that he has pondered the 'cause why' of things and perplexes us with a thousand questions. His 'why?' is ceaseless. Nor are his reasonings always disinterested. How soon the little urchin learns to manage his

nurse or mother, to calculate her moods and play upon her feelings! It is in him to be a little tyrant; "he has a will of his own," says his nurse, but she is mistaken in supposing that his stormy manifestations of greed, wilfulness, temper, are signs of will. It is when the little boy is able to stop all these and restrain himself with quivering lip that his will comes into play; for he has a conscience too. Before he begins to toddle he knows the difference between right and wrong; even a baby in arms will blush at the 'naughty baby!' of his nurse; and that strong will of his acts in proportion as he learns the difficult art of obedience; for no one can make a child obey unless he wills to do so, and we all know how small a rebel may make confusion in house or schoolroom.

2. The Mind Of A School-Child

But we must leave the quite young child, fascinating as he is, and take him up again when he is ready for lessons. I have made some attempt elsewhere[1] to show what his parents and teachers owe to him in those years in which he is engaged in self-education, taking his lessons from everything he sees and hears, and strengthening his powers by everything he does. Here, in a volume which is chiefly concerned with education in the sense of schooling, I am anxious to bring before teachers the fact that a child comes into their hands with a mind of amazing potentialities: he has a brain too, no doubt, the organ and instrument of that same mind, as a piano is not music but the instrument of music. Probably we need not concern ourselves about the brain which is subject to the same conditions as the rest of the material body, is fed with the body's food, rests, as the body rests, requires fresh air and wholesome exercise to keep it in health, but depends upon the mind for its proper activities.

The world has concerned itself of late so much with psychology, whose province is what has been called 'the unconscious mind,' a region under the sway of nerves and blood (which it is best perhaps to let alone) that in our educational efforts we tend to ignore the mind and address ourselves to this region of symptoms. Now mind, being spiritual, knows no fatigue; brain, too, duly nourished with the food proper for the body, allowed due conditions of fresh air and rest, should not know fatigue; given these two conditions, we have a glorious field of educational possibilities; but it rests with us to evolve a theory and practice which afford due recognition to mind. An authoritative saying which we are apt to associate with the religious life only is equally applicable to education. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, we are told; but we have forgotten this great principle in our efforts at schooling children. We give them a 'play way' and play is altogether necessary and desirable but is not the avenue which leads to mind. We give them a fitting environment, which is again altogether desirable and, again, is not the way to mind. We teach them beautiful motion and we do well, for the body too must have its education; but we are not safe if we take these by-paths as approaches to mind. It is still true that that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. The way to mind is a quite direct way. Mind must come into contact with mind through the medium of ideas. "What is mind?" says the old conundrum, and the answer still is "No matter." It is necessary for us who teach to realize that things material have little effect upon mind, because there are still among us schools in which the work is altogether material and technical, whether the teaching is given by means of bars of wood or more scientific apparatus. The mistress of an Elementary School writes,—"The father of one of my girls said to me yesterday, 'You have given me some work to do. E. has let me have no rest until I promised to set up my microscope and get pond water to look for monads and other wonders.'" Here we have the right order. That which was born of the spirit, the idea, came first and demanded to confirm and illustrate. "How can these things be?" we ask, and the answer is not *evident*.

Education, like faith, is the evidence of things not seen. We must begin with the notion that the business of the body is to grow; and it grows upon food, which food is composed of living cells, each a perfect life in itself. In like manner, though all analogies are misleading and inadequate, the only fit sustenance for the mind is ideas, and an idea too, like the single cell of cellular tissue, appears to go through the stages and functions of a life. We receive it with appetite and some stir of interest. It appears to feed in a curious way. We hear of a new patent cure for the mind or the body, of the new thought of some poet, the new

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1 *Home Education*, by Charlotte Mason

notion of a school of painters; we take in, accept, the idea and for days after every book we read, every person we talk with brings food to the newly entertained notion. 'Not proven,' will be the verdict of the casual reader; but if he watch the behaviour of his own mind towards any of the ideas 'in the air,' he will find that some such process as I have described takes place; and this process must be considered carefully in the education of children. We may not take things casually as we have done. Our business is to give children the great ideas of life, of religion, history, science; but it is the ideas we must give, clothed upon with facts as they occur, and must leave the child to deal with these as he chooses.

This is how he deals with Geography, for example:—

> "When I heard of any new kingdom beyond the seas the light and glory of it entered into me. It rose up within me and I was enlarged by the whole. I entered into it, I saw its commodities, springs, meadows, inhabitants and became possessor of that new room as if it had been prepared for me so much was I magnified and delighted in it. When the Bible was read my spirit was present in other ages. I saw the light and splendour of them, the land of Canaan, the Israelites entering into it, the ancient glory of the Amorites, their peace and riches, their cities, houses, vines and fig trees . . . I saw and felt all in such a lively manner as if there had been no other way to those places but in spirit only. Without changing place in myself I could behold and enjoy all those. Anything when it was proposed though it was a thousand years ago being always present before me."

I venture again to quote Traherne because I know of no writer who retains so clear a memory of his infancy; but Goethe gives as full and convincing an account of his experience of the Bible[2] ; I say 'experience' advisedly, for the word denotes the process by which children get to know. They *experience* all the things they hear and read of; these enter into them and are their life; and thus it is that ideas feed the mind in the most literal sense of the word 'feed.'

Do our Geography lessons take the children *there*? Do, they experience, live in, our story of the call of Abraham?—or of the healing of the blind man on the way to Jericho? If they do not, it is not for lack of earnestness and intention on the part of the teacher; his error is rather want of confidence in children. He has not formed a just measure of a child's mind and bores his scholars with much talk about matters which they are able to understand for themselves much better than he does. How many teachers know that children require no pictures excepting the pictures of great artists, which have quite another function than that of illustration? They see for themselves in their own minds a far more glorious, and indeed more accurate, presentation than we can afford in our miserable daubs. They read between the lines and put in all the author has left out. A child of nine, who had been reading Lang's *Tales Of Troy and Greece*, drew Ulysses on the Isle of Calypso cutting down trees to make a raft; a child of ten, revelling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, drew that Indian Princess bringing her lovely boy to Titania. We others are content to know that Ulysses built a raft, that the boy was the child of an Indian Princess. This is how any child's mind works, and our concern is not to starve these fertile intelligences. They must have food in great abundance and variety. They know what to do with it well enough and we need not disturb ourselves to provide for the separate exercise of each so-called 'faculty'; for the mind is one and works all together; reason, imagination, reflection, judgment, what you please, are like 'all hands' summoned by the 'heave-ho!' of the boatswain. All swarm on deck for the lading of cargo, that rich and odorous cargo of ideas which the fair vessel of a child's mind is waiting to receive. Do we wish every child in a class to say,—or, if he does not say, to feel,—"I was enlarged wonderfully" by a Geography lesson? Let him see the place with the eyes of those who have seen or conceived it; your barographs, thermographs, contour lines, relief models, sections, profiles and the like, will not do it. A map of the world must be a panorama to a child of pictures so entrancing that he would rather ponder them than go out to play; and nothing is more easy than to give him this *joie de vivre*. Let him see the world as we ourselves choose to see it when we travel; its cities and peoples, its mountains and rivers, and he will go away from his lesson with the piece of the world he has read about, be it county or country, sea or shore, as that of "a new room prepared for

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2 See *Some Studies in the Formation of Charcter* by Charlotte Mason

him, so much will he be magnified and delighted in it." All the world is in truth the child's possession, prepared for him, and if we keep him out of his rights by our technical, commercial, even historical, geography, any sort of geography, in fact, made to illustrate our theories, we are guilty of fraudulent practices. What he wants is the world and every bit, piece by piece, each bit a key to the rest. He reads of the [tidal] Bore of the Severn [River] and is on speaking terms with a 'Bore' wherever it occurs. He need not see a mountain to know a mountain. He sees all that is described to him with a vividness of which we know nothing just as if there had been "no other way to those places but in spirit only." Who can take the measure of a child? The Genie of the Arabian tale is nothing to him. He, too, may be let out of his bottle and fill the world. But woe to us if we keep him corked up.

Enough, that the children have minds, and every man's mind is his means of living; but it is a great deal more. Working men will have leisure in the future and how this leisure is to be employed is a question much discussed. Now, no one can employ leisure fitly whose mind is not brought into active play every day; the small affairs of a man's own life supply no intellectual food and but small and monotonous intellectual exercise. Science, history, philosophy, literature, must no longer be the luxuries of the 'educated' classes; all classes must be educated and sit down to these things of the mind as they do to their daily bread. History must afford its pageants, science its wonders, literature its intimacies, philosophy its speculations, religion its assurances to every man, and his education must have prepared him for wanderings in these realms of gold.

How do we prepare a child, again, to use the aesthetic sense with which he appears to come provided? His education should furnish him with whole galleries of mental pictures, pictures by great artists old and new;—Israels' *Pancake Woman*, his *Children by the Sea*; Millet's *Feeding the Birds*, *First Steps*, *Angelus*; Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, *The Supper at Emmaus*; Velasquez's *Surrender of Breda*,—in fact, every child should leave school with at least a couple of hundred pictures by great masters hanging permanently in the halls of his imagination, to say nothing of great buildings, sculpture, beauty of form and colour in things he see. Perhaps we might secure at least a hundred lovely landscapes too,—sunsets, cloudscapes, starlight nights. At any rate he should go forth well furnished because imagination has the property of magical expansion, the more it holds the more it will hold.

It is not only a child's intellect but his heart that comes to us thoroughly furnished. Can any of us love like a little child? Father and mother, sisters and brothers, neighbours and friends, "our" cat and "our" dog, the wretchedest old stump of a broken toy, all come in for his lavish tenderness. How generous and grateful he is, how kind and simple, how pitiful and how full of benevolence in the strict sense of goodwill, how loyal and humble, how fair and just! His conscience is on the alert. Is a tale true? Is a person good?—these are the important questions. His *conscience* chides him when he is naughty, and by degrees as he is trained, his *will* comes to his aid and he learns to order his life. He is taught to say his prayers, and we elders hardly realize how real his prayers are to a child.

3. Motives For Learning

Now place a teacher before a class of persons the beauty and immensity of each one of whom I have tried to indicate and he will say, "What have I to offer them?" His dull routine lessons crumble into the dust they are when he faces children as they are. He cannot go on offering them his stale commonplaces; he feels that he may not bore them; that he may not prick the minds he has dulled by unworthy motives of greed or emulation; he would not invite a parcel of children to a Timon feast of smoke and lukewarm water. He knows that children's minds hunger at regular intervals as do their bodies; that they hunger for knowledge, not for information, and that his own poor stock of knowledge is not enough, his own desultory talk has not substance enough; that his irrelevant remarks interrupt a child's train of thought; that, in a word, he is not sufficient for these things.

On the other hand, the children, the children of the slums especially, have no vocabulary to speak of, no background of thought derived from a cultured environment. They are like goodly pitchers, capable of holding much but with necks so narrow that only the thinnest stream can trickle in. So we have thought hitherto, and our teaching has been diluted to dishwater and the pitchers have gone empty away.

But we have changed all that. Just as in the War the magnanimous, patriotic citizen was manifested in every man so in our schools every child has been discovered to be a person of infinite possibilities. I say every child, for so-called 'backward' children are no exception. I shall venture to bring before the reader some experiences of the *Parents' Union School* as being ground with which I am familiar. Examination papers representing tens of thousands of children working in Elementary Schools, Secondary Schools and home schoolrooms have just passed under my eye. How the children have revelled in knowledge! and how good and interesting all their answers are! How well they spell on the whole and how well they write! We do not need the testimony of their teachers that the work of the term has been joyous; the verve with which the children tell what they know proves the fact. Every one of these children knows that there are hundreds of pleasant places for the mind to roam in. They are good and happy because some little care has been taken to know what they are and what they require; a care very amply rewarded by results which alter the whole outlook on education. In our Training College, the students are not taught how to stimulate attention, how to keep order, how to give marks, how to punish or even how to reward, how to manage a large class or a small school with children in different classes. All these things come by nature in a school where the teachers know something of the capacities and requirements of children. To hear children of the slums 'telling' *King Lear* or *Woodstock*, by the hour if you will let them, or describing with minutest details Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb* or Botticelli's *Spring*, is a surprise, a revelation. We take off our shoes from off our feet; we 'did not know it was in them,' whether we be their parents, their teachers or mere lookers-on. And with some feeling of awe upon us we shall be the better prepared to consider how and upon what children should be educated. I will only add that I make no claims for them which cannot be justified by hundreds, thousands, of instances within our experience.

Philosophy of Education, Chapter 5: The Sacredness of Personality

These principles (ie., authority and docility) are limited by the respect due to the personality of children which may 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.

People are too apt to use children as counters in a game, to be moved hither and thither according to the whim of the moment. Our crying need to-day is less for a better method of education than for an adequate conception of children,—children, merely as human beings, whether brilliant or dull, precocious or backward. Exceptional qualities take care of themselves and so does the 'wanting' intelligence, and both of these share with the rest in all that is claimed for them in the previous chapters. Our business is to find out how great a mystery a person is *qua* person. All action comes out of the ideas we hold and if we ponder duly upon personality we shall come to perceive that we cannot commit a greater offence than to maim or crush, or subvert any part of a person.

We have many ingenious, not to say affectionate, ways of doing this, all of them more or less based upon that egoism which persuades us that in proportion to a child's dependence is our superiority, that all we do for him is of our grace and favour, and that we have a right, whether as parents or teachers, to do what we will with our own. Have we considered that in the Divine estimate the child's estate is higher than ours; that it is ours to "become as little children," rather than theirs to become as grown men and women; that the rules we receive for the bringing up of children are for the most part negative? We may not despise them, or hinder them, ("suffer little children"), or offend them by our brutish clumsiness of action and want of serious thought; while the one positive precept afforded to us is "feed" (which should be rendered 'pasture') "my lambs," place them in the midst of abundant food. A teacher in a Yorkshire Council School renders this precept as,—"I had left them in the pasture and came back and found them feeding," that is, she had left a big class reading a given lesson and found them on her return still reading with eagerness and satisfaction. *Maxima reverentia debetur pueris* has a wider meaning than it generally receives. We take it as meaning that we should not do or say anything unseemly before the young, but does it not also include a profound and reverent study of the properties and possibilities present in a child?

Nor need we be alarmed at so wide a programme. The vice which hinders us in the bringing up of children is that so heavily censured in the Gospel. We are not simple; we act our parts and play in an unlawful way upon motives. Perhaps after all the least reprehensible pedagogic motive is that which is most condemned and the terrorism of 'Mr. Creakle' may produce a grey record in comparison with the blackness of more subtle methods of undermining personality. We can only touch upon a few of these, but a part may stand for the whole. For the action of fear as a governing motive we cannot do better than read again our *David Copperfield* (a great educational treatise) and study 'Mr. Creakle' in detail for terrorism in the schoolroom and 'Mr. Murdstone' for the same vice in the home. But,—is it through the influence of Dickens?—fear is no longer the acknowledged basis of school discipline; we have methods more subtle than the mere terrors of the law. Love is one of these. The person of winning personality attracts his pupils (or hers) who will do anything for his sake and are fond and eager in all their ways, docile to that point where personality is submerged, and they live on the smiles, perish on the averted looks, of the adored teacher. Parents look on with a smile and think that all is well; but Bob or Mary is losing that growing time which should make a self-dependent, self-ordered person, and is day by day becoming a parasite who can go only as he is carried, the easy prey of fanatic or demagogue. This sort of encroachment upon the love of children offers as a motive, 'do this for my sake'; wrong is to be avoided lest it grieve the teacher, good is to be done to pleasure him; for this end a boy learns his lessons, behaves properly, shows good will, produces a whole catalogue of schoolboy virtues and yet his character is being undermined.

'Suggestion' goes to work more subtly. The teacher has mastered the gamut of motives which play upon human nature and every suggestion is aimed at one or other of these. He may not use the nursery suggestions of lollipops or bogies but he does in reality employ these if expressed in more spiritual

values, suggestions subtly applied to the idiosyncrasies of a given child. 'Suggestion' is too subtle to be illustrated with advantage: Dr. Stephen Paget holds that it should be used only as a surgeon uses an anesthetic; but it is an instrument easy to handle, and unconsidered suggestion plays on a child's mind as the winds on a weathercock. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel" is the unfortunate child's doom; for how is it possible for stability of mind and character to evolve under a continual play of changing suggestions? But this it will be said is true of the unconsidered suggestion. What of a carefully laid train, all leading in the same direction, to produce perseverance, frankness, courage, any other excellent virtue? The child is even worse off in such a case. That particular virtue becomes detestable; no other virtue is inviting; and he is acquiring no strength to stand alone but waits in all his doings for promptings from without. Perhaps the gravest danger attending this practice is that every suggestion received lays the person open to the next and the next. A due respect for the personality of children and a dread of making them incompetent to conduct their own lives will make us chary of employing a means so dangerous, no matter how good the immediate end.

Akin to suggestion is influence, which acts not so much by well-directed word or inciting action as by a sort of atmosphere proceeding from the teacher and enveloping the taught. Late in the last century goody-goody books were written about the beauty of influence, the duty of influence, the study of the means of influence, and children were brought up with the notion that to influence other persons consciously was a moral duty. No doubt such influence is inevitable; we must needs affect one another, not so much by what we do or say as by that which we are, and so far influence is natural and wholesome. We imbibe it from persons real and imaginary and we are kept strong and upright by currents and counter-currents of unstudied influence. Supineness before a single, steady, persistent influence is a different matter, and the schoolgirl who idolises her mistress, the boy who worships his master, is deprived of the chance of free and independent living. His personality fails to develop and he goes into the world as a parasitic plant, clinging ever to the support of some stronger character.

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We have considered the several desires whose function is to stimulate the mind and save us from that *vis inertiae* which is our besetting danger. Each such desire has its place but the results are disastrous if any one should dominate. It so happens that the last desire we have to consider, the desire of knowledge, is commonly deprived of its proper function in our schools by the predominance of other springs of action, especially of emulation, the desire of place, and avarice, the desire of wealth, tangible profit. This divine curiosity is recognised in ordinary life chiefly as a desire to know trivial things. What did it cost? What did she say? Who was with him? Where are they going? How many postage stamps in line would go round the world? And curiosity is satisfied by incoherent, scrappy information which serves no purpose, assuredly not the purpose of knowledge whose function is to nourish the mind as food nourishes the body. But so besotted is our educational thought that we believe children regard knowledge rather as repulsive medicine than as inviting food. Hence our dependence on marks and prizes, athletics, alluring presentation, any jam we can devise to disguise the powder. The man who wilfully goes on crutches has incompetent legs; he who chooses to go blindfold has eyes that cannot bear the sun; he who lives on pap-meat has weak digestive powers, and he whose mind is sustained by the crutches of emulation and avarice loses that one stimulating power which is sufficient for his intellectual needs. This atrophy of the desire of knowledge is the penalty our scholars pay because we have chosen to make them work for inferior ends. Our young men and maidens do not read unless with the stimulus of a forthcoming examination. They are good-natured and pleasant but have no wide range of thought, lofty purpose, little of the magnanimity which is proper for a citizen. Great thoughts and great actions are strange to them, though the possibility is still there and they may yet shew in peace such action as we have seen and wondered at during the War. But we cannot always educate by means of a great war; the penalties are too heavy for human nature to endure for long. Therefore the *stimuli* to greatness, magnanimity, which the war afforded we must produce in the ordinary course of education.

But knowledge is delectable. We have all the 'satiable curtiosity' of Mr. Kipling's Elephant even when we content ourselves with the broken meats flung by the daily press. Knowledge is to us as our mother's milk, we grow thereby and in the act of sucking are admirably content.

The work of education is greatly simplified when we realize that children, apparently all children, want to know all human knowledge; they have an appetite for what is put before them, and, knowing this, our teaching becomes buoyant with the courage of our convictions. We know how Richelieu shut up colleges throughout France, both Jesuit and secular, "in order to prevent the mania of the poor for educating their children which distracts them from the pursuits of trade and war." This mania exists with us, not only in the parents but in the children, the mania of hungry souls clamouring for meat, and we choke them off, not by shutting up schools and colleges, but by offering matter which no living soul can digest. The complaints made by teachers and children of the monotony of the work in our schools is full of pathos and all credit to those teachers who cheer the weary path by entertaining devices. But mind does not live and grow upon entertainment; it requires its solid meals.

The Gloucestershire teachers, under Mr. Household's direction, have entered so fully into the principles implied in the method, that I am tempted to illustrate largely from their experience. But they by no means stand alone. Hundreds of other teachers have the same experiences and describe them as opportunity offers. The finding of this power which is described as 'sensing a passage,' is as the striking of a vein of gold in that fabulously rich country, human nature. Our 'find' is that children have a natural aptitude for literary expression which they enjoy in hearing or reading and employ in telling or writing. We might have guessed this long ago. All those speeches and sayings of untamed warriors and savage potentates which the historians have preserved for us, critics have declined as showing too much cultivated rhetoric to have been possible for any but highly educated persons. But the time is coming when we shall perceive that only minds like those of children are capable of producing thoughts so fresh and so finely expressed. This natural aptitude for literature, or, shall we say, rhetoric, which overcomes the disabilities of a poor vocabulary without effort, should direct the manner of instruction we give, ruling out the talky-talky of the oral lesson and the lecture; ruling out, equally, compilations and text-books; and placing books in the hands of children and only those which are more or less literary in character that is, which have the terseness and vividness proper to literary work. The natural desire for knowledge does the rest and the children feed and grow.

It must be borne in mind that in proportion as other desires are stimulated that of knowledge is suppressed. The teacher who proposes marks and places as worthy aims will get work certainly but he will get no healthy love of knowledge for its own sake and no provision against the *ennui* of later days. The monotony I have spoken of attends all work prompted by the *stimuli* of marks and places; such work becomes mechanical, and there is hardly enough of it prepared to last through the course of a boy's school life. The master of a Preparatory School remarks,—"It must be a well-known fact (I am not speaking of the exceptional but of the average boy) that new boys are placed too low. We find it is a common experience—that if we send up a boy whether he be a good mathematician, a good classic, a good English scholar or a good linguist, a couple of years will pass by before he is doing at the Public School the work he was doing when he left us." The Public School-master makes the same sort of complaint; he says, that "At twenty the boy is climbing the same pear-tree that be climbed at twelve," that is to say, work which is done in view of examinations must be of the rather narrow mechanical kind upon which it is possible to set questions and mark answers with absolute fairness. Now, definite progress, continual advance from day to day with no treading of old ground, is a condition of education.

There is an uneasy dread in some minds lest a liberal education for all, the possibility which is now before us, should cause a social *bouleversement*, such an upheaval as obtained in the French Revolution. But this fear arises from an erroneous conception. The doctrine of equal opportunities for all is no doubt dangerous. It is the intellectual rendering of the 'survival of the fittest' and we have had a terrible object lesson as to how that doctrine works. The uneasy, ambitious spirit comes to the front, gets all the chances, dominates his fellows, and thinks no upheaval too great a price for the advancement of himself and his notions. Men of this type come to the top through the avenue of examinations. Ambition and possibly greed are seconded by dogged perseverance. As was said of Louis xiv, such men elevate their practice into a theory and arrogate to their habits the character of principles of government. And these pseudo-principles inflame the populace because they promise place and power to every man in the state, with no sense of the proportion he bears to the rest. Probably the 'labour unrest' of to-day is not without connexion with the habit of working in our schools for prizes and places. The boy who works to be first

and to get something out of it does not always become the quiet, well-ordered citizen who helps to cement society and carries on the work of the State.

Knowledge pursued for its own sake is sedative in so far as it is satisfying; and the splendid consciousness that every boy in your Form has your own delight in knowing, your own pleasure in expressing that which he knows, shares your intimacy with this and the other sage and hero, makes for good fellowship and magnanimity and should deliver the citizen from a restless desire to come to the front. It is possible that a conscientious and intelligent teacher may be a little overwhelmed when he considers all that goes to a man, all that goes to each of the boys under his care. It is true that,

> "There lives
> No faculty within us which the Soul
> Can spare: and humblest earthly weal demands
> For dignity not placed beyond her reach
> Zealous co-operation of all means
> Given or required to raise us from the mire
> And liberate our hearts from low pursuits
> By gross utilities enslaved; we need
> More of ennobling impulse from the past
> If for the future aught of good must come."
> [from *Musings Near Aquapendente*, by William Wordsworth]

Wordsworth is no doubt right. There is no faculty within the soul which can be spared in the great work of education; but then every faculty, or rather power, works to the one end if we make the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake the object of our educational efforts. We find children ready and eager for this labour and their accomplishment is surprising.

Philosophy of Education, Chapter 6: Three Instruments of Education

1.—Education is an Atmosphere

Seeing that we are limited by the respect due to the personality of children we can allow ourselves but three educational instruments––the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit and the presentation of living ideas. Our motto is,––'Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.' 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' specially 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.

Having cut out the direct use of fear or love, suggestion or influence, undue play upon any one natural desire, emulation, for example, we are no longer free to use all means in the education of children. There are but three left for our use and to each of these we must give careful study or we shall not realise how great a scope is left to us. To consider the first of these educational instruments; for a decade or two we have pinned our faith on environment as a great part of education; as, say, nine-tenths rather than a third part of the whole. The theory has been,––put a child in the right environment and so subtle is its influence, so permanent its effects that he is to all intents and purposes educated thereby. Schools may add Latin and sums and whatever else their curriculum contains, but the actual education is, as it were, performed upon a child by means of colour schemes, harmonious sounds, beautiful forms, gracious persons. He grows up aesthetically educated into sweet reasonableness and harmony with his surroundings.

"Peter's nursery was a perfect dream in which to hatch the soul of a little boy. Its walls were done in warm, cream-coloured paint and upon them Peter's father had put the most lovely patterns of trotting and jumping horses and dancing cats and dogs and leaping lambs, a carnival of beasts . . . there was a big brass fire-guard in Peter's nursery . . . and all the tables had smoothly rounded corners against the days when Peter would run about. The floor was of cork carpet on which Peter would put his toys and there was a crimson hearthrug on which Peter was destined to crawl . . . there were scales in Peter's nursery to weigh Peter every week and tables to show how much he ought to weigh and when one should begin to feel anxious. There was nothing casual about the early years of Peter."

So, Mr. [*H.G.*] Wells, in that inconclusive educational treatise of his, *Joan and Peter*. It is an accurate picture of the preparation for 'high-souled' little persons all over the world. Parents make tremendous sacrifices to that goddess who presides over Education. We hear of a pair investing more than their capital in a statue to adorn the staircase in order that 'Tommy' should make his soul by the contemplation of beauty. This sort of thing has been going on since the 'eighties at any rate and, as usual, Germany erected a high altar for the cult which she passed on to the rest of us. Perhaps it is safe to say that the Young Intelligenzia of Europe have been reared after this manner. And is the result that Neo-Georgian youth *Punch* presents to us with his air of weariness, condescension and self-complacency? Let us hear Professor Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose, the Indian scientist, on one of his conclusions concerning the nervous impulse in plants,

"A plant carefully protected under glass from outside shocks looks sleek and flourishing but

its higher nervous function is then found to be atrophied. But when a succession of "blows" (electric shocks) "is rained on this effete and bloated specimen, the shocks themselves create nervous channels and arouse anew the deteriorated nature. Is it not the shocks of adversity and not cotton wool protection that evolve true manhood?"

We had thought that the terrible succession of blows inflicted by the War had changed all that; but, no; the errors of education still hold sway and we still have amongst us the better-than-my-neighbour folk, whose function, let us hope, is to administer the benefits of adversity to most of us. What if parents and teachers in their zeal misread the schedule of their duties, magnified their office unduly and encroached upon the personality of children? It is not an environment that these want, a set of artificial relations carefully constructed, but an *atmosphere* which nobody has been at pains to constitute. It is there, about the child, his natural element, precisely as the atmosphere of the earth is about us. It is thrown off, as it were, from persons and things, stirred by events, sweetened by love, ventilated, kept in motion, by the regulated action of common sense. We all know the natural conditions under which a child should live; how he shares household ways with his mother, romps with his father, is teased by his brothers and petted by his sisters; is taught by his tumbles; learns self-denial by the baby's needs, the delightfulness of furniture by playing at battle and siege with sofa and table; learns veneration for the old by the visits of his great-grandmother; how to live with his equals by the chums he gathers round him; learns intimacy with animals from his dog and cat; delight in the fields where the buttercups grow and greater delight in the blackberry hedges. And, what tempered 'fusion of classes' is so effective as a child's intimacy with his betters, and also with cook and housemaid, blacksmith and joiner, with everybody who comes in his way? Children have a genius for this sort of general intimacy, a valuable part of their education; care and guidance are needed, of course, lest admiring friends should make fools of them, but no compounded 'environment' could make up for this fresh air, this wholesome wind blowing now from one point, now from another.

We certainly may use atmosphere as an instrument of education, but there are prohibitions, for ourselves rather than for children. Perhaps the chief of these is, that no artificial element be introduced, no sprinkling with rose-water, softening with cushions. Children must face life as it is; if their parents are anxious and perturbed children feel it in the air. "Mummie, Mummie, you aren't going to cry this time, are you?" and a child's hug tries to take away the trouble. By these things children live and we may not keep them in glass cases; if we do, they develop in succulence and softness and will not become plants of renown. But due relations must be maintained; the parents are in authority, the children in obedience; and again, the strong may not lay their burdens on the weak; nor must we expect from children that effort of decision, the most fatiguing in our lives, of which the young should generally be relieved.

School, perhaps, offers fewer opportunities for vitiating the atmosphere than does home life. But teaching may be so watered down and sweetened, teachers may be so suave and condescending, as to bring about a condition of intellectual feebleness and moral softness which it is not easy for a child to overcome. The bracing atmosphere of truth and sincerity should be perceived in every School; and here again the common pursuit of knowledge by teacher and class comes to our aid and creates a Current of fresh air perceptible even to the chance visitor, who sees the glow of intellectual life and moral health on the faces of teachers and children alike.

But a school may be working hard, not for love of knowledge, but for love of marks, our old enemy; and then young faces are not serene and joyous but eager, restless, apt to look

anxious and worried. The children do not sleep well and are cross; are sullen or in tears if anything goes wrong, and are, generally, difficult to manage. When this is the case there is too much oxygen in the air; they are breathing a too stimulating atmosphere, and the nervous strain to which they are subjected must needs be followed by reaction. Then teachers think that lessons have been too hard, that children should be relieved of this and that study; the doctors probably advise that so-and-so should 'run wild' for a year. Poor little soul, at the very moment when he is most in need of knowledge for his sustenance he is left to prey upon himself! No wonder the nervous symptoms become worse, and the boy or girl suffers under the stigma of 'nervous strain.' The fault has been in the atmosphere and not in the work; the teacher, perhaps, is over anxious that her children should do well and her nervous excitation is catching. "I am afraid X cannot do his examination; he loves his work but he bursts into tears when he is asked an examination question. Perhaps it is that I have insisted too much that he must never be satisfied with anything but his best." Poor little chap (of seven) pricked into over exertion by the spur of moral stimulus! We foresee happy days for children when all teachers know that no other exciting motive whatever is necessary to produce good work in each individual of however big a class than that love of knowledge which is natural to every child. The serenity and sweetness of schools conducted on this principle is surprising to the outsider who has not reflected upon the contentment of a baby with his bottle!

There are two courses open to us in this matter. One, to create by all manner of modified conditions a hot-house atmosphere, fragrant but emasculating, in which children grow apace but are feeble and dependent; the other to leave them open to all the "airts that blow," but with care lest they be unduly battered; lest, for example, a miasma come their way in the shape of a vicious companion.

2.—Education is a Discipline

By this formula we mean the discipline of habits formed definitely and thoughtfully whether habits of mind or of body. Physiologists tell us of the adaptation of brain structure to habitual lines of thought, i.e., to our habits.

Education is not after all to either teacher or child the fine careless rapture we appear to have figured it. We who teach and they who learn are alike constrained; there is always effort to be made in certain directions; yet we face our tasks from a new point of view. We need not labour to get children to learn their lessons; that, if we would believe it, is a matter which nature takes care of. Let the lessons be of the right sort and children will learn them with delight. The call for strenuousness comes with the necessity of forming habits; but here again we are relieved. The intellectual habits of the good life form themselves in the following out of the due curriculum in the right way. As we have already urged, there is but one right way, that is, children must do the work for themselves. They must read the given pages and tell what they have read, they must perform, that is, what we may call the *act of knowing*. We are all aware, alas, what a monstrous quantity of printed matter has gone into the dustbin of our memories, because we have failed to perform that quite natural and spontaneous 'act of knowing,' as easy to a child as breathing and, if we would believe it, comparatively easy to ourselves. The reward is two-fold: no intellectual habit is so valuable as that of attention; it is a mere habit but it is also the hall-mark of an educated person. Use is second nature, we are told; it is not too much to say that 'habit is ten natures,' and we can all imagine how our work would be eased if our subordinates listened to instructions with the full attention which implies recollection––Attention is not the only habit that follows due self-education. The habits of fitting and ready expression, of

obedience, of good-will, and of an impersonal outlook are spontaneous bye-products of education in this sort. So, too, are the habits of right thinking and right judging; while physical habits of neatness and order attend upon the self-respect which follows an education which respects the personality of children.

Physiologists tell us that thoughts which have become habitual make somehow a mark upon the brain substance, but we are bold in calling it a mark for there is no discernible effect to be quoted. Whether or no the mind be served by the brain in this matter, we are empirically certain that a chief function of education is the establishment of such ways of thinking in children as shall issue in good and useful living, clear thinking, aesthetic enjoyment, and, above all, in the religious life. How it is possible that spirit should act upon matter is a mystery to us, but that such act takes place we perceive every time we note a scowling brow, or, on the other hand,––

> "A sweet attractive kind of grace,
> A full assurance given by looks;
> Continual comfort in a face,
> The lineaments of gospel books."

We all know how the physical effort of smiling affects ourselves in our sour moods,––

> "Nor soul helps flesh more now, than flesh helps soul"

Both are at our service in laying down the rails, so to speak, upon which the good life must needs run.

In the past we have, no doubt, gone through an age of infant slavery, an age of good habits enforced by vigorous penalties, conscientiously by the over scrupulous eighteenth century parent, and infamously by the school masters, the 'Creakies' and the 'Squeers' who laboured only for their own ease and profit. Now, the pendulum swings the other way. We have lost sight of the fact that habit is to life what rails are to transport cars. It follows that lines of habit must be laid down towards given ends and after careful survey, or the joltings and delays of life become insupportable. More, habit is inevitable. If we fail to ease life by laying down habits of right thinking and right acting, habits of wrong thinking and wrong acting fix themselves of their own accord. We avoid decision and indecision brings its own delays, "and days are lost lamenting o'er lost days." Almost every child is brought up by his parents in certain habits of decency and order without which he would be a social outcast. Think from another point of view how the labour of life would be increased if every act of the bath, toilet, table, every lifting of the fork and use of spoon were a matter of consideration and required an effort of decision! No; habit is like fire, a bad master but an indispensable servant; and probably one reason for the nervous scrupulosity, hesitation, indecision of our day, is that life was not duly eased for us in the first place by those whose business it was to lay down lines of habit upon which our behaviour might run easily.

It is unnecessary to enumerate those habits which we should aim at forming, for everyone knows more about these than anyone practises. We admire the easy carriage of the soldier but shrink from the discipline which is able to produce it. We admire the lady who can sit upright through a long dinner, who in her old age prefers a straight chair because she has arrived at due muscular balance and has done so by a course of discipline. There is no other way of forming any good habit, though the discipline is usually that of the internal government which the person exercises upon himself; but a certain strenuousness in the formation of good habits is necessary because every such habit is the result of conflict. The

bad habit of the easy life is always pleasant and persuasive and to be resisted with pain and effort, but with hope and certainty of success, because in our very structure is the preparation for forming such habits of muscle and mind as we deliberately propose to ourselves. We entertain the idea which gives birth to the act and the act repeated again and again becomes the habit; 'Sow an act,' we are told, 'reap a habit.' 'Sow a habit, reap a character.' But we must go a step further back, we must sow the idea or notion which makes the act worth while. The lazy boy who hears of the Great Duke's narrow camp bed, preferred by him because when he wanted to turn over it was time to get up, receives the idea of prompt rising. But his nurse or his mother knows how often and how ingeniously the tale must be brought to his mind before the habit of prompt rising is formed; she knows too how the idea of self-conquest must be made at home in the boy's mind until it become a chivalric impulse which he cannot resist. It is possible to sow a great idea lightly and casually and perhaps this sort of sowing should be rare and casual because if a child detect a definite purpose in his mentor he is apt to stiffen himself against it. When parent or teacher supposes that a good habit is a matter of obedience to his authority, he relaxes a little. A boy is late who has been making evident efforts to be punctual; the teacher good-naturedly foregoes rebuke or penalty, and the boy says to himself,––"It doesn't matter," and begins to form the unpunctual habit. The mistake the teacher makes is to suppose that to be punctual is troublesome to the boy, so he will let him off; whereas the office of the habits of an ordered life is to make such life easy and spontaneous; the effort is confined to the first half dozen or score of occasions for doing the thing.

Consider how laborious life would be were its wheels not greased by habits of cleanliness, neatness, order, courtesy; had we to make the effort of decision about every detail of dressing and eating, coming and going, life would not be worth living. Every cottage mother knows that she must train her child in habits of decency, and a whole code of habits of propriety get themselves formed just because a breach in any such habit causes a shock to others which few children have courage to face. Physical fitness, morals and manners, are very largely the outcome of habit; and not only so, but the habits of the religious life also become fixed and delightful and give us due support in the effort to live a godly, righteous and sober life. We need not be deterred by the fear that religious habits in a child are mechanical, uninformed by the ideas which should give them value. Let us hear what the young De Quincey felt about going to church:––

"On Sunday mornings I went with the rest of my family to church: it was a church on the ancient model of England having aisles, galleries, organ, all things ancient and venerable, and the proportions were majestic. Here, whilst the congregation knelt through the long litany, as often as we came to that passage so beautiful amongst many that are so where God is supplicated on behalf of 'all sick persons and young children' and 'that He would show His pity upon all prisoners and captives,' I wept in secret, and raising my streaming eyes to the upper windows saw, on days when the sun was shining, a spectacle as affecting as ever prophet can have beheld . . . *there* were the Apostles that had trampled upon earth and the glories upon earth, *there* were the martyrs who had borne witness to the truth through flames . . . and all the time I saw through the wide central field of the window where the glass was uncoloured white fleecy clouds sailing over the azure depths of the sky."

And then the little boy had visions of sick children upon whom God would have pity.––

"These visions were self-sustained, the hint from the Litany, the fragment from the clouds, those and the storied windows were sufficient. God speaks to children also in dreams and by the oracles that lurk in darkness; but in solitude, above all things when made vocal to the

meditative heart by the truths and services of a national church, God holds with children 'communion undisturbed.'"

With such a testimony before us, supported by gleams of recollection on our own part, we may take courage to believe that what we rightly call Divine Service is particularly appropriate to children; and will become more so as the habit of reading beautifully written books quickens their sense of style and their unconscious appreciation of the surpassingly beautiful diction of our liturgy.

We have seen the value of habit in mind and morals, religion and physical development. It is as we have seen disastrous when child or man learns to think in a groove, and shivers like an unaccustomed bather on the steps of a new notion. This danger is perhaps averted by giving children as their daily diet the wise thoughts of great minds, and of many great minds; so that they may gradually and unconsciously get the courage of their opinions. If we fail in this duty, so soon as the young people get their 'liberty' they will run after the first fad that presents itself; try it for a while and then take up another to be discarded in its turn, and remain uncertain and ill-guided for the rest of their days.

3.—Education is a Life

We have left until the last that instrument of education implied in the phrase 'Education is a life'; 'implied' because life is no more self-existing than it is self-supporting; it requires sustenance, regular, ordered and fitting. This is fully recognised as regards bodily life and, possibly, the great discovery of the twentieth century will be that mind too requires its ordered rations and perishes when these fail. We know that food is to the body what fuel is to the steam-engine, the sole source of energy; once we realise that the mind too works only as it is fed education will appear to us in a new light. The body pines and develops humours upon tabloids and other food substitutes; and a glance at a 'gate' crowd watching a football match makes us wonder what sort of mind-food those men and boys are sustained on, whether they are not suffering from depletion, inanition, notwithstanding big and burly bodies. For the mind is capable of dealing with only one kind of food; it lives, grows and is nourished upon ideas only; mere information is to it as a meal of sawdust to the body; there are no organs for the assimilation of the one more than of the other.

What is an idea? we ask, and find ourselves plunged beyond our depth. A live thing of the mind, seems to be the conclusion of our greatest thinkers from Plato to Bacon, from Bacon to Coleridge. We all know how an idea *'strikes,' 'seizes,' 'catches hold of,' 'impresses'* us and at last, if it be big enough, *'possesses'* us; in a word, behaves like an entity.

If we enquire into any person's habits of life, mental preoccupation, devotion to a cause or pursuit, he will usually tell us that such and such an idea struck him. This potency of an idea is matter of common recognition. No phrase is more common and more promising than, 'I have an idea'; we rise to such an opening as trout to a well-chosen fly. There is but one sphere in which the word idea never occurs, in which the conception of an idea is curiously absent, and that sphere is education! Look at any publisher's list of school books and you shall find that the books recommended are carefully dessicated, drained of the least suspicion of an idea, reduced to the driest statements of fact. Here perhaps the Public Schools have a little pull over the rest of us--the diet they afford may be meagre, meagre almost to starvation point for the average boy, but it is not destitute of ideas; for, however sparsely, boys are nourished on the best thoughts of the best minds.

Coleridge has done more than other thinkers to bring the conception of an idea within the sphere of the scientific thought of to-day; not as that thought is expressed in *psychology*, a term which he himself launched upon the world with an apology for it as *insolens verbum* ("we beg pardon for the use of this *insolens verbum* but it is one of which our language stands in great need." *Method*, S. T. Coleridge) but as shewing the re-action of mind to an idea. This is how in his *Method* Coleridge illustrates the rise and progress of such an idea:––

"We can recall no incident of human history that impresses the imagination more deeply than the moment when Columbus on an unknown ocean first perceived that baffling fact, the change of the magnetic needle. How many instances occur in history when the ideas of nature (presented to chosen minds by a Higher Power than Nature herself) suddenly unfold as it were in prophetic succession systematic views destined to produce the most important revolutions in the state of man! The clear spirit of Columbus was doubtless eminently methodical. He saw distinctly that great leading idea which authorised the poor pilot to become a 'promiser of kingdoms.'"

Here we get such a genesis of an idea as fits in curiously with what we know of the history of great inventions and discoveries "presented to chosen minds by a higher Power than Nature herself." It corresponds too, not only with the ideas that rule our own lives, but with the origin of practical ideas which is unfolded to us by the prophet Isaiah:––

"Doth the ploughman plough continually to . . . open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin and put the wheat in rows . . . for his God doth instruct him aright and doth teach him . . . Bread corn is ground for he will not ever be threshing it . . . This also cometh from the Lord of Hosts which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." [Isaiah xxviii.]

Let us hear Coleridge further on the subject of those ideas which may invest us as an atmosphere rather than strike as a weapon:––

"The idea may exist in a clear and definite form as that of a circle in that of the mind of a geometrician or it may be a mere instinct, a vague appetency towards something . . . like the impulse which fills a young poet's eyes with tears."

These indefinite ideas which express themselves in an 'appetency' towards something and which should draw a child towards things honest, lovely and of good report, are not to be offered of set purpose or at set times: they are held in that thought-atmosphere which surrounds him, breathed as his breath of life.

It is distressing to think that our poor words and ways should be thus *inspired* by children; but to recognise the fact will make us careful not to admit sordid or unworthy thoughts and motives into our dealings with them.

Coleridge treats in more detail those definite ideas which are not inhaled as air but are conveyed as meat to the mind:––

"From the first or initiative idea, as from a seed, successive ideas germinate." "Events and images, the lively and spirit-stirring machinery of the external world, are like light and air and moisture to the seed of the mind which would else rot and perish." "The paths in which we may pursue a methodical course are manifold and at the head of each stands its peculiar

and guiding idea. Those ideas are as regularly subordinate in dignity as the paths to which they point are various and eccentric in direction. The world has suffered much in modern times from a subversive and necessary natural order of science . . . from summoning reason and faith to the bar of that limited physical experience to which by the true laws of method they owe no obedience. Progress follows the path of the idea from which it sets out requiring however a constant wakefulness of mind to keep it within the due limits of its course. Hence the orbits of thought, so to speak, must differ from among themselves as the initiative ideas differ." (*Method*, S. T. C.).

Is it not a fact that the new light which biology is throwing upon the laws of mind is bringing us back to the Platonic doctrine that "An idea is a distinguishable power, self-affirmed and seen in unity with the Eternal Essence"?

I have ventured to repeat from an earlier volume [*Parents and Children*, by the Writer.] this slight exposition of Coleridge's teaching, because his doctrine corresponds with common experience and should reverse our ordinary educational practice. The whole subject is profound, but as practical as it is profound. We must disabuse our minds of the theory that the functions of education are in the main gymnastic, a continual drawing out without a corresponding act of putting in. The modern emphasis upon 'self-expression' has given new currency to this idea; we who know how little there is in us that we have not received, that the most we can do is to give an original twist, a new application, to an idea that has been passed on to us; who recognise, humbly enough, that we are but torch-bearers, passing on our light to the next as we have received it from the last, even we invite children to 'express themselves' about a tank, a Norman castle, the Man in the Moon, not recognising that the quaint things children say on unfamiliar subjects are no more than a patchwork of notions picked up here and there. One is not sure that so-called original composition is wholesome for children, because their consciences are alert and they are quite aware of their borrowings; it may be better that they should read on a theme before they write upon it, using then as much latitude as they like.

In the early days of a child's life it makes little apparent difference whether we educate with a notion of filling a receptacle, inscribing a tablet, moulding plastic matter, or nourishing a life, but as a child grows we shall perceive that only those *ideas* which have fed his life, are taken into his being; all the rest is cast away or is, like sawdust in the system, an impediment and an injury.

Education is a life. That life is sustained on ideas. Ideas are of spiritual origin, and God has made us so that we get them chiefly as we convey them to one another, whether by word of mouth, written page, Scripture word, musical symphony; but we must sustain a child's inner life with ideas as we sustain his body with food. Probably he will reject nine-tenths of the ideas we offer, as he makes use of only a small proportion of his bodily food, rejecting the rest. He is an eclectic; he may choose this or that; our business is to supply him with due abundance and variety and his to take what he needs. Urgency on our part annoys him. He resists forcible feeding and loathes predigested food. What suits him best is pabulum presented in the indirect literary form which Our Lord adopts in those wonderful parables whose quality is that they cannot be forgotten though, while every detail of the story is remembered, its application may pass and leave no trace. We, too, must take this risk. We may offer children as their sustenance the Lysander of Plutarch, an object lesson, we think, shewing what a statesman or a citizen should avoid: but, who knows, the child may take to Lysander and think his 'cute' ways estimable! Again, we take the risk, as did our Lord in that puzzling parable of the Unjust Steward. One other caution; it seems to be necessary to present ideas with a great deal of padding, as they reach us in a novel or poem or history

book written with literary power. A child cannot in mind or body live upon tabloids however scientifically prepared; out of a whole big book he may not get more than half a dozen of those ideas upon which his spirit thrives; and they come in unexpected places and unrecognised forms, so that no grown person is capable of making such extracts from Scott or Dickens or Milton, as will certainly give him nourishment. It is a case of,––"In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that."

One of our presumptuous sins in this connection is that we venture to offer opinions to children (and to older persons) instead of ideas. We believe that an opinion expresses thought and therefore embodies an idea. Even if it did so once the very act of crystallization into opinion destroys any vitality it may have had; *pace* Ruskin, a crystal is not a living body and does not feed men. We think to feed children on the dogmas of a church, the theorems of Euclid, mere abstracts of history, and we wonder that their education does not seem to take hold of them. Let us hear M. Fouillée [*Education From a National Standpoint.*] on this subject, for to him the *idea* is all in all both in philosophy and education. But there is a function of education upon which M. Fouillée hardly touches, that of the formation of habits, physical, intellectual, moral.

"'Scientific truths,' said Descartes, 'are battles won.' Describe to the young the principal and most heroic of these battles; you will thus interest them in the results of science and you will develop in them a scientific spirit by means of the enthusiasm for the conquest of truth . . . How interesting Arithmetic and Geometry might be if we gave a short history of their principal theorems, if the child were meant to be present at the labours of a Pythagoras, a Plato, a Euclid, or in modern times, of a Descartes, a Pascal, or a Leibnitz. Great theories instead of being lifeless and anonymous abstractions would become living human truths each with its own history like a statue by Michael Angelo or like a painting by Raphael."

Here we have an application of Coleridge's 'captain-idea' of every train of thought; that is, not a naked generalisation, (neither children nor grown persons find aliment in these), but an idea clothed upon with fact, and story, so that the mind may perform the acts of selection and inception from a mass of illustrative details. Thus Dickens makes 'David Copperfield' tell us that,––"I was a very observant child," and that "all children are very observant," not as a dry abstraction, but as an inference from a number of charming natural incidents.

All roads lead to Rome, and all I have said is meant to enforce the fact that much and varied humane reading, as well as human thought expressed in the forms of art, is, not a luxury, a tit-bit, to be given to children now and then, but their very bread of life, which they must have in abundant portions and at regular periods. This and more is implied in the phrase, "The mind feeds on ideas and therefore children should have a generous curriculum."