

rather more than three hundred years ago, quoted the phrase of King Agamemnon, and added an approving comment of his own. "It is no marvel," said Montaigne, "that such an education (as Agesilaus recommended) produced so admirable effects." . . . . "We should instruct children not by hearsay but by action, framing them not only by precepts and words but principally by examples and works."

Now, if this idea of practical education has been before the world for so many centuries, commended (as we have seen) on high authority for more than two thousand years, reinforced by the influential arguments of one of the most brilliant essayists in modern literature, and moreover an idea which obviously "jumps with" the practical interest and sympathy of the average parent—all these things being so, how is it, it may be asked, that such an eminently desirable invention has not been long ago universally adopted? How comes it that, even to-day, so many critics can find it necessary to denounce what they would agree with a famous writer in calling the "letter-puff pedantry" of the school!

There is, I think, only one conclusion to be drawn. The thing cannot be as simple as it looks at first sight. Seneca groaned over the defects of education. "We learn," he said, "we learn not for life but for the school. Non vitæ sed scholæ discimus." But let us put the plain question, "How, in point of detailed fact, are you going to make children 'learn for life' at school?" There is the rub. That is the point which has puzzled so many of the philosophers. Many of those present will know, as I do, from that best of all books—actual experience, that it is one thing to talk about teaching and quite another thing to teach. The first is sometimes easy; the second is invariably difficult. True teaching is not a trade or a

knack, but a fine art, one of the noblest, one of the most self-sacrificing, and one of the hardest arts in the world. We may depend upon it that if Agesilaus had been right, the history of Sparta would have been different, and with the history of Sparta the history of Hellas, and with the history of Hellas the history of the world. In short, the thing is not so simple as it looks.

The best fruit of education is not mere knowledge or even aptitude, though both are good. But it lies in an attitude of mind and heart towards nature, towards life, towards work, towards fellow-men and the future. The shorter the time available for schooling, the more skilful should be the effort rightly to refine and temper the judgment and sympathies of the child. And, in so far as knowledge and direct instruction bear a part in this process, they should be strictly kept at a right angle towards practical life. But they should not be prematurely specialised. They should contain—so to speak, in solution—the elements of that measure of liberal culture which the life prospects of the child permit us to regard as being within his or her ultimate reach—without injury to bread winning, to family claims, and to personal service to the local community and the State. Sometimes, however, behind the demands for a more practical education there lurks a darker purpose. For example, I have read parliamentary speeches delivered in a foreign country which leave one in little doubt that the speakers resent the school, and the village school in particular, because it is the vent-hole of new ideas. Through its agency, it is argued, there seem to pour out the social discontents, the crude notions, and the distempered hopes which act as a solvent on the old order. The idea seems to have seized some minds (I do not refer in these remarks to our own country)