

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC METHOD IN THE SCHOOL.*

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Lecture I.—Language as the Supreme Instrument of Education.

EVERY human being is educated by the experience of life. At the same time there can be little doubt that no two human beings are precisely alike in respect of their native capacity to receive these experiences and to utilize them for the building up of their characters. The experiences begin very early. The babe at its mother's breast, is receiving impressions for good or for evil as certainly as a seed which has just begun to sprout is already receiving from the soil those influences which are to make it or mar it as a vigorous plant of its kind. As next he walks *non aequis passibus* at his mother's side, the whole world of nature is seeking to form the child. Earth and sky, the events of his little life, the words and acts of those about him are all busy in the work of his education. Unconsciously at first and thereafter consciously, he is organizing into himself the vast and infinite realm of feeling and education. Every human being is undergoing this process of education; and it is not at all a question whether he is to be educated or not, but simply how and to what end he is to be educated.

When one takes a wide survey of the history of education, one is driven to conclude that there is much, very much, a much that is almost incalculable, in the instincts and aptitudes of race. It is impossible to compare the Chinese child, the Persian, the Hin-

doo, the Hellenic, the Roman, the British, as we find them in history, and not be convinced of this. Next to race in educative power is the spirit of the race, as expressed in its national religion, in its more or less conscious aims as a political society, in its public life and national acts. These alone without the help of schools will, under favourable conditions, make a people and a great people; and, whatever may be done of set purpose by schools and teachers, national life in its various forms will always be the most perfect educator of the young.

The parent is the first teacher of the young within the State; and no State is in a healthy condition where the family life is not always the most potent, as it is the nearest of educative influences. But as the pressure of life becomes heavier and social conditions more complex it becomes necessary to appoint a substitute for the parent, but not on this account to set aside the God-appointed tutor.

I have said that it is the individual experiences, and the national life in all its forms as the most potent of those experiences, which chiefly educate, and from this I may draw the conclusion that where schools are instituted, their main purpose is to focus, so to speak, the life of the nation, and bring its best elements—its language, religion, ethics, art, literature, history—to bear on the young whom we gather into our public seminaries. This we do, in the hope that by so doing we may make sure that the experiences which educate shall

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