

III.

Dr. James Ward once made a profound suggestion to the late Mr Quick. He hinted at a history of education on new lines, namely, that he should try to ascertain (1) what each generation took the child to be; (2) what it endeavored to do for the child, and (3) what means it employed in order to do it.

Let us apply this idea to the question now under our review.

Plutarch tells us that Agesilaus, the King of Sparta, was once asked what he thought children ought to learn. The educational system of Sparta was, of course, the admiration of many thinkers in antiquity, and, therefore, there was much point in putting to Agesilaus this searching (though apparently simple) question on educational procedure. The King's answer was that "they should do as children what they would do as men." In other words, was a little man in short clothes, and early education ought to be an epitome of the practical life which the lad was destined to lead.

A very great French writer, discussing the question of education rather more than three hundred years ago, quoted the phrase of King Agesilaus, 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 puffed 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