

of Sir William Hamilton the nearest to a discussion of interest that we find is a passage on "The love of action signalized as a fact in human nature by all observers." Turning to books on education especially, we expect to find the topic treated at length. But where do we find any extended discussion of it? Laurie, Payne, Fitch, and Compayre make only slight, though clear, reference to it, and do not attempt to analyze or elucidate it. Even Bain and Herbert Spencer, whose undercurrent of thought suggests it all the time, do not give anything like prominence to the idea. Our own well-known educational writers until very recently, have referred to interest as something taken for granted rather than as a fundamental matter calling for distinct and earnest treatment.

What is to be inferred from this rather meager and incidental disposal of the subject in psychological and educational literature? Is it not a fact of primary consequence? Is the idea a subordinate or incidental one, rather than fundamental? Is it not a salient thing in education? Or, has it been neglected? It is certainly true that every great poet, epic or dramatic, who has charmed generation after generation, and has put his conceptions into the common thought of the race, did so through his power to awaken interest. Every prophet, every orator, every artist, and every teacher who ever spoke or sung or taught with *power* attained his mastery through the interest which he was able to develop, first in himself and then in all whom he influenced.

The educational reformers of the sixteenth century, and since, did not discuss interest; but did not Montaigne and Ascham and Comenius and Locke and Rousseau condemn the methods of their time because they failed to nourish the interest of the learner? What but appreciation

of the importance of awakening interest led Comenius to make an illustrated text-book? What else produced the *Emile*? When we come to Pestalozzi at the threshold of our own century, we do not hear even from him much on the subject of interest, but he is always showing you how to be interesting and making you feel interested; he is himself aglow with interest, so that for him to talk about it would be quite superfluous.

Is interest, then, something to be assumed—to be allowed to spring up spontaneously, or not, as may happen—or ought it to be investigated and understood and then intelligently cultivated? The Herbartians have assigned to interest a prominent place in pedagogy; they have attempted to study nature and the conditions and means of its development, and they have sought to make its cultivation a direct object of instruction and training. Surely, in doing this they have rendered education very great service.

What do we mean by interest? Is there in the idea anything more than is obvious? Is not the common meaning of the word the correct one? We sometimes lose the sense of a common word by trying to explain it. But sometimes the very familiarity of a term conceals its true and larger significance. I think it is so in this case.

First, let us glance at the etymology. *Interesse*, "to be between." Between what? Between the thing and everything else, that is, close upon it, or in the midst of the matter. If you are interested in a thing, you are "right in it." If you are not interested in a matter, you might as well have no connection with it for any good it will do you because you are "not in it." Indeed, I think that this word brings to us, down from the old practical Roman days, the very same subtle idea that the favorite colloquialism of the day expresses. But more