

They would have us believe that the world has hitherto been all astray, that the educational wisdom of the ages is little better than foolishness, that we are upon the eve of a reform in our practice which is to be nothing less than revolutionary in its effect. These theorists complain, briefly, that education has in the past been made too much a matter of words; the remedy they offer is to make it in the future chiefly a matter of things. To bring about this radical change, it is proposed to displace, to a great extent, the sterile practices of literary, philological and historical study, by the productive practices with which physical science acquaints us; to substitute for the study of man in his social and political character the study of man in his character as a tool-making and tool-using animal, mainly intent upon material comfort and progress. The educational tendency here suggested is very marked at the present day, and the signs of the times in many ways force it upon our attention. It is a tendency more marked, perhaps, during recent years than ever before, and more marked, probably, in our own country than in any other. This is a fact easily to be accounted for. The development of physical science is the dominant intellectual characteristic of the age, and this development, with its countless implied possibilities of material amelioration, has diverted many eyes from those things of the spirit that are so essential to the higher welfare of mankind, fixing them instead upon the objects which their lower natures demand; it has, in a word, substituted ideals of comfort for ideals of virtue and of the full-statured life of the soul. And this diversion of attention from the higher to the lower aims of life, this substitution of lesser ideals for greater, of ignoble for noble purposes, has been nowhere else so nearly complete

as in this country of unexampled material resources and unexampled material prosperity.

Matthew Arnold, in one of his essays on religious subjects, has a passage exactly descriptive of our too prevalent attitude toward the educational problem. This passage, with the necessary substitution of "the humanities," or some such phrase, for the word "religion" runs as follows:

"Undoubtedly there are times when a reaction sets in, when an interest in the processes of productive industry, in physical science and the practical arts, is called an *interest in things*, and an interest in [the humanities] is called an *interest in words*. People really do seem to imagine that in seeing and learning how buttons are made, or *papier mache*, they shall find some new and untried vital resource; that our prospects from this sort of study have something peculiarly hopeful and animating about them; and that the positive and practical thing to do is to give up [the humanities] and turn to them."

Now a great many sincere and well-meaning people have been telling us of late that "the positive and practical thing to do" in education is to set aside such useless studies as "mere" history and literature, as "dead" languages and ancient civilizations; to restrict considerably the attention paid to most other kinds of "book" learning; and to devote the time thus reclaimed from waste to such scientific and even manual pursuits as are likely to have some direct bearing upon the every-day life of the men and women that our school-children are so soon to become.

Half-truths are more dangerous than downright errors and the consequences of the socialist theory of education just outlined are in many directions