

The Place of Science in Education

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THE place of science in education is a subject that cannot be adequately treated in the time that may with convenience be allotted to an address, and I must choose between treating it in a very general manner or entering into detail with regard to some particular part of it. My choice rests with the former method, largely because the subject has been treated so frequently and so thoroughly in most of its details that one who should attempt to cover the same ground would be exposed to the danger of comparisons which would probably be odious. Thus, the value of science from the direct utilitarian standpoint has received a very vigorous exposition by Herbert Spencer in his treatise on Education. In his clear logical style he maintains that scientific knowledge is the knowledge of most worth in all our relations to life, and complains that it is too much neglected in our curricula, that science is the household drudge in the family of knowledges, supplying all the conveniences and gratifications of life and yet continually "kept in the background that her haughty sisters may flaunt their fripperies in the eyes of the world". Mr. Spencer, however, ventures the prophecy that the time is at hand "when the positions will be changed, and while these haughty sisters sink into merited neglect, science, proclaimed as highest alike in worth and beauty, will reign supreme". We have not yet reached that stage of development, nor, in my opinion, is it desirable that such venerable dames as the classics and philosophy, haughty though they may have been in the past, should languish in utter neglect. They too have their part in a liberal education, and victory, whether in intellectual warfare or on the actual battlefield, should look not to the utter suppression of the conquered but to the subjection of his domineering spirit, his insolence, and the utilisation of the good that is in him.

And when all has been said about the utility of a knowledge of scientific facts and theories, the question will intrude itself whether, after all, the aim of education, especially in the primary stages, should be directly utilitarian, and by directly utilitarian I mean an education based upon the Gradgrindian method which declares "Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You