
Notes on American schools and training colleges

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NOTES ON AMERICAN SCHOOLS
AND TRAINING COLLEGES

REPRINTED FROM THE REPORT OF THE ENGLISH EDUCATION
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BY
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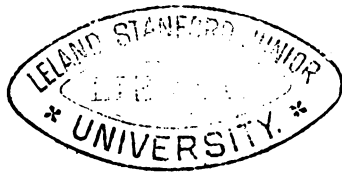
ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTORS OF TRAINING COLLEGES

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INTRODUCTION.

THE occasion of the appearance of these "Notes" will be best explained by quoting the following extract from my annual official report on English Training Colleges, presented to Parliament in 1889:

"Through the favor of your Lordships, I was permitted last year to extend the usual official holiday, and so to gratify a wish which I had long entertained, to visit some of the leading schools and colleges in America. I have appended to this report, in the form of some notes, such of the chief facts and considerations brought under my notice in the course of this journey as I thought most likely to prove interesting and suggestive to school managers, masters, and mistresses at home, especially to those who are concerned in the training of elementary teachers."

This sentence indicates, I hope, with sufficient clearness, the very limited scope and pretensions of the notes which are here reprinted. A full and exhaustive account of so complex a subject as American Education would have been impossible

in the very brief time at my disposal. And it was mainly to furnish hints and information to my own countrymen, and not with a view to tell the American public anything which they did not know before, that these notes were written. Nevertheless, since a wish has been expressed by some of my many Transatlantic friends that what I have here said should be reprinted in the "States," my consent to that course has been willingly given; and the more willingly because to the real sympathy and admiration with which I witnessed some of the chief educational phenomena in America, there is added in this instance a very deep sense of the generous and thoughtful attention which I everywhere received from those whose institutions I visited or whose help I sought.

To institute comparisons of the methods, the extent, or the results of educational work in Europe and in America would be presumptuous without a much fuller acquaintance with the interior life of schools and colleges than it would be possible for a visitor to obtain. And as to mere figures, statistics, and printed reports, they may prove seriously misleading, unless the special conditions which give their true significance to those details are thoroughly understood. If I needed a warning against indulging in hasty generalizations from *data* imperfectly understood, I should find it in a recent article, otherwise very weighty and suggestive, which appeared under the honored name of Dr. Edward

Everett Hale in the *Forum* of July last. In it the writer says :

“ We spend more on public education in America than has been spent upon it in Great Britain in twenty years. In the year 1886, which I select for comparison because it is the latest in ‘ Whitaker’s Almanack,’ the State of Massachusetts alone, with a population of less than 2,000,000 people, expended about \$6,000,000 for the public education of its children, while the kingdom of Great Britain, with a population of 35,000,000, expended only \$17,000,000 in the same time. *What follows, of course, is that there are twenty times as many readers in America in the same population as there are in England.*”

The misleading character of the statement here, and the fallacy of the remarkable inference which is deduced from it, and which I have printed in italic, will be evident on considering two things :

(1) The figures quoted by Dr. Hale represent the parliamentary grant for elementary education only ; that is to say, for children presumably of the laboring class, whose education is not prolonged beyond the fourteenth year, and who are supposed to need the assistance of a public fund in order to procure the means of education. No grant is made by Parliament for the instruction of children of the middle and upper classes who do not use the public elementary schools, nor for advanced or high-school instruction for pupils of any class ;

INTRODUCTION.

whereas the Massachusetts fund provides for higher and intermediate, as well as for purely elementary education, and the public schools are attended by the children of all classes of the community.

(2) The statistics presented in Dr. Hale's article are from the official returns of the Education Department. But that Department simply administers a "grant in aid" of local effort. The sum annually voted by Parliament for elementary education is only a part, and not the largest part, of the fund available even for that limited purpose. During the year referred to, in which \$17,000,000 in the form of grants from the Imperial Exchequer were appropriated to elementary schools, the contributions of parents in the shape of fees to the same schools amounted to \$8,500,000, the voluntary subscriptions to \$3,500,000, the local rates to \$5,500,000, and other resources to \$500,000, thus making a total revenue of \$35,000,000 for the elementary schools alone; whereas the figures quoted for Massachusetts represent the entire school fund, which is not, so far as I can ascertain, supplemented by contributions either from parents or from other sources.

Indeed, there is little or no analogy between the educational systems in a young community which has found itself unhampered by traditions, and free to fashion new institutions; and those of a country like England, in which educational systems

—if so they may be called—are unsymmetrical, and are the outcome of compromise and of historical development. As I have in another place* had occasion to say, “It is very characteristic of this country, of its genius, its traditions, its history, and the idiosyncrasies of its people, that many of its most cherished institutions are the result of growth rather than of manufacture; have not been consciously predetermined by legislators or by theorists, but have shaped themselves by a process of slow evolution to suit the changed circumstances and needs of successive generations.” This general statement is strikingly verified in the history of education in England, and in the character of the provision now made for sustaining it.

For example: secondary and intermediate education in England provided wholly by voluntary, local, or private effort, and has never yet been directed or subsidized by the central government. There is, therefore, no organized system of public instruction extending beyond the requirements of children who leave school for work in their thirteenth or fourteenth year. An increasing number of the secondary schools of England are established at the instance of local committees or of public bodies, such as the Girls’ Public Day School Company, or are the result of the combined efforts of the parents. Such schools, when established, are generally placed under

* In the article “Education,” in *Chambers’s Cyclopædia*.