A SURVEY OF NEW EDUCATIONAL BOOKS

By Allen W. Porterfield

OF the one hundred and twelve million people in the United States, over twelve million own automobiles and slightly under six million are illiterate. We have then wealth in profusion, and opportunity without limit to use it for educational purposes. And we are doing this. We have approximately one thousand colleges that grant the established bachelor's degree in the liberal arts. Of "colleges" that specialize there is virtually no end, and new ones of all types are opening as fast as contractors can deliver the material and builders assemble it. Cities and states the nation over are having their educational systems surveyed with an idea to better methods and sounder principles. There is in short an unprecedented interest in education in this country, an interest that is being manifested in a variety of ways apart from the publication of books which are supposed to be used in schools and colleges.

Take the City of New York which, due to its size and the complexity of its problems, is typical or symptomatic of the entire country. Twelve years ago there were no typewriters in the administrative offices of the schools of New York. Twelve weeks ago I visited a high school in provincial Virginia the administrative office of which was equipped with a typewriter, a telephone, and an automobile for "official use only". Telephones were installed in the schools of New York in 1917. Adding machines are being put in at this writing, and the principals are wondering how they ever did without them. It was Jean Baptiste de la Salle (died at Rouen in 1719) who introduced the method of group teaching. Today classrooms, presided over by a single instructor, administer to capacity audiences, for the American child, particularly the child of foreign parentage, seems more than ever determined to free himself from the worst of all possible slaveries, ignorance.

The profoundest advance, however, may be illustrated by this almost incredible fact. If, thirty years ago, a boy presented himself to the principal of a New York school, the following conversation might have taken place: "Where do you come from?" "Boscobel Avenue." "Very well, go back to Boscobel; we do not admit persons of your type here." Today, the parents of a child from any avenue are "liable to fine or imprisonment or both" if it is found that they are not sending their children to school.

It is consequently easy to understand why the publishers are bringing out the most voluminous body of educational books it has been our privilege to use since the first red Indian — or blond Norwegian — taught his child his father's name. To give all of these books honorable mention may be a consummation devoutly to be wished, but it is obviously impossible of fulfilment. The most and best I can do is to single out certain works that seem to represent in a fairly comprehensive way the new movements, and which symbolize the ad-

mirable spirit that is coming over education in what has been, since 1917, truly "the greatest, grandest, and most glorious country on the face of the earth". I omit mere texts and editions, informative though it might be to comment at length on the ill founded Spanish wave, which is receding, and the return, on the other hand, of German as this once again takes its place among the subjects taught with unaffected enthusiasm and studied with reasonable profit.

One of the best written books of this entire national output is "Our Faith in Education" (Lippincott) by Henry Suzzallo, president of the University of Washington. Dr. Suzzallo has manifestly been annoyed by some laymen who have told him precisely how his institution should be conducted. There is no need for him to worry; he should rather rejoice because of the widespread interest: better interference than apathy in a matter in which the whole citizenry seems at present engaged. I quote a paragraph from his book:

> Schools are wealth producers. If effectively managed, they are the greatest wealth producers in our civilization. When the reactionary says that the improvement of human power is not a contribution to wealth production, he is guilty of the same logical fallacy as the radical when he insists that the brains of management, invention, and science contribute nothing to the production of material goods.

This passage, though heavier than the average, contains a sterling truth, for if there were no illiteracy in the United States, then every citizen could afford to own an automobile. The fact is, however, that the number of automobiles will decrease as intelligence increases, it having already reached the point where it is an actual kindness to one's fellow men to forego a car.

Another good book of a general nature is Charles F. Thwing's "What Education Has the Most Worth" (Macmillan). Dr. Thwing, president emeritus of Western Reserve University, is the author of dozens of volumes on educational subjects. About this one there is something of the air of finality: the venerable educator seems to be nearly through. He is hopeful, though not a windy optimist. He has infinite fault to find with some of the general tendencies of education, but infinite patience with the belief that time will correct these faults. One fault that he emphasizes with righteous zeal is the incautious desire on the part of the new graduate to secure for himself an executive position. This intellectual stripling wants to be in charge of something rather than with or on something; he wants to be a leader, even a commander, rather than a follower. His will power has been developed, his intellect has been neglected. All of this argument is irrefutable and reveals a quite regrettable state of affairs.

A third study of singular value is "Fitting the Child to the School" (Macmillan) by Elisabeth A. Irwin and Louis A. Marks. These two teachers spent six years in the investigation — education all over the country is being investigated — of a typical school in a congested section of the city, by way of determining the IQ, which means intelligence quotient. In simpler terms, the book was written with the idea of seeing how the greatest good can be done to the greatest number. Our population is naturally increasing, and everybody in this country wants education. The problem then that has been studied here is really the crux of the matter: how get all out of the effort that is being made? For of variety of minds there is no end, and much education faultily directed is a weariness to the Republic.

Time was, and not so long ago, when a seeming dullard was thrown out while a seemingly gifted pupil was pushed with all the vigor known to a nominating committee at a political convention. This method is being discarded on the ground that however varied mental equipments may be, the degree of their superiority is less marked than has been supposed, it being largely a matter of mental bent for one subject and mental warp against another. Nor does this principle apply solely to elementary education. A few years ago a young woman, after getting no further than a conditioned junior through five years of work at a southern college, was officially dropped from the roll as incompetent. She transferred to a northern college where, after studying for one year and one summer session, she was given an A.B. and an A.M. degree.

How can this be explained? Was it due to the fact that the standards of the one institution were so much higher than those of the other? Was it due to the fact that the one institution made no effort, or at most only an unsuccessful one, to fit the college to the woman? I have taught long and arduously in both institutions and I am of the distinct conviction that this "case" arose because of the unrelieved inflexibility of the southern college. For those who can stand up under the process of fitting, that southern college is one of the very best in the country, but we are not all of like minds.

In 1861, Herbert Spencer published his "Education". The book was so rare at the time that it has been regarded as a classic ever since. In 1924, the house of Macmillan brings out no fewer than twenty seven big books on general education, no fewer than twenty two of which have to do with improvement in educational methods rather than the rigidly scientific or historical phases of the matter. The five that I am minded to exclude from this list of "improvement" books are: "Changing Conceptions in Jewish Education" by Emanuel Gamoran, "The Origin and Development of Education in Texas" by Frederick Eby, "The Education of the Consumer" by Henry Harap, "History Curricula" by Sisters of St. Agnes, and "The Platoon School" by Charles L. Spain. And the guardian angels of even these have been, to a degree, "the Graces of Improvement, Investigation, Adaptation".

If general treatises on education are being brought out by all the leading houses, there is an equally long list of books on special subjects. Dutton, for example, not heretofore noted as the publisher of works on languages, has twenty two books on various phases of Russian language and literature. Not all of these are new, though they are all being pushed as new. It is an amazing list for so staid a firm when we recall that Russia, try as she may, overtly and covertly, has thus far failed to receive recognition from the Main Street of Washington, D. C. Nor is this all: the same house announces lexicons or manuals of one kind and another on Roumanian, Egyptian, Malay, Polish, Japanese, Latin, Italian, Czechish, Greek, Chinese, Hebrew, the expected number of works on Spanish, and eighty four texts having to do with French. Holt lists fifty five Spanish publications, all of which could be described as recent — for our interest in Spanish is recent — and many of which are new.

English, too, has received the generous consideration which, if this were not an educational age, might be regarded as unusual. Among new publications of the Atlantic Monthly Press are "The Junior Book of Atlantic

Plays" edited by Charles S. Thomas, "The Voice of Carlyle" by Henry G. Pearson, "Précis-Writing" by Samuel Thurber, and, we might say of course, "Education Moves Ahead" by Eugene R. Smith. Stokes publishes "Aspects of Modern Poetry" by Alfred Noyes; Crowell, "Essentials of Speech" by John R. Pelsma; and Sully announces "The Book of Mother Verse" by Joseph Morris and St. Clair Adams. Very significant however is Merriam's "Webster's New International Dictionary" with its 451,000 words, Winston's "Simplified Dictionary" which is listed as "an entirely new book", and Sully's "Troublesome Words" by W. L. Mason.

There are fewer educational books on business than the unparalleled prosperity of the country might make logical. Is it possible that those of previous seasons have made this moderation possible? For there is nothing so common in the United States at present, relatively speaking, as the business school. Works that stand out are "Statistical Methods" by Frederick C. Mills, "Our Competitors and Markets" by Arnold W. Lahee, "International Trade Finance" by George W. Edwards, and "The Discount Policy of the Federal Reserve System" by B. Haggott Beckhart. All of these bear the imprint of Holt. Doubleday, Page announce "Marketing Practice" by Percival White and Walter S. Hayward, and Crowell lists "Problems of Finance" by Jens P. Jensen.

Let us try to visualize the entire business through the medium of percentages, bearing in mind that, it is to be hoped at least, all of the nine or ten thousand books published in this country last year are educational. If, for example, the best sellers in the field of fiction are not educative, then we waste time more energetically than we waste money politically. But if we mean, as I do, by educational books only those books that are intended primarily for routine students, there have been written during the current spring and summer approximately three hundred new educational works. Of these fifty per cent, as the adding up of a table top of figures shows, come under the heading of education (including all that is taught in schools and colleges under the departments of education, philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, and school management), twenty five per cent are devoted to languages and literatures, native and foreign, fifteen per cent to established or traditional science, and ten per cent miscellaneous.

A glance at some of the works included under miscellaneous will show how our ideas of "education" are broadening. I list the following: "Cooperation in Coal Production" (Holt) by Archibald H. Stockder; "Intelligence Testing" (Holt) by Rudolf Pintner; "Tolstoi: The Teacher" (Dutton) by Charles Baudouin; "The Radio Amateur's Handbook" (Crowell) by A. Frederick Collins; "The Game of Ma Chiang" (Crowell) by Mrs. Prescott Warren; "Practical Exercises in Filing" (Winston) by L. H. Cadwallader; "Moonlight Schools for the Emancipation of Adult Illiterates" (Dutton) by Cora W. Stewart; "Military Intelligence" (Stokes) by Lieutenant Colonel Walter C. Sweeney; "Heirs of the Incas" (Minton, Balch) by Carroll K. Michener; "Art in the School" (Doubleday, Page) by Belle Boas; "Romance of a Living Temple" (Sully) by Frederick M. Rossiter; Downey's "Will-Temperament and its Testing" (World Book Company); "The Profession of Journalism" (Atlantic) by William G. Bleyer; "Human Geography" (Winston) by J. Russell Smith; "Practical Projects for Elementary Schools" (Ginn) by Lillian

I. Lincoln; "Colloid Chemistry" (Dutton) by Herbert Freundlich. This list, which could be extended to include an even hundred, shows how far we have progressed beyond "the three r's". It is no wonder that there are so many books on how to make, use, and survive a curriculum. And the publishers and authors hope to live to see these books "adopted" by the schools.

Here is an imposing array of educational matter. But to lead the reader to fancy that all of this is new material would be a grandiose imposition. There is in truth an immense amount of repetition in these 300 books, or 500, or even 1,000, if we include mere edited texts, revised editions, and so on. Some of this repetition is intentional, some of it expressed, some of it unconscious, and some of it necessitated by regional circumstances, while all of it is made possible by our wealth.

By way of explaining the repetition, let us take the field of physics. Chemistry would serve as a better illustration were it not for the fact that the number of new texts on chemistry is incredible, and I have no space for affidavits. There are, without doubt, at least fifty quite adequate texts on school and college physics in circulation in the United States at this moment. Yet Holt invests money in still another: "Elements of Physics" by Merchant and Chant. It would seem at first blush that the sole reason for this new text lies in the attractive feature of the authors' names. It is like spelling "Smith" with a "P". These gentlemen have written a good book, or Henry Holt could never have been cajoled into publishing it. But wherein lie its novel merits?

On the other hand, Dr. Clinton Maury Kilby of Randolph-Macon Woman's College has written a college physics text on demand: the southern people have given him no peace; he had to do it. The publisher (he has not been agreed upon at this writing) is to be congratulated, for this book is assured of a steady and "solid" circulation throughout southern colleges, for this reason: the south is making strides in education of which the north is quite unaware. But the pre-college schools in the south are run from six to eight weeks less in each year than those of the north. Hence the physics texts written in the north and east are too big for the south. Hence Dr. Kilby has written his "Essentials of Physics" with an eye single to abridged statement, but with a mind open to the most recent developments in the physical sciences.

A similar story could be told of many of the books listed for spring and summer publication. Such stories must be in the background, else how account for this huge amount of material on the abnormal, which means the defective, child? Books on this theme are as numerous as those on the familiar sciences, and more numerous than those on American history and literature. Indeed the history of our country, as a coherent and inspiring tale, is the Cinderella of this entire educational family, just as pedagogy or education is the Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe.

For that measure and proportion which constitute the really conspicuous features of a well educated man, one seeks then in vain. But this is hardly the fair moment to look for them: the fight between the automobile owner and the illiterate is still too even. There is sound reason however for full hope: we have the children, the interest in education, the money, the books, and the sense.

This sense is emphasized by the absence, in all this list, of just one

book: "Why We Should Have a Secretary of Education". Publishers have apparently been as wary about accepting a manuscript on this theme as they would on such theme as: "Why Politics Should be Made an Integral Part of our Educational System". Six million of us may be unable to read and write, but even these can listen. And the man who listens today learns that each state must solve its own educational problems. If we had a federal secretary guiding the entire system from above, there could be, and probably would be, a great saving in the publication of educational books: there would not be nearly so many of them, for the whole system would be standardized. But fancy what such standardization would mean, if you can. You cannot, for the human mind has its limitations in picturing misfortune.