Book Reviews

Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady, Lady Allen of Hurtwood and Mary Nicholson. Thames and Hudson, London. 1975. Pp. 272. Illustrated.*

All who met Lady Allen of Hurtwood were impressed by her vitality. These memoirs are a new expression of this wonderful vitality. Where did it originate? Was it inborn or acquired? Probably originally part of her endowment and well protected through her childhood by her understanding and encouraging parents.

The memoirs open with a charming description of the family, the parents and the three brothers and their life out in the country camping and living close to nature wherever they were. Marjory was also fortunate in being placed in a most informal school where again her love for nature, for flowers, growing plants and children could develop fully. In these environments the growing girl discovered her own personality with a realization of potentialities and shortcomings: "I was walking alone on the South Downs when I suddenly had the thought that I was unique; in the whole wide world there never had been, and never would be, anyone just like me. The courage came to believe in myself as I was—uninterested in school-work, good at games, a natural organizer, devoted to music but in no sense a musician." So she lived with a confidence in her own ability to overcome difficulties and do useful work, and with the same deep respect for everybody else including children, that "every child is gifted with unique capacities, ready to respond to those who trust them and to those who have no fear of giving them freedom".

We are allowed to follow Marjory Gill through her youth and life as a gardener, and in her happy marriage with the intelligent and noble Clifford Allen who died much too early, but had made a lasting impression on the world around him and given to his wife a fine inheritance to carry further. They were both socialists and pacifists devoted to the struggle for the causes they believed in.

After the death of her husband Lady Allen with her young daughter continued to work for causes for children hit by the disaster of war and bombing, for new laws for their protection, new organizations to promote the understanding and protection of "every child as an individual marvel". She wrote vivid and dramatic booklets to attract attention to the needs of children: she made films to describe the children's institutions as they are and as they should be: she travelled through the United Kingdom, Europe and U.S.A. to tell the world that the children need space, place for activity, loving adults and contact with Nature as well as food and housing: she was the person who more than anybody else promoted the idea for adventure playgrounds in the cities, and even created playgrounds for handicapped children: she joined UNICEF and moved for a period to Paris in order to plan for assistance to children in other parts of the world. And in the midst of it all she conceived the idea of a world organisation for joint co-operation of all professions interested in children—OMEP, recognized as an important international organisation in 1948.

Throughout the reading of the Memoirs the vitality of Lady Allen is enthralling, but also her ability to keep her eyes open, to discover and react to the problems of people and especially of children, and her energy to do something to help. Her ability to organize, that she had recognized in herself as a young girl, brought success to her enterprises. And her warm affection for her many friends was reciprocated by their support in the crises and periods of effort that she again and again had to go through.

In co-operation with Mary Nicholson, Lady Allen has dug into the newspapers, journals and other sources where her life and activities have been chronicled. To this material the clear and precise memories have been added. The result is a charming, well documented and well written book. For all members of OMEP, and for ever so many others interested in children, in politics, in the work performed in a living democracy "Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady" will be a joy for a long time to come.

ASE GRUDA SKARD (Norway)

*This review was written before Marjory Allen's death (see page 41).

The Road to Effective Read[ng, Ed. W. Latham. Ward Lock Educational, London. 1975. £2.50.

The Road to Effective Reading is a report on the tenth annual study conference of the U.K. Reading Association. Let us confess straight away that the sight of another collection of conference proceedings

causes our eyes to narrow. This collection is rather different, because the 24 people who addressed the gathering were all experts in reading, writing, talking and listening. Moreover, the programme had been unusually well thought out and the speakers, authorties on communication, communicate with ease. So this is much more of a book than is usual with conference reports.

The 24 speakers encompassed between them the modern approach to reading, which includes what is valuable from the past. The book opens with an examination of the crisis in reading and ends with a deeply sympathetic examination of what we can do to help the enormous numbers of casualties upon which we have, century after century, turned a blind eye. How wrong we have been in regarding the reading failures as stupid and/or lacking in virtue can best be explained by one incident in the final section. There was a broadcast in the U.S. on The Right to Read, and a man who for 21 years had concealed from his wife and children that he could not read wished to tell the broadcaster. So he recorded on tape, ending his "letter" with "so I hope you can help me".

Between these opening and closing chapters, the themes traverse preschool, primary school, secondary school and the true meaning of adult literacy. If I had to put my personal view of the discovery about reading, at last, thousands of years after the invention of the alphabet, I would express it this way: We now find that the highly complex mental processes involved in the scholarly reading of cultured adults are all to be found in the earliest stages, in the talking and listening, the writing and the dazzling moment when the individual child suddenly sees how reading works.

Not being aware of the signs, or of their significance, we have had the wrong objectives in our attempts to teach reading. These processes are a kind of meta-reading, rising high above any particular language which happens to be the child's mother tongue. This is why it is worth reviewing at some length a book on reading published in what many member countries of OMEP affectionately refer to as "anglo-saxon". By this they mean the U.S., the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and so on. But many of the countries who so call us have already acted as host to the international Reading Association, which conducts most of its work in English. So there is already an awareness of the new concepts of reading which far outstrips the old notion that the ABC is enough.

The Road to Effective Reading was planned to appear at the time of one of our government reports, the Bullock Report entitled *A Language for Life*. But the government report was delayed and this book came out first. As it happens, this has been to our advantage. UKRA devoted a whole issue of its journal *Reading** to carefully considered criticism of the Bullock Report. Naturally, great appreciation was expressed for the government's attention to the important matter of reading. But UKRA are the experts on the new movement in reading, and there are important criticisms. It is rather like following an Agatha Christie, to begin with the journal and from that deduce what the report says. Moreover, this gives a directive to one's own reading of the Bullock Report.

For students to buy the books they need has always been a problem, but never such a problem as today. The book under review is more of a manual than a quick read. Any serious student of reading should consider investing in a copy for constant reference. From there one is equipped to enter into the activities of UKRA or the International Reading Association or—if it is available—the Open University *Development of Reading* course. Most of all, working with children is enhanced.

PHYLLIS PICKARD (U.K.)

**Reading*. A journal for the study and improvement of reading and related skills. Vol. 9 No. 2 June 1975. Copies available from the General Secretary UKRA, 63 Laurel Grove, Sunderland, Co. Durham, SR2 9EE, U.K.

Early Child Care in Britain, Mia Kellmer Pringle and Sandhya Naidoo. Gordon and Breach (International Monograph Series on Early Child Care, No. 5, eds. H. B. Robinson and N. M. Robinson), London. 1975. Pp. 473. £4.80.

This slim volume by Kellmer Pringle and Naidoo will be welcomed by all concerned with the welfare of young children not only to take its place in the International Monograph Series as a comprehensive review of services for young children in Britain but also because of its value in bringing together widely differing kinds of information ranging from legal and administrative arrangements to the details of a young child's daily programme and characteristic behaviour.

The authors must have been tempted with the wealth of research material available from the National Children's Bureau studies to present the material with a particular bias but they have on the whole resisted this temptation. The book gives a balanced picture of ways of working with young children in Britain from the intimacy of the family to local and central government involvement including statutory and voluntary services.

However, while noting changes in society within the historical context the authors in some sense miss the major areas of controversy e.g. What are the major factors involved in quality care in the first three years of life? Should mothers, who wish to do so, be enabled to stay at home to look after their children by being paid a salary commensurate with the service they render to society? Where should a nation's money be spent in times of economic restraint? One gets the impression that by mutual agreement these controversial matters have been muted.

The reader is introduced to the review by the presentation of broad demographic data on the family in Britain and to the findings of research concerning

attitudes and practices of upbringing and education in the early years. This material draws heavily on the research studies of John and Elizabeth Newson and brings out the point that a child-centred approach involves areas of conflict especially for parents brought up in a more authoritarian regime. Emphasis is placed on a working partnership between parents and State in the upbringing and welfare of young children. This becomes of particular importance for children who come into the socially disadvantaged category. The changing role of women, the single parent family, overcrowding, poverty, and handicap physical and/or mental are factors affecting increase of state intervention in the care of children.

The main body of the book is concerned with services provided by different Government Departments, Health, Social Services and Education and the education and training of relevant personnel for these services. The chapter on research is severely compressed, with the exception of The Educational Priority Areas Project by Halsey and the National Children's Bureau's own longitudinal study. Mention of the exciting psychological studies in early behaviour and learning in university centres at Strathclyde (Schaffer), Edinburgh (Bower), Sheffield (Connolly) and Keele (J. and C. Hutt) is conspicuous by its absence. These studies are likely to contribute to developments in child-adult interaction strategies in the family, playgroup and nursery school of the future and one would have thought they merited a mention.

The last chapter, The Way Ahead, leaves one wanting to know more and wondering if this series will be updated as time goes on. Information about the interdisciplinary neighbourhood Children's Centres that are being administered by local government and by voluntary agencies is urgently needed at national and international level. Introduction of training for child minding in the home, planned and organized jointly at local government level, gives a glimpse of the efforts being made towards active collaboration between health, social services and education.

The basic aim of preschool care and education is seen as the fostering of optimal all-round development. Health, social services and education must collaborate if this aim is to be achieved. The review concludes with a plea for more "practice oriented research" in child development. There are some delightful child study photographs and a comprehensive list of references.

MARGARET J. ROBERTS (U.K.)

Children's Ways of Knowing, Nathan Isaacs. Teachers College Press (Collection of essays on education, psychology and Piaget, ed. Mildred Hardeman), New York and London. 1974.

It is worthy of note that this edition of Nathan Isaacs' works is published in the United States. Inspiration for the publication came from Evelyn Isaacs (Evelyn Lawrence before her marriage to Nathan Isaacs) one-time Director of the National Froebel Foundation which had previously published Nathan Isaacs' works. Nathan Isaacs was concerned with the contribution of the work of Piaget to the development of his own theory of "living learning". The article in the collection entitled "Piaget: Some Answers to Teachers' Questions", gives a brief summary of Piaget's work, the implications for education and Isaacs' own criticisms. While accepting Piaget's account of cognitive development in the first 18 to 21 months, he viewed Piaget's concentration on one aspect of cognitive growth, namely the development of formal logic, as too narrow for the range of intellectual processes. He stressed the importance of language in opening up new areas for exploring, organizing and integrating but warned against creating for the child a world of "verbal twilight learning". He saw language in its most constructive and productive use in children's spontaneous questions.

Mildred Hardeman in her valuable introduction identifies for the reader aspects of Isaacs' contribution to the theoretical material underpinning the active learning approach characteristic of the British Infant school (so designated by the Americans). She emphasizes the importance for the teacher of studying how the child views the world and how he deals with situations that do not conform to his expectations. In Isaacs' view the child receives a "cognitive shock" in such a situation and his response is an open-ended "Why?" This is in effect a question about the state of his knowledge. The child is pushed into an interest in knowledge. He is asking for help, for an explanation which he cannot supply himself; he needs knowledge in order to feel secure. Isaacs looks at what goes on in school in terms of his "living learning" theory. He is particularly critical of conditions that evoke "passive receptivity" in opposition to "living integrative" learning.

In "Early Scientific Trends in Children", Isaacs stresses children's natural interest in the world and their need for clarity, correctness and adequacy in their knowledge. He emphasizes the importance of the teacher's own understanding of scientific method and interest in encouraging the formulation of questions by the children. He recognizes that the implications for the teacher and for teacher training are considerable and stresses the importance of a broad integrated and meaningful psychology of cognition in his article "What is Required of the Nursery Teacher in this Country Today?"

Nathan Isaacs had seen for himself the possibility of an "active learning" education when Susan Isaacs was running the Malting House School experiment; in a way his essays are complementary to her work. He makes explicit some of the implicit assumptions underlying Susan Isaacs' practical handling of the children's problems and questions. While Susan Isaacs' contribution has been essentially an analysis of the theoretical basis of the child's social and emotional

life, Nathan's interest led him to study the implications of Piaget's work for the education of young children with particular reference to their scientific education. His patient analytical approach to questions vital to education is emphasized by this collection of his works in one volume and an expression of appreciation is due to the editor, Mildred Hardeman, and the publishers.

MARGARET J. ROBERTS (U.K.)

Learning Tasks, Stock, C. Pruett Publishing Co., Colorado. 1970. $4.95.

Learning Activities, Stock, C. Pruett Publishing Co., Colorado. 1970. $2.50.

Minimal Brain Dysfunction, Stock, C. Pruett Press Inc., Colorado. 1970.

Apparently there has been a considerable time lag since the publication of these three books and their arrival on the Editor's desk. They are thin paperbacks, each comprising about fifty pages and the kind of books which may readily drop out of sight in a pile of journals—and hence out of mind. They deserve a better fate. Although five years have passed since their publication a note on their usefulness may provide welcome source material for parents, for interested professionals in special education, public health nursing and occupational therapy.

The books have a common author and a similar technique in the presentation and layout of their material, facilitating input to the reader's mind and clarifying appropriate action to be taken by professionals to attain specific educational objectives.

The content of the first of the above books is designed to promote tactile discrimination, attention and awareness of motion, in children who require intensified instruction to reinforce basic motor-perceptual-conceptual learning because of developmental retardation in these areas. The suggested activities are well thought out and can be readily presented with inexpensive materials. Each learning task has specified objectives, materials which are colourfully illustrated and suggested variations so that a parent or teacher need never run short of ideas for promoting linguistic and multisensory learning.

The volume on Learning Activities comprises the material from Learning Tasks and includes a Parental Observation Form which is intended to ascertain whether children are learning sequential developmental skills enabling them to meet future academic demands. The suggested tasks have a sound theoretical basis. They do not suggest that intelligent behaviour, abstracting, symbolising, formulating concepts, are higher reasoning processes generated spontaneously and mysteriously. On the contrary they underline the unity of learning, how these processes are intimately connected with early activities and with opportunities for the experience of systematic stimulation of the total organism. Critical periods when the ability to learn is optimal occur with many children before the statutory age for the start of formal schooling. For this reason the above books could play a useful part in compensatory programmes of stimulation aimed at offsetting the systemic effects of initial handicapping factors, including social disadvantages.

The third of these books is a clear presentation of what is known about learning disabilities, assumed to be caused by minimal brain dysfunction. The author modestly claims that it does not constitute an exhaustive survey or total review of the literature. If all the members of those disciplines concerned with growth, development, learning processes and remediation for the pupil with learning disabilities, were acquainted with the content of this book, a great step would be made towards the alleviation of many of our present educational casualties.

The techniques of columnar layout of each page is somewhat similar to that of the above two books. First the clinical manifestation is named, second a definition and detailed description of the behaviours associated with the specific clinical symptom follows, and third, techniques of handling the behaviour and suggestions about classroom management are offered. This is bound to help the busy teacher who is often taxed to find skills, approaches and abilities which can substitute or compensate for the multiplicity of deficits found in special remedial groups.

From the theoretical point of view minor quibbles could be raised over questions of aetiology and terminology. For example "limited attention" span is not well defined and "over attention to irrelevancies" is forwarded as an alternative explanation. There is no doubt that many young children with organic involvement have concentration for egocentrically pursued goals rather than for other directed activity and have relatively short attention span but both neurological and psychological explanations can be invoked in practically every case. However the references themselves constitute invaluable source material where theoretical divergencies abound. For the busy clinician, teacher and parent the techniques of management and strategies of coping with children's deficits constitute the most practical and valuable aspects of the work.

JOHN MCKENNA (Ireland)

Beyond the Information Given. Studies in the Psychology of Knowing, Bruner. J. S. Allen & Unwin (Selected, edited and introduced by J. M. Anglin) London. 1973.

The title of this book is inspired. It epitomises what those who understand progressive education are trying to do. We no longer treat children as computers, conditioning them to reproduce the facts at speed. It is now clear that even very young children can work in a dimension beyond the capability of the most complex computer. The computer manipulates the facts it is given; but the child can make inspired guesses beyond

the facts which have been given. Bruner produces experimental evidence to show that the main task of educators is this: to adapt the mode of instruction to the mode of representation available to a child. Since modes of representation become more complex and abstract with maturation, this demands great flexibility and awareness on the part of teachers and others. The situation is further complicated by the fact that children are sociable and yet no two are at exactly the same stage of maturation.

Jerome S. Bruner is in the forefront of psychological theory and practice. He was for many years Professor of Psychology at Harvard, where he and a colleague founded the Centre for Cogitive Studies; and he is now a Fellow of the postgraduate Wolfson College, Oxford, England, and in charge of the Oxford Preschool Research Group. This book consists of 27 major papers covering 25 years of his work. His findings drove him back and back to infancy for the origins of thought. He found that by three years of age children have highly skilled mechanisms for ordering information, by means of which they can discover information beyond the given facts.

The book is arranged under headings of perception, thought, skills in infancy, representation in childhood, and education. In the final section he gives many concrete examples in support of his theories. One example from these will show how he pin-points an objective, and incidentally how he may unjustly be criticised by those who have failed to perceive the objective. Two experts, a mathematician and a psychologist, selected four children of eight, two boys and two girls, of above average but not exceptional ability, I.Q. 120-130, for a six weeks experiment. Once a day, four times a week, with the aid of a wealth of apparatus, these children were coached by the two experts. By the end of the 24 one-hour coachings these children could achieve with ease: factoring, distributive and commutative properties of addition and multiplication, and also quadratic function. In at least one review this experiment was seen as having little relevance to classes of thirty children or more. But that was not what was being examined. The experimenters, who were Z. P. Dienes and J. S. Bruner, were seeking to find out what would really happen if you did adapt the mode of instruction to the mode of representation of this little group.

Bruner considers schools ideal for disengaging children from the community activities of their early years, freeing them for thinking. But he also thinks that the way schools are run, isolating the children from the community activities of their parents, is an important factor in the cultural malaise and violence of young people today. He considers that children not only need plenty of opportunity for active discovery and help at the right moment in the techniques for manipulating the complexity of information; they also need to be actively involved in the wider community. Most primary teachers have heard conversations on the following lines: "My Daddy works in an office." "What is an office?" "I don't know but my Daddy says I will when I grow up."

Many educators of young children today have used fantasy as a powerhouse from which the children can rise to surprisingly high levels of creative art in the various media. This aspect of thinking, by which a child—as any other artist—transmutes vivid experience to a creation in paint, music, drama or sculpture, does not figure in the book under review. But this is only one man's selection of Bruner's papers. Elsewhere,* in 1972, Bruner turns his attention to play with his customary broad and deep approach. From many well-documented sources of information he speculates that the play of young primates took on certain characteristics from the time mankind emerged from the ice age. He pays particular attention to social organisation, tool using, play and imitation; and to the drastic alteration to induction of the young into adult society with emergence of language. One feels both elated that play has this fine history of many millenia, and deflated that this same emerging mankind has taken so long to see that successful induction depends upon adapting to the child's developing modes of learning.

Two professors have been Bruner's twin stars: F. C. Bartlett of England and Piaget of Switzerland. Both went deeply into the processes of thought earlier in this century. Bruner chose the title of this collection of papers from Bartlett's book *Remembering* (1932), in which the author stresses the need to go beyond the information given.

PHYLLIS PICKARD (U.K.)

*Bruner, J. S. Nature and Uses of Immaturity. *American Psychologist,* August 1972.

Propos sur le jeune enfant, Lézine, Irène. Coll. Education et société, Mame. 1974. 230 pp. 30f.

L'excellent livre que vient de publier Irène Lézine est le fruit de nombreuses années de travaux scientifiques. L'auteur, psychologue, est constamment tourné vers les applications pratiques de ses recherches scientifiques et la lecture du livre en est ainsi facilitée pour les non-spécialistes.

Après avoir remarquablement résumé les recherches des 50 dernières années dans le domaine du jeune enfant, I. Lézine aborde des problèmes plus techniques et plus précis tels que: les échelles de développement psycho-moteur, diagnostic, précoce de la débilité.