

## Part I Persons or Products

### Children are Born Persons<sup>1</sup>

"The consequence of truth is great, therefore the judgment of it must not be negligent."

It should not surprise the reader that a chapter, designed to set forth a startling truth, should open with the weighty words of an old Divine (Whichcote). But truths get flat and wonders stale upon us. We do not care much about the starry firmament, the budding trees, the cunning architecture of the birds; and to all except young parents and young brothers and sisters a baby is no longer a marvel. The completeness of the new baby brother is what children admire most, his toes and his fingers, his ears and all the small perfections of him. His guardians have some understanding of the baby; they know that his chief business is to grow and they feed him with food convenient for him. If they are wise they give free play to all the wriggings and stretchings which give power to his feeble muscles. His parents know what he will come to, and feel that here is a new chance for the world. In the meantime, he needs food, sleep and shelter and a great deal of love. So much we all know. But is the baby more than a 'huge oyster'? That is the problem before us and hitherto educators have been inclined to answer it in the negative. Their notion is that by means of a pull here, a push there, a compression elsewhere a person is at last turned out according to the pattern the educator has in his mind.

The other view is that the beautiful infant frame is but the setting of a jewel of such astonishing worth that, put the whole world in one scale and this jewel in the other, and the scale which holds the world flies up outbalanced. A poet looks back on the glimmering haze of his own infancy and this is the sort of thing he sees,—

"I was entertained like an angel with the works of God in their splendor and glory . . . Is it not strange that an infant should be heir of the whole world and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold? . . . The corn was orient and immortal wheat which never should be reaped nor was ever sown. I

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<sup>1</sup> Mason, *A Philosophy of Education*,

thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious gold. The green trees transported and ravished me. Their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap . . . Boys and girls tumbling in the streets were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born or should die . . . The streets were mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it." [*Thomas Traherne*]

We are not poets and are disposed to discount the sayings of the poets, but the most prosaic of us comes across evidence of mind in children, and of mind astonishingly alert. Let us consider, in the first two years of life they manage to get through more intellectual effort than any following two years can show.... that to run and jump and climb stairs, even to sit and stand at will must require fully as much reasoned endeavor as it takes in after years to accomplish skating, dancing, skiing, fencing, whatever athletic exercises people spend years in perfecting; and all these the infant accomplishes in his first two years. He learns the properties of matter, knows colors and has first notions of size, solid, liquid; has learned in his third year to articulate with surprising clearness. What is more, he has learned a language, two languages, if he has had the opportunity, and the writer has known of three languages being mastered by a child of three, and one of them was Arabic; mastered, that is, so far that a child can say all that he needs to say in any one of the three—the sort of mastery most of us wish for when we are traveling in foreign countries. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu tells us that in her time the little children of Constantinople prattled in five tongues with a good knowledge of each. If we have not proved that a child is born a person with a mind as complete and as beautiful as his beautiful little body, we can at least show that he always has all the mind he requires for his occasions; that is, that his mind is the instrument of his education and that his education does not produce his mind.

Who shall measure the range of a child's thoughts? His continual questions about God, his speculations about 'Jesus,' are they no more than idle curiosity, or are they symptoms of a God-hunger with which we are all born, and is a child able

to comprehend as much of the infinite and the unseen as are his self-complacent elders? Is he 'cabined, cribbed, confined,' in our ways and does the fairy tale afford a joyful escape to regions where all things are possible? We are told that children have no imagination, that they must needs see and touch, taste and handle, in order to know. While a child's age is still counted by months, he devotes himself to learning the properties of things by touching, pulling, tearing, throwing, tasting, but as months pass into years a glance suffices for all but new things of complicated structure. Life is a continual progress to a child. He does not go over old things in old ways; his joy is to go on. The immensity of his powers brings its own terrors.

Reason is present in the infant as truly as imagination. As soon as he can speak he lets us know that he has pondered the 'cause why' of things and perplexes us with a thousand questions. His 'why?' is ceaseless. Nor are his reasonings always disinterested. How soon the little urchin learns to manage his nurse or mother, to calculate her moods and play upon her feelings! It is in him to be a little tyrant; "he has a will of his own," says his nurse, but she is mistaken in supposing that his stormy manifestations of greed, willfulness, temper, are signs of will. It is when the little boy is able to stop all these and restrain himself with quivering lip that his will comes into play; for he has a conscience too. Before he begins to toddle he knows the difference between right and wrong; even a baby in arms will blush at the 'naughty baby!' of his nurse; and that strong will of his acts in proportion as he learns the difficult art of obedience; for no one can make a child obey unless he wills to do so, and we all know how small a rebel may make confusion in house or schoolroom.

### **Questions and Thoughts to Consider:**

1. Describe how a person may be like an oyster?
2. What are the implications for this view?
3. Describe the relationship between a parent/ teacher and a child with this view.
4. Describe the other view of the child?
5. How does the poet describe the child?
6. Is a human person more than animal?
7. How does the present culture view children?

8. Can we distinguish relationships between children as persons and children as products in our lives, in our children's lives?
9. How does the view of children as persons differ from adoring or worshipping the child?
10. What does Mason tell us about the child and his need?

## **Part II. How is the Student Growing?**

### **The Mind of a School-Child**

But we must leave the quite young child, fascinating as he is, and take him up again when he is ready for lessons. I have made some attempt elsewhere to show what his parents and teachers owe to him in those years in which he is engaged in self-education, taking his lessons from everything he sees and hears, and strengthening his powers by everything he does. (Mason referring to her outline of pre and early school education in her first volume.) Here, in a volume which is chiefly concerned with education in the sense of (formal) schooling, I am anxious to bring before teachers the fact that a child comes into their hands with a mind of amazing potentialities: he has a brain too, no doubt, the organ and instrument of that same mind, as a piano is not music but the instrument of music. Probably we need not concern ourselves about the brain which is subject to the same conditions as the rest of the material body, is fed with the body's food, rests, as the body rests, requires fresh air and wholesome exercise to keep it in health, but depends upon the mind for its proper activities.

The world has concerned itself of late so much with psychology, whose province is what has been called 'the unconscious mind,' a region under the sway of nerves and blood (which it is best perhaps to let alone) that in our educational efforts we tend to ignore the mind and address ourselves to this region of symptoms. Now mind, being spiritual, knows no fatigue; brain, too, duly nourished with the food proper for the body, allowed due conditions of fresh air and rest, should not know fatigue; given these two conditions, we have a glorious field of educational possibilities; but it rests with us to evolve a theory

and practice which afford due recognition to mind. An authoritative saying which we are apt to associate with the religious life only is equally applicable to education. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, we are told; but we have forgotten this great principle in our efforts at schooling children. We give them a 'play way' and play is altogether necessary and desirable but is not the avenue which leads to mind. We give them a fitting environment, which is again altogether desirable and, again, is not the way to mind. We teach them beautiful motion and we do well, for the body too must have its education; but we are not safe if we take these by-paths as approaches to mind. It is still true that that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. The way to mind is a quite direct way. Mind must come into contact with mind through the medium of ideas. "What is mind?" says the old conundrum, and the answer still is "No matter." It is necessary for us who teach to realize that things material have little effect upon mind, because there are still among us schools in which the work is altogether material and technical, whether the teaching is given by means of bars of wood or more scientific apparatus. The mistress of an Elementary School writes,—"The father of one of my girls said to me yesterday, 'You have given me some work to do. E. has let me have no rest until I promised to set up my microscope and get pond water to look for monads and other wonders.'" Here we have the right order. That which was born of the spirit, the idea, came first and demanded to confirm and illustrate. "How can these things be?" we ask, and the answer is not evident.

Education, like faith, is the evidence of things not seen. We must begin with the notion that the business of the body is to grow; and it grows upon food, which food is composed of living cells, each a perfect life in itself. In like manner, though all analogies are misleading and inadequate, the only fit sustenance for the mind is ideas, and an idea too, like the single cell of cellular tissue, appears to go through the stages and functions of a life. We receive it with appetite and some stir of interest. It appears to feed in a curious way. We hear of a new patent cure for the mind or the body, of the new thought of some poet, the new notion of a school of painters; we take in, accept, the idea and for days after every book we read, every person we talk with brings food to the newly entertained notion. 'Not proven,' will be the verdict of the casual reader; but if he watch the behavior

of his own mind towards any of the ideas 'in the air,' he will find that some such process as I have described takes place; and this process must be considered carefully in the education of children. We may not take things casually as we have done. Our business is to give children the great ideas of life, of religion, history, science; but it is the ideas we must give, clothed upon with facts as they occur, and must leave the child to deal with these as he chooses.

How many teachers know that children require no pictures excepting the pictures of great artists, which have quite another function than that of illustration? They see for themselves in their own minds a far more glorious, and indeed more accurate, presentation than we can afford in our miserable daubs. They read between the lines and put in all the author has left out. A child of nine, who had been reading Lang's *Tales Of Troy and Greece*, drew Ulysses on the Isle of Calypso cutting down trees to make a raft; a child of ten, reveling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, drew that Indian Princess bringing her lovely boy to Titania. We others are content to know that Ulysses built a raft, that the boy was the child of an Indian Princess. This is how any child's mind works, and our concern is not to starve these fertile intelligences. They must have food in great abundance and variety. They know what to do with it well enough and we need not disturb ourselves to provide for the separate exercise of each so-called 'faculty' (a singular power of the mind, such as memory, reason, or speech); for the mind is one and works all together; reason, imagination, reflection, judgment, what you please, are like 'all hands' summoned by the 'heave-ho!' of the boatswain. All swarm on deck for the lading of cargo, that rich and odorous cargo of ideas which the fair vessel of a child's mind is waiting to receive. Do we wish every child in a class to say,—or, if he does not say, to feel,—"I was enlarged wonderfully" by a Geography lesson? Let him see the place with the eyes of those who have seen or conceived it; your barographs, thermographs, contour lines, relief models, sections, profiles and the like, will not do it. A map of the world must be a panorama to a child of pictures so entrancing that he would rather ponder them than go out to play; and nothing is more easy than to give him this joy of living. Let him see the world as we ourselves choose to see it when we travel; its cities and peoples, its mountains and rivers, and he will go

away from his lesson with the piece of the world he has read about, be it county or country, sea or shore, as that of "a new room prepared for him, so much will he be magnified and delighted in it." All the world is in truth the child's possession, prepared for him, and if we keep him out of his rights by our technical, commercial, even historical, geography, any sort of geography, in fact, made to illustrate our theories, we are guilty of fraudulent practices. What he wants is the world and every bit, piece by piece, each bit a key to the rest. He reads of the [*tidal*] Bore of the Severn [*River*] and is on speaking terms with a 'Bore' wherever it occurs. He need not see a mountain to know a mountain. He sees all that is described to him with a vividness of which we know nothing just as if there had been "no other way to those places but in spirit only." Who can take the measure of a child? The Genie of the Arabian tale is nothing to him. He, too, may be let out of his bottle and fill the world. But woe to us if we keep him corked up.

Enough, that the children have minds, and every man's mind is his means of living; but it is a great deal more. Working men will have leisure in the future and how this leisure is to be employed is a question much discussed. Now, no one can employ leisure fitly whose mind is not brought into active play every day; the small affairs of a man's own life supply no intellectual food and but small and monotonous intellectual exercise. Science, history, philosophy, literature, must no longer be the luxuries of the 'educated' classes; all classes must be educated and sit down to these things of the mind as they do to their daily bread. History must afford its pageants, science its wonders, literature its intimacies, philosophy its speculations, religion its assurances to every man, and his education must have prepared him for wanderings in these realms of gold.

How do we prepare a child, again, to use the aesthetic sense with which he appears to come provided? His education should furnish him with whole galleries of mental pictures, pictures by great artists old and new;—Israel's Pancake Woman, his *Children by the Sea*; Millet's *Feeding the Birds*, *First Steps*, *Angelus*; Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, *The Supper at Emmaus*; Velasquez's *Surrender of Breda*,—in fact, every child should leave school with at least a couple of hundred pictures by great masters hanging permanently in the halls of his imagination, to say nothing of great buildings, sculpture, beauty of form and color in things he see.

Perhaps we might secure at least a hundred lovely landscapes too,—sunsets, cloudscapes, starlight nights. At any rate he should go forth well furnished because imagination has the property of magical expansion, the more it holds the more it will hold.

It is not only a child's intellect but his heart that comes to us thoroughly furnished. Can any of us love like a little child? Father and mother, sisters and brothers, neighbors and friends, "our" cat and "our" dog, the wretchedest old stump of a broken toy, all come in for his lavish tenderness. How generous and grateful he is, how kind and simple, how pitiful and how full of benevolence in the strict sense of goodwill, how loyal and humble, how fair and just! His conscience is on the alert. Is a tale true? Is a person good?—these are the important questions. His conscience chides him when he is naughty, and by degrees as he is trained, his will comes to his aid and he learns to order his life. He is taught to say his prayers, and we elders hardly realize how real his prayers are to a child.

### **Questions and Thoughts to Consider:**

1. Describe what growth looks like in a child?
2. How has education ignored mind and moved to symptoms? Why?
3. Reflect upon your own education, how was mind cultivated? How was it not cultivated?
4. What are the kinds of things Mason is describing as "food for the mind"?
5. How can schooling be a "play-way", "a fitting environment", or "beautiful motion"? Does this feed the mind?
6. Describe a growth mindset?
7. When is mind ignored and why?
8. How can we cultivate a home that nurtures mind? What are the challenges before us?

### III. What are we drawing the students to?

#### The Means of Motivation

So far we have considered incidental ways of trespassing upon those rights of personality proper to children, but we have more pervasive, if less injurious, ways of stultifying intellectual and moral growth. Our school ethic rests upon, our school discipline is supported by, undue play upon certain natural desires. It is worthwhile to reflect that the mind also has its appetites, better known as desires. It is as necessary that Mind should be fed, should grow and should produce, as that these things should happen to Body, and just as Body would not take the trouble to feed itself if it never became hungry, so Mind also would not take in that which it needs if it were not that certain Desires require to be satisfied. Therefore schoolmasters do not amiss in basing their practice upon the Desires whose very function appears to be to bring nourishment to Mind. Where we teachers err is in stimulating the wrong desires to accomplish our end. There is the desire of approbation which even an infant shows, he is not happy unless mother or nurse approve of him. Later this same desire helps him to conquer a sum, climb a hill, bring home a good report from school, and all this is grist to the mill, knowledge to the mind; because the persons whose approbation is worth having care that he should learn and know, conquer idleness, and get habits of steady work, so that his mind may be as duly nourished every day as is his body. Alas for the vanity that attends this desire of approbation, that makes the boy more solicitous for the grin of the stable boy than for the approval of his master! Nay, this desire for approval may get such possession of him that he thinks of nothing else; he must have approval whether from the worthless or the virtuous. It is supposed that outbreaks of violence, robbery, assassinations, occur at times for the mere sake of infamy, just as deeds of heroism are done for the sake of fame. Both infamy and fame mean being thought about and talked about by a large number of people; and we know how this natural desire is worked by

the daily press; how we get, now a film actress, now a burglar, a spy, a hero, or a scientist set before us to be our admiration and our praise.

Emulation, the desire of excelling, works wonders in the hands of the schoolmaster; and, indeed, this natural desire is an amazing spur to effort, both intellectual and moral. When in pursuit of virtue two or a score are 'emulously rapid in the race,' a school acquires 'a good tone' and parents are justified in thinking it the right place for their child. In the intellectual field, however, there is danger; and nothing worse could have happened to our schools than the system of marks, prizes, place-taking, by which many of them are practically governed. A child is so taken up with the desire to forge ahead that there is no time to think of anything else. What he learns is not interesting to him; he works to get his remove. But emulation does not stand alone as Viceregent in our schools; another natural desire whose unvarnished name is avarice labors for good government and so-called progress cheek by jowl with emulation. "He must get a scholarship,"—is the duty of a small child even before he goes to school, and indeed for good and sufficient reasons. Sometimes the sons of rich parents carry off these prizes but as a rule they fall to those for whom they are intended, the sons of educated parents in rather straitened circumstances, sons of the clergy, for example. The scholarship system is no more than a means of distributing the vast wealth left by benefactors in the past for this particular purpose. Every Grammar school has its own scholarships; the Universities have open scholarships and bursaries often of considerable value; and a free, or partially free, education is open to the majority of the youth of the upper middle class on one condition, that of brains. It is small wonder that every Grammar and Public School bases its curriculum upon these conditions, knows exactly what standard of merit will secure the 'Hastings,' knows the children who have a chance, and orders their very strenuous work towards the end in view. It is hard to say what better could be done and yet this deliberate cult of cupidity is disastrous; for there is no doubt that here and there we come upon impoverishment of personality due to enfeebled intellectual life; the child did not learn to delight in knowledge in his schooldays and the adult is shallow in mind and whimsical in judgment.

We need not delay over that desire of power, ambition, which plays its part in every life; but the educator must see that it plays no more than its part. Power is good in proportion as it gives opportunities for serving; but it is mischievous in child or man when the pleasure of ruling, managing, becomes a definite spring of action. Like each of the other natural desires, that for power may ruin a life that it is allowed to master; ambition is the cause of half the disasters under which mankind suffers. The ambitious child or man would as soon lead his fellows in riot and disorder as in noble effort in a good cause; and who can say how far the labor unrest under which we suffer is inspired and inflamed by ambitious men who want to rule if only for the immediate intoxication of rousing and leading men? It is a fine thing to say of a multitude of men,—"I can wind them around my little finger"; and the much-burdened Head of a school must needs beware! If the able, ambitious fellow be allowed to manage the rest, he cheats them out of their fair share of managing their own lives; no child should be allowed to wax feeble to make another great; the harm to the ambitious child himself must be considered too, lest he become an ignoble, maneuvering person. It is within a teacher's scope to offer wholesome ambitions to a child, to make him keen to master knowledge rather than manage men; and here he has wide field without encroaching on another's preserve.

Another desire which may well be made to play into the schoolmaster's hands is that of society, a desire which has much to do with the making of the naughty boys, idle youths and silly women of our acquaintance. It is sheer delight to mix with our fellows, but much depends on whom we take for our fellows and why; and here young people may be helped by finger-posts. If they are so taught that knowledge delights them, they will choose companions who share that pleasure. In this way princes are trained; they must know something of botany to talk with botanists, of history to meet with historians; they cannot afford to be in the company of scientists, adventurers, poets, painters, philanthropists or economists, and themselves be able to do no more than 'change the weather and pass the time of day'; they must know modern languages to be at home with men of other countries, and ancient tongues to be familiar with classical allusions. Such considerations rule the education of princes, and every boy has a princely

right to be brought up so that he may hold his own in good society, that is, the society of those who 'know.'<sup>2</sup>

It must be borne in mind that in proportion as other desires are stimulated that of knowledge is suppressed. The teacher who proposes marks and places as worthy aims will get work certainly but he will get no healthy love of knowledge for its own sake and no provision against the ennui of later days. The monotony I have spoken of attends all work prompted by the stimuli of marks and places; such work becomes mechanical, and there is hardly enough of it prepared to last through the course of a child's school life.<sup>3</sup>

### **Questions and Thoughts to Consider**

1. How do school ethics and school discipline unduly play upon the natural desires? Give examples
2. Where do we err as teachers? Why must this be?
3. Why does emulation work against learning? Avarice? Ambition? Society?
4. What are we drawing students to when we play upon these motives?
5. Think about school life for the student in elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. Talk about the ways at these various ages in which we "motivate" children towards schooling.
6. What happens to the desire of knowledge when the other desires are at the forefront?
7. How is this seen in the school classroom? The homeschool classroom? The use of curricula? The home? Children's sports and activities?

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<sup>2</sup> *Towards a Philosophy of Education*, 80-85.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 94.