

Margaret Gillett. *A History of Education: Thought and Practice*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill of Canada, 1966, 443 pp.

In this book we find a new and fresh approach to the History of Education. The book is unusual and perhaps unique in a number of ways. It is by a Canadian (albeit a Canadian by adoption); it illustrates *both* educational theory and educational practice; it contains a concise section on contemporary educational systems; and, most important of all it looks upon the educational scene from a wide international viewpoint (which is not surprising when it is known that the author, now Chairman of the Department of History and Philosophy of Education at McGill University, has had experience of schools and educational systems in four continents). Into this framework the sections on Canada fit very well and are given no more prominence than is natural in a book written by a Canadian and presumably mainly for Canadians.

This international outlook, however, deserves more than passing mention. It is both universal and timely. More than that; it has the salutary effect of placing in a truer perspective the history of Western Education which is the usual fare for Education students in the English-speaking universities of the West. One of the best things in the book is the chapter entitled "International Education" which brings together a wealth of information not only about UNESCO and the Colombo Plan, but about the work of many other agencies supported by the U.S.A., Canada and other countries and operating in many different parts of the underdeveloped world.

Here the writer's enthusiasm carries her along with a sweep which, understandably, is not evident in all parts of the book. At the same time it must be said that the author's interest in educational developments outside the West leads to the introduction of one or two short sections (for example on Muslim Education and on education in Korea) which had perhaps better been either expanded or omitted altogether. And it does seem rather odd to find a section on the Education of Incas in a chapter headed "The Renaissance and Humanistic Studies." Those minor criticisms apart, there is no doubt the book gains greatly from its breadth of outlook.

The book is divided into two equal parts. The first takes the history of educational theory and practice up to the end of the eighteenth century (and for Canada up to 1867); the second continues the story up to the present, and includes, as already explained, a section on international education and short but informative sections on contemporary educational systems in countries both of the developed and the developing world. In the opinion of this reviewer, the second part is the better and he would hazard a guess that this is where the author's chief interests lie. The pace is brisker, the language crisper, the thought clearer and more direct, than in some of the earlier chapters. But such variations are inevitable in a book of the scope and sweep of this one.

The influence of advancing technology in the last two centuries, the development of modern psychology, the growth of interest in and understanding of young children, the new, scientific and philosophical ideas beginning with Darwin, the spread of popular education and the significance of educational research — all of those are effectively dealt with and the author has been remarkably successful in forming out of those disparate but connected elements a very clear and continuous narrative. The chapter on Pragmatism and Progressive Education (a nice distinction not always observed) particularly delighted this reviewer, perhaps because while he finds himself arguing both with its account of the substance of Dewey's ideas and their influence upon educational practice and with its criticism of Dewey, the author's point of approach to Dewey's philosophy is very different from his own.

Concerning the remaining chapters of this half of the book, those dealing with its contemporary educational systems, little will be said here. They are necessarily short, but, for those countries of which the present reviewer has some knowledge, adequate for the purposes of the book. The interested reader will naturally wish to refer for further information to the books listed in the bibliographies on those chapters.

It seems desirable at this point to pause and ask ourselves the question, "What is the purpose of teaching the History of Education?" This reviewer suggests a triple answer: (a) because the history of education, like all history is interesting and enlightening if well told; (b) because the present can be understood only in the light of the past; and (c) to illuminate educational studies by making possible comparative studies of past and present. This reviewer has already indicated his opinion that Dr. Gillett's book gives an excellent presentation of the present state of education in the world in the light of world developments in the past two centuries. It is also successful in illuminating the educational progress we have made by comparison with earlier school practice. The account of a Lancastrian School in Chapter 11 is an interesting illustration. It is difficult today to credit the enthusiasm stirred by this method in the early nineteenth century, a method which seems now to us regimented, harsh and ineffective. We have come a long way since Lancaster.

It does not seem to this reviewer that the first part of the book is as successful as the second in promoting understanding of the present as a child of the past nor in broadening the reader's outlook by enabling him to compare past and present. To be sure the raw material is all there, Greek practice and Greek theory, the Romans, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Reformation, the rationalism of the eighteenth century. But somehow the flame of Greece does not burn as brightly as it should, the fiery philosophical disputes of mediaeval times are damped down, the knights and the clerics don't live as they do in Chaucer's Prologue. There are, of course, bright spots. Luther emerges as the giant he was (though Melancthon, in this reviewer's opinion, gets less than his due) and

the figure of Rousseau, the fountain head of so many modern educational ideas, is presented to us with force and verve. Do we detect a partiality of our author for striking and controversial characters?

Which brings us to the reviewer's bias. All reviewers are biased and the present reviewer by education and inclination is biased in favour of the earlier period of educational history. He does not feel that the treatment of educational practice in Athens is adequate. Reference to K. J. Freeman's book "School of Hellas," which does not appear in the bibliography for Chapters 2 and 3 would show where the inadequacies lie. And he feels that a fuller account of the humanist schools of the Renaissance, and particularly of Vittorino's delightful school at Mantua, is highly desirable.

Much of this criticism is, no doubt, due to the compression necessary in a book of this kind, and it must be said that the author has successfully compressed an astonishing amount of information into just over 400 pages. That the author is aware of this situation is evident from her remarks in the preface. "This book," she says, "is designed to provide a basic structure for a formal course in the History of Education. Its scope ranges from antiquity to the present day. *Its omissions and elisions will be offset by classwork and correlative reading*" (my italics). None the less, this reviewer feels that the book would have been improved by the omission of some factual matter and the expansion of other material, especially a fuller and more dramatic treatment of some of the great figures, or even some of the lesser figures of educational history. While, as already stated, Luther, Rousseau, and Dewey appear as human beings or as theorists largely in the round (to whom we might add perhaps, Pestalozzi and Erasmus) there is a whole host of other fascinating figures who appear only in two dimensions. In short he is of the opinion that Dr. Gillett's book might have better served the first aim of teaching the history of education, to make the past interesting, by exercising more dramatically the historian's privilege (and necessary task) of selecting from the past events and persons germane to his purpose. But one must not ask too much of any one book.

On any count, this book is a notable addition to the shelf of histories of education, and one whose characteristics and peculiar merits are not duplicated by existing histories (Nakosteen's is nearest). Unlike Ulich and Curtis and Boulwood, it deals with practice as well as theory; it writes from a broader outlook than Good, Knight or Boyd, who deal with Western Education only; and it brings the development of Canadian education into the circle of world-wide educational developments.

It is a pleasure to welcome and to recommend such a book as a product of scholarship from a Canadian University.

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