

The abundance of this kind of finely drawn detail is, at once, the characteristic charm and the characteristic weakness of the book. It is true that the Silvers have attempted to sketch in the social and economic background, both at a local and a national level, to the operation of the school, but, while the reader is at once entertained by the detail and informed by the commentary, he is not made aware of any argument that is being presented and by which he can assess the relevance of the material. This is, in a way, odd, for Harold Silver's best known book, *The Concept of Popular Education*, is a lucid, well-documented, and very forcefully argued work. *The History of a National School* is local history, albeit local history at its best, and it rarely succeeds in getting outside of its subject matter in order to view it critically or even purposively.

Yet — if we are to gain a deeper understanding of the origins and character of English popular education, it may well be that what is needed is precisely good local history. As Creighton has observed of the functions of biography, "we can only understand ideas when exhibited in their application to actual life . . . [and] movements are only intelligible when described in terms of individual endeavour" (p. 305).<sup>1</sup> *The History of a National School* provides just such an application and makes possible just such an understanding.

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<sup>1</sup>Creighton, M. *Heroes*. In L. Creighton (Ed.), *Historical Lectures and Addresses*, London, Longmans, Greer & Co., 1903.

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A. E. Dyson and Julian Lovelock. *Education and Democracy*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. Pp. 295. \$17.60.

This is a volume of readings in the Birth of Modern Britain series which is intended to appeal equally to students of history and literature. One stumbling block for the student of history, say the general editors of the series in their preface, is hindsight which over-simplifies the past and fails to imagine events as they actually were. It is necessary, in their view, to combat this "dull sense" of inevitability and, to this end, the series will endeavour to "recreate situations through the passions and commitments of participants and contemporary commentators before the outcome was known." The editors declare further that this treatment of the recent past is the soundest basis for understanding the modern world, for, as we accompany our predecessors on their pilgrimage, we come to realise that continuity is no less striking than the element of change.

Such statements create a pleasurable sense of anticipation in the reader as he turns to the present volume, edited by Messrs. Dyson, of Black Papers fame, and Lovelock, both experienced teachers of English, one at the University of East Anglia and the other at Dulwich College Preparatory School. They contribute a 29-page introduction in excellent prose and then present 100 selected readings covering the period 1791 to 1916 and divided into four chronological sections. The editors can scarcely be faulted for organisation, for, in addition to their general introduction, there is a preface to each of the four sections, referring briefly to each item and explaining its significance. Furthermore, each of the 100 items is preceded by a brief note about its author. The selection of material is skillful and ranges widely over novels, magazine articles, letters, speeches, and commission reports as well as works on education. The famous educational names are there — Lancaster, Owen, the Mills, the Arnolds, Robert Lowe, Kay Shuttleworth, Brougham, Forster — together with famous literary names such as Wordsworth, George Eliot, Dickens, William Morris, F. D. Maurice, Hardy, and Shaw, but most readers will be grateful also for an introduction to many obscure figures whose inclusion greatly increases the fascination and value of the volume. Inevitably, most of the extracts are very short: a few only half a page, though, on the other hand, there are passages of 7 or 8 pages from Matthew Arnold and George Eliot. Sometimes, of course, a short, pungent paragraph can convey the gist of a longer passage very well, but this can scarcely be true of the great Royal Commission reports, which would justify a whole volume of readings to themselves. Here the Newcastle, Taunton, and Bryce Reports get only a page apiece and the Clarendon Report fares a little better, with three pages. In spite of this, the extracts do, in general, achieve what they set out to do: they recapture the atmosphere of educational debate in the 19th century, they make the period and its characters live, and they are fair to all shades of opinion.

Many hopes, anxieties, and perplexities, "dreams and nightmares," as our editors call them, shine through the 100 selected items, and education is seen from many viewpoints — as a means of ensuring national supremacy in trade, as a weapon against crime and drunkenness, as a means of social mobility, as a cure for social tensions, as a God-given right to each individual, and as a means of preserving the heritage of the past. The readings very effectively illustrate the great hope of 19th century liberals that democracy could be an ally of culture and the great fear of conservatives that it would be hostile. Nor was it a simple conflict between liberal and conservative, for many liberals shared the fear, even as they hoped, and conservatives hoped, even as they feared. "The difficulty of democracy," wrote Matthew Arnold, "is how to find and keep high ideals. The individuals who compose it are, the bulk of them, persons who need to follow an ideal, not to set one . . . Our society is likely to become more democratic; who or what will give a high tone to the nation then!" In their introductory comment on the educational disputation and educational progress of the 19th century, our editors suggest that democracy may have, in fact, produced not one, but two, children in the sphere of education, each hostile to the other. The elder child was the principle of equal opportunity; in the early days, the democrat, like the hero of Hardy's novel, *Jude the Obscure*, naturally raised the cry of Job to protest against the aristocratic monopoly of education and wealth: "I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you; yea, who knoweth not such things as these" (Job c. xii, v. 3). Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, educational reformers, responding to this cry, worked to broaden the scope of educational opportunity, and to create the famous ladder up which more and more youngsters were able to climb according to their ability, but a meritocracy is, of its nature, elitist and the majority will still be losers. Moreover, in the old days when wealth and power depended on the accident of birth alone, a poor man could regard himself as simply unlucky; he did not need to regard himself as a failure. Under the meritocracy, on the other hand, those unable to climb the ladder may well feel their position to be intolerable, especially if the "meritocrat" behaves as selfishly as the autocrats of old and reveals little sense of responsibility for his fellows. Therefore, democracy, as it developed, brought forth its second child, egalitarianism, hostile not only to the elite, but to the standards of excellence by which they justify their pre-eminence. The fratricidal struggle between these two children of democracy has reached its climax only in our own day, but glimpses of it were caught by perceptive observers in the 19th century. Will the anxieties of 19th century conservatives ultimately prove to have been justified? Will democracy prove to be an enemy of culture, with the recognition of ability regarded as a sin, and the cult of the average man accepted as the only permissible orthodoxy? Cain has not slain Abel yet, but he seems to be getting the upper hand, and our editors are cautiously pessimistic about the future. Such speculations will exasperate or infuriate some progressivist readers and make others a little uncomfortable, but, while the editors' opinions may be stimulating, thought-provoking, or outrageous, according to one's viewpoint, they do not obtrude. The extracts are well balanced — as is also the bibliography at the end — and the result is an extremely valuable handbook for students of Education and English History, but how many potential readers can afford to pay \$17.60 for a moderate-sized book of readings? Hopefully, a paperback edition will be rapidly forthcoming. Otherwise, one fears, the publishers must reconcile themselves to producing for the College library rather than the private bookshelf.

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Peter E. Bryant, *Perception and Understanding In Young Children: An Experimental Approach*. London: Methuen, 1974. Pp. 195. \$10.95

This is a very significant work in child psychology. Its importance stems from the clarity, precision, and internal consistency of the theory it outlines linking perception and cognition in young children. The author develops his theoretical model principally from experimental evidence and the book is a good example of how careful scientific analysis is implemented. The results of research in several fields of child behaviour are subjected to careful scrutiny and evaluation. It is the author's stated intention to demonstrate the value of the experimental method in developing connections between different patterns of behaviour in children. In this, he succeeds admirably, a success which, in no small part, is due to his own impressive ability to