

THE ENGLISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Some Elementary Facts about it

BY

A. W. NEWTON, M.A.

Formerly an Inspector of the Board of Education

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4

FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1919

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Toronto

PREFACE

IN writing this book I have had a very humble aim. Much information as to elementary education is floating about, but it is often rather out of reach ; it is to be found in official documents, various periodicals, and people's memories ; my endeavour has been to embody some of it in a convenient and semi-permanent form.

The Blue-books contain a great deal of interesting matter, but they seldom find their way into non-official hands. They can, of course, be ordered through any bookseller, but booksellers do not keep them on sale, and the public are unfamiliar with them. The blue covers soon wear out, and all Blue-books, except the very smallest, are apt to come unsewn, and break in two. The compilers generally write for experts, so far as they can be said to write for anybody except themselves. They do not begin at the beginning of anything, so to speak, but take for granted much that the ordinary reader does not know, and consequently they puzzle him. They are dull, because they have to write in the official language, and with official caution and reticence. They cannot pass judgment on persons with whom their Department has relations, or utter opinions on any point the Department regards as controversial. Lastly, the Blue-book is apt to be indigestible, because it contains, along with matter of public interest, a great deal which is printed merely for administrative purposes. The annual volumes of the old Education Department used to exhibit glaring examples of this fault.

Writers in educational periodicals, also, provide for

persons engaged in educational work, and take a great deal of knowledge for granted. They are not restricted, as the Blue-book writers are, by official conventions ; but, on the other hand, they are sometimes too much of partisans to be safe guides. What is worse, their productions are necessarily scrappy, and even more transitory than the Blue-book ; for the newspaper file, whether bound or loose, repels the most ardent seeker after knowledge.

My object is to describe, in as few and simple words as possible, the English elementary schools of to-day and yesterday, the regulations under which they work, and some of the considerations which influence those who conduct them. My treatment may be dull, but the subject is interesting, and I shall not have written in vain if this book will provoke some more competent person to write a better one.

In preparing what is something between a history and a guide-book on such a subject as elementary education, the main difficulty lies in securing accuracy, whilst avoiding useless statistics and useless references to Acts of Parliament and official regulations. Statistics and quotations from the Acts and regulations could be multiplied to any extent, but they would make the text unreadable, and I have omitted them almost entirely. At the same time, for the benefit of any person who may wish to verify my statements or embark on educational administration, I have supplied an Appendix, containing a list of the more important Education Acts, and certain other pieces of information.

I do not hesitate to use the first person singular in describing what I have actually seen and heard. Any honest person may be a useful witness, if circumstances permit, and I, through no merit of my own, have witnessed a great deal. On the recognised principle that a witness

must give his name and address, I supply the following information about my own experience, which goes back as far as 1880. After being assistant inspector in two or three different places, I have worked successively in Durham, London, Cambridgeshire, and Kent, and have, as what is called a divisional inspector, seen a good deal of the eastern and south-eastern counties generally. Also, I have acted for some years as an inspector of training colleges, and at two different periods as an assistant secretary of the Board of Education.

This book is concerned with England only. So far as education is concerned, Ireland and Scotland are absolutely separate countries. The Isle of Man and the Channel Isles are also separate countries, though they have relations with the English Board of Education. The Welsh system, it may be explained, is administered from the same headquarters as the English, but Welsh conditions are different from our own. I have no first-hand knowledge of them, and I only refer to them incidentally.

A. W. N.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Educational Machinery of England and Wales -	1
II. Payment by Results—Mundella Code—Modifications of the Same	21
III. Voluntary Schools before 1902—Their Finance and Position -	39
IV. School Hygiene—School Premises in Various Parts of the Country—School Furniture—School Cleaning—Medical Inspection—The Feeding of School Children -	50
V. Infant Schools under the Mundella Code—Their Relation to the Kindergarten—Neo-Froebelianism—More Modern Infant Schools—The School Attendance of Young Children	71
VI. Difficulty of Comparing Schools of the Present with those of the Past—The Value of our School Output—School Discipline as it is and was—Reading, Composition, and Arithmetic at the Present Time	95
VII. The Teaching of Geography, History, and Science in Elementary Schools	116
VIII. Manual Instruction in Schools—Needlework—Cookery—Laundry Work—Gardening—Woodwork—Clay Modelling—Drawing with and without Instruments -	135
IX. Physical Training—The Teaching of Foreign Languages—The Grading of Schools -	159
X. Attempts to Use Schools for Purposes of Propagandism by Religious Bodies—By other People -	176
XI. The Education and Training of Teachers under the Kay-Shuttleworth Plan—And under Later Plans -	194

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. The Training of Teachers in University Institutions -	211
XIII. Elementary Teaching as a Profession - - -	234
XIV. School Inspection and the Choice of Inspectors -	254
XV. Improvements and Research in Education - -	274
APPENDIX I. The Publications of the Board of Education	291
„ II. A Few Statistics - - - -	293
„ III. A Short View of the Education Acts -	295