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## FIRST WEEKS IN LONDON.

### LECTURES AND EDUCATION

I.—By E. A. Allen.

"London is a very big place." This is what one of my most thoughtful friends said to me one day, when we were speaking about prospects of getting into touch with the most useful things.

"Yes, I know it is," I assented readily. And in imagination I did know. I knew that in a place so vast that there is a likelihood of living there all one's life and not coming into contact with the right things and people. But one realizes it differently when one is actually faced with a London day, a wilderness of newspapers, two columns of theatre advertisements, concerts, lectures, Kreisler playing in the Queen's Hall, an invitation to lunch from a boat companion, and four or five handbooks from educational and university centres.

All of the latter have a bewildering variety of lectures. Within the same college there is a competition. The attempt to fix a convenient hour for a practical course of 16 students, resulted, after an exhaustive process of elimination, in fixing two hours for the same lecture, one on Thursday, one on Wednesday.

—New Movements.—

One thing is very heartening. Every one agrees that it is a time of a fresh movement in educational circles. This is due to several causes. One is the influence that psycho-analysis is having upon educational theories, and another is the movement in a certain type of school to get away from the timetable and class teaching. This involves a different kind of organization and a modification of discipline.

The London day training college is in Southampton Row. The first day that I went there a teacher was just ushering out a score of tinies. Such ragged little things! We went upstairs and were introduced to Professor Percy Nunn, who in succession to Professor Adams, has taken control there. He is a short man, with a rather flat face, and a very alert attitude. The eyes are small and his colouring not deep, so that all one's attention seems to be upon the wiry, springy, movements and the heavily accentuated lines around the mouth. He gave us his advice and chatted pleasantly for a few minutes. He is giving a course of lectures on Saturday mornings upon "Some fundamental problems of educational theory." These are in the Day Training College itself. Professor Nunn is an interesting lecturer. Alert, quick, he speaks in a clear voice and makes his subject clear. He began his course with an account of the theories called Behaviourism. They were illustrated with some very good stories. Then in a later lecture, he took the subject of psycho-analysis, and outlined some of its main contentions and results in a very interesting way.

Professor Spearman, at University College, is a fairly tall man, partly bald, very impatient of vague concepts, very clear in his own methods. While he is lecturing he takes his spectacles off every time that he glances at the students or addresses a question. As he uses spectacles that have long, flexible ear pieces and require a circular movement of his hands to move them, this is quite a process. But as it has evidently become purely mechanical and habitual the students take no notice, and the professor often puts them on and off again without looking at his notes at all. The impulse to look at them is enough, and starts the process without its being any hindrance to the lecture.

Mr. Flugel is an assistant lecturer at University College. He is soft and rather fat, and has a disjointed way of moving, and a very pale face, shaped rather like an egg. At the close of the summer vacation he went to Berlin to a conference on psycho-analysis, of which, I understand, he was the secretary. There were hundreds of people there, he said, but not many professors!

Professor John Adams is a short man—one is inclined to say roly-poly; he reminds me of an alderman, the conventional alderman, with a bald head and a round appearance. But one soon forgets his appearance when he begins to speak. He is surprisingly young and up-to-date, and his lecture dealt with those very aspects in educational theory that emphasize individual tendencies and possibilities. The lecture that I heard was at University College, and Professor Spearman was in the chair.

—interesting Lectures.—

Prof. Percy Nunn has recently been appointed the Director of the London Day-training College, in succession to Prof. John Adams, who has retired. He is giving a short course of lectures, principally addressed to teachers, upon "Some Fundamental Problems of Educational Theory." In the first lecture the main subject was the meaning of "Behaviourism." Psychology has been very variously defined; but one of the definitions recently emphasized is that it is the science of behaviour. Psychology has had a tendency, in the opinion of the ordinary man, to get away from practical things, and expend its time upon discussions that, as far as he can see, have no bearing at all upon practical things. Just at present, popular opinion is swinging to the opposite side of the scale, and limiting psychology to a cunning way of dealing with one's fellows. For instance, skill in flattering and persuading and cajoling is called the "psychology of advertising;" surely a little skill in interpreting and reading down the carefully manufactured matter of the advertisement might be called the "psychology of buying!"

—In Industry.—

The psychology that is called "behaviourism," however, has one or two main points that can be stressed and brought out plainly. One of its points is that it watches outward movements to the exclusion of the feelings that may accompany them. This is a gain in the application of tests to industry. For instance, in a certain industry, the psychological investigator watches the movements of the workman and makes a study of them from the particular point that is in question. If he is investigating the conditions of fatigue, he finds out exactly the position, the length of time taken, and the unit of a completed movement. If he is working out a test to examine candidates in order to pick out the most suitable, he is in a position to isolate the qualities that are most essential to the successful carrying out of the movements required. The business firms concerned are not interested in the other powers or faculties of their employe, they only want those that tell in the particular piece of work that they require. And the psychology of the "behaviourism" watches and records these movements in a way that the ordinary employer would not think of doing. A psychological expert can often make very valuable suggestions in business matters.

"Only last night," said the professor, "there were published some very interesting results that have been known for some weeks in the inner circle, but which are now public property." He went on to tell us that in a business "the nature of which was not disclosed," but in which there were a very large number of breakages, a psychologist had been called in. The psychologist went to work by watching the movements of the girls employed on this mysterious business that could not be named. It appeared that at one stage of the process, words and orders had to be shouted down a tube, and that at another certain journeys had to be taken.

—Results.—

The psychologist began by advising that the routes of the journeys should be stereotyped, so to speak, and that the movements of the girls should be made as mechanical as possible. This would avoid collisions, and reduce flurry and fatigue. Then, by watching the other things he reported that in the event of a rush time, if there was irritation at having to wait on the part of a customer, the irritation was apt to be communicated by means of the tube to those below. He advised that certain often repeated orders should be replaced altogether by coloured lights. "That if a certain article was wanted a red light should appear; and that if another one, a blue light should appear." I do not suppose that all the suggestions of the expert were repeated to us. But the triumphant result was that the curve of breakages in the business was reduced. The two highest curves of breakage in this not-to-be-named business were at 12 and at 5. The type of business, and even the name of the firm, will probably have come to the mind of any who read this. But the reduction of the high peak of 5 o'clock breakages was a triumph indeed.