The Abuse of the Tests

IV.

WE have found reason for thinking that the intelligence test may prove to be a considerable help in sorting out children into school classes. If it is true, as Professor Terman says,* that between a third and a half of the school-children fail to progress through the grades at the expected rate, then there is clearly something wrong with the present system of examinations and promotions. No one doubts that there is something wrong, and that in consequence both the retarded and the advanced child suffer.

The intelligence test promises to be more successful in grading the children. This means that the tendency of the tests in the average is to give a fairly correct sample of the child's capacity to do school work. In a wholesale system of education, such as we have in our public schools, the intelligence test is likely to become a useful device for fitting the child into the school. This is, of course, better than not fitting the child into the school, and under a more correct system of grading, such as the intelligence test promises to furnish, it should become possible even where education is conducted in large classrooms to specialize the teaching, because the classes will be composed of pupils whose capacity for school work is fairly homogeneous.

Excellent as this seems, it is of the first importance that school authorities and parents realize exactly what this administrative improvement signifies. For great mischief will follow if there is confusion about the spiritual meaning of this reform. If, for example, the impression takes root that these tests really measure intelligence, that they constitute a sort of last judgment on the child's capacity, that they reveal "scientifically" his predestined ability, then it would be a thousand times better if all the intelligence testers and all their questionnaires were sunk without warning in the Sargasso Sea. One has only to read around in the literature of the subject, but more especially in the work of popularizers like McDougall and Stoddard, to see how easily the intelligence test can be turned into an engine of cruelty, how easily in the hands of blundering or prejudiced men it could turn into a method of stamping a permanent sense of inferiority upon the soul of a child.

It is not possible, I think, to imagine a more contemptible proceeding than to confront a child with a set of puzzles, and after an hour's monkeying with them, proclaim to the child, or to his parents, that here is a C— individual. It would not only be a contemptible thing to do. It would be a crazy thing to do, because there is nothing in these tests to warrant a judgment of this kind. All that can be claimed for the tests is that they can be used to classify into a homogeneous group the children whose capacities for school work are at a particular moment fairly similar. The intelligence test shows nothing as to why those capacities at any moment are what they are, and nothing as to the individual treatment which a temporarily retarded child may require.

I do not mean to say that the intelligence test is certain to be abused. I do mean to say it lends itself so easily to abuse that the temptation will be enormous. Suppose you have a school in which there are fifty ten year old children in the seventh grade and fifty eleven year old in the eighth. In each class you find children who would jump ahead if they could and others who lag behind. You then regrade them according to mental age. Some of the ten year olds go into the eighth grade, some of the elevens into the seventh grade. That is an improvement. But if you are satisfied to leave the matter there, you are doing a grave injustice to the retarded children and ultimately to the community in which they are going to live. You cannot, in other words, be satisfied to put retarded eleven year olds and average ten year olds together. The retarded eleven year olds need something besides proper classification according to mental age. They need special analysis and special training to overcome their retardation. The leading intelligence testers recognize this, of course. But the danger of the intelligence tests is that in a wholesale system of education, the less sophisticated or the more prejudiced will stop when they have classified and forget that their duty is to educate. They will grade the retarded child instead of fighting the causes of his backwardness. For the whole drift of the propaganda based on intelligence testing is to treat people with low intelligence quotients as congenitally and hopelessly inferior.

Readers who have not examined the literature of mental testing may wonder why there is reason to fear such an abuse of an invention which has many practical uses. The answer, I think, is that most of the more prominent testers have committed themselves to a dogma which must lead to just such abuse. They claim not only that they are really

* The Measurement of Intelligence, p. 3.

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measuring intelligence, but that intelligence is innate, hereditary, and predetermined. They believe that they are measuring the capacity of a human being for all time and that this capacity is fatally fixed by the child's heredity. Intelligence testing in the hands of men who hold this dogma could not but lead to an intellectual caste system in which the task of education had given way to the doctrine of predestination and infant damnation. If the intelligence test really measured the unchangeable hereditary capacity of human beings, as so many assert, it would inevitably evolve from an administrative convenience into a basis for hereditary caste.

In the next article we shall examine the evidence for the claim that the intelligence tests reveal the fixed hereditary endowment.

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(*To be continued.*)

Clemenceau Comes Crusading

IN another week or two, when the steamship Paris docks amid the ferryboats, there comes aboard Manhattan the most loved, best hated, and certainly most famous statesman in all Europe. On his own inspiration, "and without any mission from anybody," M. Georges Clemenceau is on his way to tell Americans "the rights and duties of each nation in the redoubtable crisis engendered by the war."

How will America receive him? Well, from this distance (I write in Paris) the approaching tour looks promising. Some new invitation to include another city arrives in each day's mail. I do not know if this measures American interest in the arrival of the famous Tiger. In three years America has had enough celebrated tourists along Broadway and at Niagara Falls to have lost a little of the thrill. Still, I do not suppose that even Carpentier and Conan Doyle, Suzanne Lenglen and the Prince of Wales, can have taken the edge entirely off this visit.

And meantime, on this side of the Atlantic, his trip is one of the chief topics of debate among those interested in politics. Only the Turks and Greeks have had more headlines in the press. There are some journals that hail this voyage with enthusiasm. The Petit Parisien thinks all Europe may soon owe Clemenceau a monument. Other papers wish him the best of luck in his effort to induce recalcitrant America to return to Europe—but doubt whether the best way to bring home a wandering son is by sending a policeman for him. Still other papers, notably those directed by the Liberals and the Socialists, deplore the fact that another militarist has chosen this particular hour to plead the case of France. Only here and there does any paper take the whole affair a little lightly. Bonsoir, one of the sprightliest of our evening papers, prints a cartoon tonight of a very sly old gentleman addressing an audience with upturned, reverent faces and collars just a bit too large for them. "Ah!" whisper the Americans, as Clemenceau hammers home his points. "What candor!"

Why this visit, anyway? That is what some Frenchmen ask themselves—and probably some Americans, as well. On the surface, of course, it is the individual effort of a robust old patriot to step in and retrieve some of the prestige his country has lost during recent months—with the possibility, meantime, of helping speed the day when Americans will chuck their creed of isolation. That is the obvious explanation—plus the fact that Clemenceau is notably a restless soul, fond of searching for adventure. This junket to America hunting prestige is only the next chapter following last winter's trip to Bengal hunting tigers.

That may be enough to explain why Clemenceau picks this moment for America. But more than likely there is something else. Consider the present status of politics in France: That other famous Man of Iron, Poincaré, has been losing prestige steadily for many weeks. He has been losing prestige just as any other French Premier will lose it, so long as he promises to collect German reparations, and fails—threatens to invade the Ruhr, and stops because he isn't sure but that the risk's too great. Poincaré has pledged action, then written notes—rattled the sabre, put his hand back in his pocket. He is weaker today than he has ever been before. And if Clemenceau has any ambition to return to power, despite his more than eighty years, the chance might come within the next few months. He would be very strong if he returned from America able to demonstrate that he had had the greatest of all popular receptions—had brought French prestige back to par.

In the struggle that ensued, he himself might attempt to take the place of Poincaré. On the other hand, he might be satisfied with a rôle behind the scenes, letting some younger man, one of his own partisans, lead the new attack. In that case the most likely man would be André Tardieu—right bower of Clemenceau at the Peace Conference, present editor of his newspaper (the Echo National), chief advocate of his ideas—his Tumulty and Colonel House, his Henry Cabot Lodge and Charlie Murphy, all in one.

Tardieu, today, leads persistent attacks upon the government of Poincaré. It is an interesting performance. For Tardieu, of course, is out for

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