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QUALITY

CLARA HARRISON LORM

Mr. Galsworthy once wrote an exquisite little sketch called "Quality." It is the tale of the passing of an old time shoemaker who lavished such care upon his creations that a squeak developing in one of them grieved him as would the discovery of an unlovely trait in a cherished child. This tale is the passing of the artisan and of the taking of his place by the dealer who knows not creation, who reckons his achievements by the hundreds of shoes sold, and who is happily ignorant of their squeaks after they have left his crowded shelves.

The story paints for us the change of emphasis in industrial ideals which has come with these later days, the shifting from pride in perfection of product to pride in quantity and rapidity of production.

Mr. Galsworthy, quite as appropriately, might have chosen for his tale a setting in almost any industry or profession, so universally is quantity emphasized, so universally is quality slighted.

An instance is a recent report of an experimental study comparing rapidity of reading with accuracy of reproduction of the matter read. A correlation was found between the rapidity and the accuracy, and this was attributed to the great intensity and exclusiveness of attention upon the text enacted by the rapid reading. On the strength of these results a plea was made for training in methods of rapid reading. The fact was overlooked that perhaps the richest gains from reading are the associated and derivative ideas stimulated by the written words, and that these gains are ruled out by the method of exclusive attention employed. Apparently it was not realized that in the reader who failed to distinguish himself by verbal accuracy of reproduction may have been born a vital concept worth more to him and to the world than the written wisdom of the whole book. We do not question that the results of the experiments justify the inference of a correlation between rapidity of reading and verbal accuracy of reproduction, but the conclusion that if the correlation proves to be constant, training should be instituted to develop in school children this type of reading we do question, and we question it because we value the quality of thought content above accuracy of rate memory.

This tendency to overestimate quantity is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the studies of individuals made today by the applied psychologists. This group, by the aid of psychological methods, studies individuals in schools, in industries, in courts, and in hospitals for the purpose of reaching such an understanding of their particular abilities and peculiarities as will be of service in guiding their future careers.

As this practical application of psychology is of quite recent origin, and has been, perhaps, overstimulated by public demand, it is natural that the first line of development having proved fruitful, this line should be followed rather than new points of departure evolved. Exactly this has happened. The first applied studies to attract attention sought to measure the amount of general intelligence possessed by an individual. Such a bit of information is, of course, valuable (provided one admits that there is such a thing as general intelligence) and in refining and perfecting methods to determine it, and also in evolving mass tests by which simultaneously to determine it for many persons, the thought and ingenuity of the applied psychologists have centered. They have indeed accentuated this aspect of a psychological examination to such a degree in their writings, teaching, and practice that the lay public, which is actively and practically interested, now believes that the psychologist's task in examining an individual is fulfilled when he presents a so-called "psycho-metric" rating. Such a rating states the individual's level of intelligence in terms of years of mental development or per cent of intelligence usually possessed by persons of similar age. Methods of obtaining such a psycho-metric rating of general intelligence have been so standardized that many believe (and many act upon this belief) that a few weeks training is sufficient to equip them for conducting such examinations and for speaking authoritatively on the intellectual capacity of those examined.

In some courts of justice today such a psycho-metric rating is required as a psychological report. Moreover, and this is the deplorable factor, it is also required that the psychological report be limited to such a rating.

Not only in the courts do we find this development, but also in the public schools. In many states and cities it is now the custom to segregate in special classes children with defective mentality. This is for the two-fold purpose of permitting a more homogeneous grouping in the regular classes and thereby facilitating the work, and of providing for the defective children a training fitted to their limited

abilities. In many school systems the mentally defective children are selected by means of psychological examinations. Children whose mental defects prevent them from profiting by the regular school routine, are, fortunately, by no means all feeble-minded. Among them are many who are hampered by special mental defects, qualitatively different from feeble-mindedness. An intelligence test is undoubtedly the best formal method by which to determine whether a child is feeble-minded, but it fails utterly to identify the child who suffers from special mental defects because such a child is apt to have a general intelligence equal to that of the average child of his age. It is exactly this child with special mental defects who can profit most by special methods of education. The psycho-metric method has been so exclusively popularized that in spite of this fact, several states have passed statutes and the educational departments of other states passed rulings which exclude from the special classes for defectives all children who do not show a certain set deviation from the average by some approved method of examination, which gives a quantitative estimate of general intelligence. This is indeed a deplorable result of over-emphasis on the quantitative aspect of intelligence, which will cost many a child the chance for a corrective pedagogy which would spell future success instead of failure.

More remarkable than all is the spread of the tendency toward quantitative estimating of intelligences to the study of the insane. Insanity differs from feeble-mindedness in that it is an aberrant mental functioning which may occur at any stage of mental development, while feeble-mindedness is an absence of or a lack of complete development of mental processes. The standard methods of measuring general intelligence are based upon the conception of developmental levels of intelligence, they are applied to the diagnosis of the feeble-minded on the assumption that with feeble-minded persons the mental development ceases at one or another of the immature developmental levels. There is no such reason for their application to the study of the insane (except in cases of dementia, which by some authorities has been considered as a retracing in reverse order of the developmental series), and they are, perhaps, of all psychological methods, the least adapted to the analysis of insane states. Nevertheless, the application of psychology to the study of insanity as now being reported is largely made up of intelligence ratings.

This rapid development and universal acceptance of quantitative intelligence testing in practical work is exceedingly interesting, but it

constitutes such a one-sided development that the whole structure of applied psychology is in danger of a collapse until it is balanced by an emphasis upon the methods for studying the qualitative factors of mental life. That this has not already been done, though regrettable, is altogether excusable. It must be remembered that until very lately the psychologist was exclusively a student, an investigator of human material it is true, but nevertheless a student with the student's aim of seeking facts, of seeking to know. He studies human beings with the aim of accumulating knowledge concerning them, and with no ulterior object of effecting changes in such phenomena as they appeared in individual persons. Necessarily he found his subject matter in the reactions of the individuals studied, and generalized from the data secured from many persons. In the course of time many data were secured and the idea of performance norms was evolved. From this it was but a step to the idea of comparing an individual's performance with such performance norms and thus obtaining an expression of his degree of conformity to the average and a basis for a judgment of his abilities.

This step, however, involved a complete change of orientation. A research student, working in the calm of his laboratory on such problems as perceiving, reasoning and feeling, the psychologist suddenly found himself confronted by conduct conflicts of all kinds and called upon to explain their origin and meaning, and to advise as to adjustments to life's situations. The gap is even wider than that between physiology and anatomy, and the practice of medicine.

Naturally, the psychologist most completely the scholar in type was little attracted by this call to practical work. It involved too much distraction, too many utterly discordant and uncongenial factors, the sacrifice of the scholarly life involved was too great. The call, however, was insistent and many socially minded men were especially attracted by it and entered upon the study of psychology with this practical application as their aim, concentrating from the beginning on all that would aid in the preparation for clinical work. The result has been a monotonous insistence upon those clinical problems and methods first inaugurated at the expense of other equally important and equally interesting ones.

The time has come to vary and increase the problems, to change the emphasis. Where shall the emphasis be placed to best effect a balance in the now one-sided structure?

There are several points that might well be considered. First,

an examination of the intelligence from the qualitative standpoint. A diagnosis such as "Mary, aged fifteen years, has a mental age of nine years," tells us only that Mary is incapable of mental achievements beyond the ability of an average nine year old girl. It is essential for her further educational training that the examiner should add to this statement concerning mental level something explicit about what she *can do*. Ten Marys, all rating nine years in intelligence, and all having a retardation of six years would in all probability present to the teacher ten distinctly individual problems. For the guidance of the teacher is needed a differential estimate of the mental abilities which any particular child possesses. Such a method should disclose as graphically as possible the strong and weak points of the individual's mental makeup. To a psychologist familiar with abnormal mental states, not only in a descriptive fashion, but also analytically, such a statement concerning an individual is of great aid in planning a corrective pedagogical procedure.¹

A second group of conduct factors left unexplored by an intelligence test comprises the motor and volitional abilities. These play a very important part in every-day life. Many methods for their study are in use in psychological laboratories, but at present they are much neglected in the applied work in the community.

A third group of neglected factors includes the instinctive, the emotional, the temperamental and character reactions. This is a field less accessible to direct approach, psychologists have been less successful in analyzing its problems than in analyzing those of the intellectual life. Nevertheless, certain experimental methods of approach are in use which apparently have rich potentialities of development. Considering the enormous factor which these aspects of the personality contribute to every act, considering their importance in the successful handling of industrial, professional and social enterprises, considering their vital role in the development of the neurosis and the psycho-neurosis, too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of developing clinical methods of revealing their intricacies in the individual. This is a field both difficult and complicated, but one which cannot fail richly to reward development. So little has as yet been done that there is still time to drop a word of warning against a purely quantitative point of view concerning the emotions. Let the differentiating attributes be kept in mind, and let not the examiner fall into the habit of stating

¹"Analytic Study of a Group of Five and Six-Year Old Children," Clara Harrison Town, University of Iowa Studies, Vol. 1, No. 4, pages 33-36.

that the emotivity is fifty or eighty per cent of the average endowment.

The function of a psychological examination as it is conceived by the psychologist trained in the fundamentals of his science as well as in its applications to the study of the individual, normal and abnormal, child and adult, is the preparation of an approximately complete mental picture—a psychogram—of an individual, this psychogram presenting his degree of general intelligence, the strengths and relative strengths of his several mental processes, his motor and volitional ability, and his instinctive, emotional, temperamental and character reactions. This is a function far more comprehensive than that of a psycho-metric test, which takes rank as one item in the procedure; it is a function worthy of the best equipped and keenest minds in the profession.

If one attempts to make a psychological examination of an individual one must, in reverent mood, face the intricacies, the complexities of the mental life one presumes to interpret; one must leave nothing undone which will add one jot to the completeness of the finished portrait, which at the best will be but a crude deliniation.

It is undoubtedly the task of the applied psychologist to lead the layman to an understanding of the intricacies of the problem, to lead him to an understanding that there are qualitative as well as quantitative differences in mental life, and that these qualitative factors as well as the emotional and character traits are as essential to the summing up of an individual's capacity as are the factors of intelligence; and finally to lead him to demand of the courts and schools more than a meager psycho-metric rating of intelligence, to demand instead a mental analysis which will be of real aid in planning the future adjustments of the person examined.

As a final application of Mr. Galsworthy's message, let not the psychological examiner be tempted by the urgent call for more and more examinations per day to slight the quality of these examinations. There are, it is true, many persons for whom examinations are desirable and comparatively few persons to make them; this results in hasty, inadequate examinations, but does not excuse them. If the examinations are thoroughly done their value will lead to a demand for psychologists which will attract an adequate force of workers to the field. If on the contrary the psychologist weakly complies to a public demand for what he knows is impossible, and makes hasty and inadequate examination, his findings will later be contradicted by the behavior of the persons examined and the work of applied psychology starting with such promise, will disappear and deservedly disappear, until a later age develops psychologists of sterner fibre.