

BLACKFRIARS

suggestion of the late Professor E. Bullough, and is an expansion of a report on the position of biology in education, prepared for the University Catholic Federation. Conscious of the difficulties arising from the subject matter of biology itself, Mr. Lauwerys offers this volume, not as an outline of biology, nor as a book of tips for teachers, but as a reasoned analysis of the difficulties involved as, for instance, the question of sexual reproduction, evolution, Darwinism, the mechanistic theory of life, and so on. It is inevitable that in teaching biology such questions should arise, and in regard to the problem of sex which the author maintains *brings itself* into the course, since it is, and should be treated as one of the many natural vital processes, without further ado. The author takes as his standpoint a vitalist—that is, a non-mechanistic—view of life, affirming that biology to be truly biological should rest on an Aristotelian rather than on a Newtonian foundation. The method of teaching should be based on the conception of dynamic types, in which the relations of the parts to the wholes should be stressed.

The notion of dynamic type suggests the plan or method of teaching. Birth is the emergence of type: reproduction of like types is heredity; and departure from a given type is variation. Hence the questions arise, how is the type maintained and how is it perpetuated? These problems in turn may be studied under the headings of organism and environment, nutrition and reproduction, heredity and variation, etc. The book is well thought out and should be very valuable to teachers. It contains in addition to theoretical exposition, chapters specially concerning the syllabus itself, as well as laboratory equipment, which need be neither extensive nor expensive.

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MODERN PHOTOGRAPHY, 1934-5. (The Studio, Ltd., 5/- in wrappers; 7/6 in cloth).

The purist aestheticians continue to deny that the photographer is or can be an artist. The photographer can bear the excommunication with equanimity. Although even still photography is now breeding theorists of its own, the photographer is relatively free to explore to the utmost the potentialities of his medium unrestricted by *a priori* theory. The latest *Modern Photography*—an excellent and thoroughly representative selection and a considerable improvement on its immediate predecessor—shows that in practice contemporary photographers are, with fullest regard for the distinctive characteristics of their medium, making the most of their opportunities.

We need not pause to dispute with the Wilenskis, though there is not a specimen in this volume, for all their variety,

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which does not give the lie to the assertion that photography is unselective. Willard van Dyke notes that contemporary photography is 'being rapidly split into two well-defined groups—one group doing work which is influenced by painting and the other section making photographs which are the result of legitimate photographic practice . . . I believe that photography has its own virtues and limitations and that a photograph can achieve art value only if it exists strictly within the possibilities of the medium.' The principle is self-evident; yet it would be a pity if any preconceived conception of 'pure photography' were to hamper experimentation 'under the influence of painting' for it is this which has achieved some of the most remarkable results, as examples in the present volume bear witness.

A stimulating preface by Mr. Ansel Adams illustrates the difficulty in formulating canons of what is and is not 'legitimate photographic practice.' He asserts as an axiom that 'there should be no part of the image out-of-focus,' and the examples of his own work—his *Pine Cone and Eucalyptus Leaves* and *Old Fence*—show his fidelity to his own theory and the magnificent results which it can attain. But on what grounds should the contrary practice be forbidden to Mr. Czabán Marton, the beauty of whose *Butterfly* is due precisely to his so isolating the subject? The value of utilising the camera's power to select by varying degrees of focus is recognized by all cinéastes. On what grounds can it be denied to the still photographer? Is not this to restrict rather than to respect the medium?

But *Modern Photography* raises questions of wider import than the purely aesthetic. If the photographer be neither artist nor poet at least he is called to share in a singular way in their social task of 'making souls worth saving.' His mission is the more extensive because his work lends itself with particular ease to faithful mechanical reproduction and multiplication. Mr. Ansel Adams writes: 'Photography makes the *moment* enduring and eloquent.' This is true; but less important than the fact that it reveals the inherent endurance and eloquence of the moment. The 'new photography' seizes and renders static the fleeting instant, reduces the commonplace—old fences, wet pavements, cups and saucers, ships and motor-buses as well as flowers, nudes and landscapes—to their elemental visual constituents of light and shade, and holds up to our gaze the eternal values immanent in time. Volumes such as these serve as a sorely needed propaedeutic to contemplation, singularly suited to our age. The consideration may help to moderate the alarm of those who perceive the spiritual harm wrought by the speeding-up of life through scientific advancement. Photography is but one of the remedies which science supplies to heal its own ravages.

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