

ADULT EDUCATION.

THE Final Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction (Cd. 321, 1s. 9d.), appointed in July, 1917, as a Sub-Committee of the Reconstruction Committee, over which the Prime Minister presided, but afterwards, on the establishment of the Ministry of Reconstruction, as a Committee of the Department, has been issued and presented to the Prime Minister, in the absence of a Minister of Reconstruction to succeed Sir Auckland Geddes. It is a most informing and suggestive document, and has been preceded by three interim reports dealing respectively with industrial and social conditions in relation to adult education, and suggesting drastic reforms, both industrial and social; education in the Army; and libraries and museums, in which it is insisted that a much closer relationship and co-operation should be arranged with other branches of educational work, even to the extent of the transfer of their administration to the local education authorities.

The Committee was presided over by the Master of Balliol, who has prefaced the Report by a most illuminating covering letter addressed to the Prime Minister. The Committee comprised scholars, employers, trade unionists, and representatives of the Workers' Educational Association, and included men and women fully conversant with the needs of working people and others, and familiar with the work of the various educational organisations, both public and private. Its terms of reference were:—"To consider the provision for, and possibilities of, adult education (other than technical or vocational) in Great Britain, and to make recommendations." The scope of the inquiry necessarily covers a wide field, but it has been fully considered in its various aspects, and comprises a history and general review of adult education since 1800; standards and methods in adult education and its weaknesses and possibilities; the relation of the State and local authorities and of the higher institutions of learning to adult education; the supply of teachers; the development of adult education in rural areas; the relation of technical to humane studies; the organisation and finance of adult education; and concludes with certain valuable recommendations for its effective establishment.

The Report covers 178 pages, and, as is the case with the interim reports, is unanimous. It is followed by four important appendices, the first of which reviews respectively and at great length the present provision of the means and facilities of adult education; the part played therein by the local authorities; the universities in respect of lecture extension courses, and especially of tutorial classes; voluntary agencies such as the Workers' Educational Association; the colleges for working people, including the London Working Men's College and the Ruskin and Labour Colleges at Oxford; the educational work of residential settlements like Toynbee Hall and the Passmore Edwards Settlements, and of non-residential such as Swarthmore, Leeds; the Gilchrist Trust, the National Home Reading Union, the co-operative movement, and other activities of literary and scientific societies; war-time developments; and, finally, adult education abroad. The further appendices deal with university education in London and in Wales, the report of the Committee on the position of natural science and that of modern languages in our educational system. The appendices, which are replete with statistics and fertile in suggestion, cover 200 pages of the Final Report.

The Report lays down as an absolute condition of future civilised progress that education, taken in its true sense, is the basis and postulate of all urgent

problems of reform, whether they refer to domestic questions such as those of nationalisation, the claims of Labour to better conditions of life, the position of woman, the subject of a Second Chamber, and social matters such as those of drink and prostitution, or to political questions dealing with the Imperial position in relation to the self-governing Dominions or to India and Egypt, or to the international problems involved in the redrawing of the map of Europe on sound lines of nationality with due regard to the claims of racial and religious minorities.

These serious and urgent problems will not find a speedy and wise solution until we have an educated and enlightened public. There is abundant evidence, in the opinion of the Committee, of the demand of the adult members of the public for the means of a humane and liberal education, which shall include literature, modern languages, local and general history, economics, art, and the natural sciences. There is latent in the mass of the people a capacity, far from being recognised as it should be, to rise to the fundamental conceptions of great issues and to face the difficulties incident to their realisation.

The Committee has based its main conclusions on the following propositions:—The main purpose of education is to fit a man or woman for life as a member of a civilised community, and so the education of the adult must proceed on the lines of successive periods in his education: the family, the school, the trade union or the profession, and the locality, which are all successive stages, and reach their fullness in the life of the community; and whilst each part of the process must be related to its appropriate stage, the goal of all education must be citizenship, viewed in relation to both rights and duties on the part of the individual as a member of the community. This is the *raison d'être* of the need for facilities for education and training.

Adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons, or as a thing which concerns a short span of early manhood, but as an object of permanent national necessity, as an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and be therefore universal and lifelong spread systematically and uniformly over the whole community in its own interest and as a duty to its members. All possible encouragement should be given to voluntary organisation, so that there may be freedom of experiment and that their work may find its appropriate place and opportunity of development in the national educational system.

The tutorial class methods of instruction are unreservedly praised in the Report, and, in order that the higher institutions of learning shall be enabled to take their full share in their development, the demand is made that the State and the local authorities shall place more abundant resources at their disposal, so that their staffs of teachers may be largely increased. In the present crisis of the nation's affairs is found the chief and abiding reason for the speedy adoption of the Committee's recommendations.

AN OBSCURE DISEASE, ENCEPHALITIS LETHARGICA.¹

ABOUT two years ago reports began to appear concerning a "new" acute general disease associated with a condition of apathy and drowsiness which passed into lethargy. Other striking features were progressive muscular weakness and paralysis of various cranial nerves, leading especially to squint. The prevailing abnormal conditions of life and living

¹ Report of an Inquiry into an Obscure Disease, *Encephalitis lethargica*. Local Government Board Reports (New Series, No. 121), 1918.