

**THE EDUCATION OF
PAUPER AND DESTITUTE CHILDREN
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

A collection of theses on microfiche

Introduction by
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THE EDUCATION OF PAUPER AND DESTITUTE
CHILDREN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The rescue through special educational provision of the children of submerged groups in society was one of the more notable efforts in Victorian social welfare provision, whether in workhouse, ragged, industrial or reformatory schools. The rationale is outlined with stark clarity on the symbolic front cover of Macgregor's 1854 study of the rise, progress and results of the ragged schools,(1) which grew apace in the middle of the century. Poor children are shown at the crossroads. In one direction lies the gaol, the gin palace and the convict ship! In the other, the protective haven of the ragged school, secure on the firm foundation of the bible. The school responded to a clearly-articulated hierarchy of needs, starting with shelter, and moving up to work, learning and, at the apex, religion. From the calm waters of this harbour sails an emigrant ship, epitomising the fact that migration to a new world was seen as a highly desirable end for pauper and destitute children.

In 1904, Montague presented a similarly flattering portrait of the impact of ragged school, employing Hayward's visual metaphor of the 'Ragged School Tree'.(2) This portrayed the Ragged School Movement as the solid trunk, growing out of the fertile soil of biblical teaching, from which branched a most generous growth of religious, educational, and other philanthropic organisations, including bands of hope, clothing stubs, Sunday schools, industrial schools, penny banks, apprenticeships, and lending libraries.

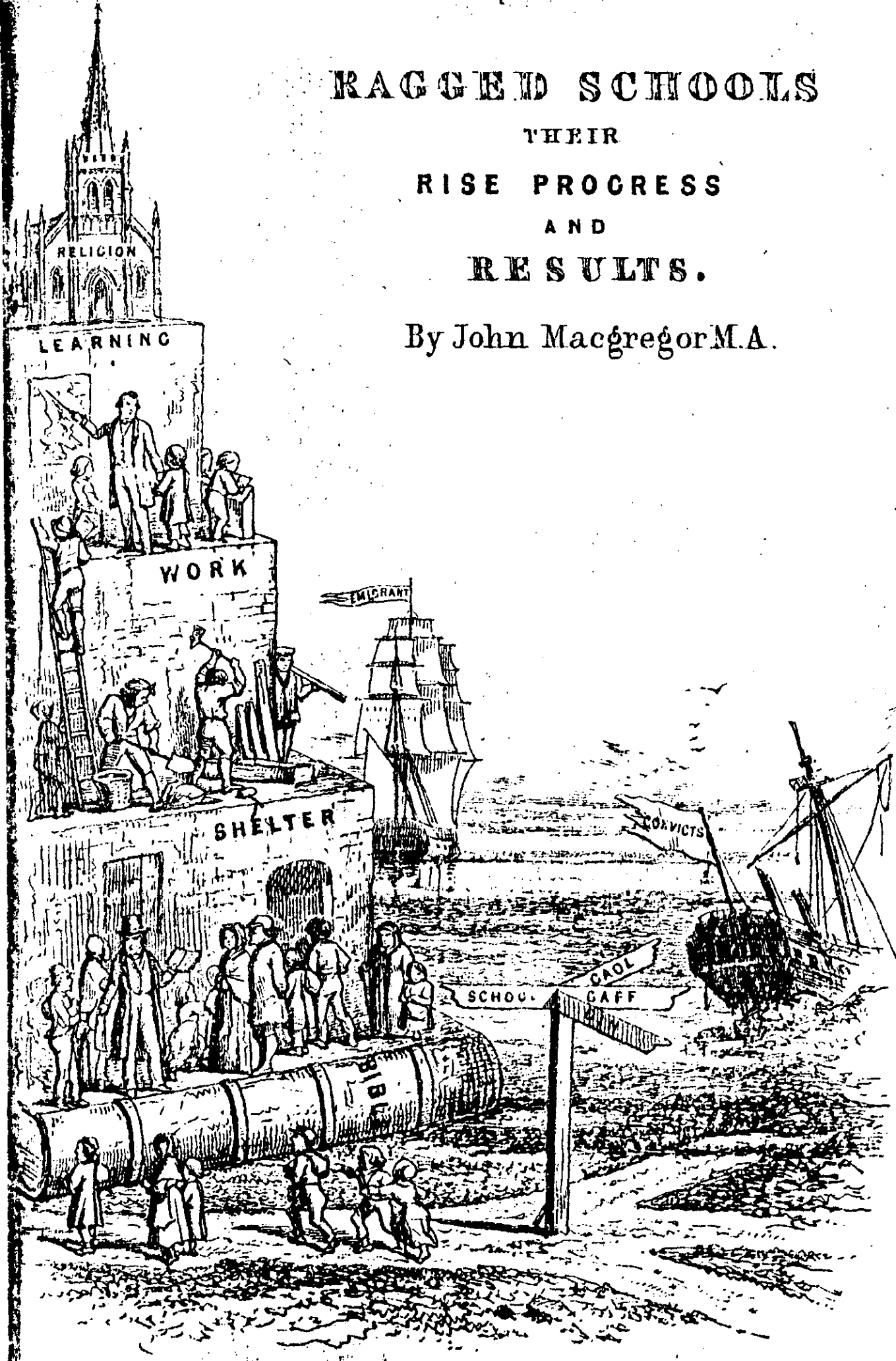
Counterpointing this favourable view were the highly sceptical social commentators and agents of more official and respectable education. The London ragged schools were accused of teaching young thieves to pilfer the articles marked at the highest prices. Mayhew described proceedings at some of the schools as 'ungovernable and hilarious'. The boys went for a 'lark' and to get warm: they terrorised the teachers, who in some cases dared only give them magic lantern shows: when the hymn numbers were announced, they sang their own ribald verses or broke into pop tunes of the time - "Oh Susannah, I'm off to Alabama, with a banjo on my knee".(3) Tobias equally critically characterised the London ragged schools as the winter pastures of a kind of youthful criminal transhumance system.(4)

- 1 J. Macgregor (1853), Ragged Schools: their Rise, Progress and Results (Sampson, Low & Son, London), frontispiece, see page 2
- 2 C.J. Montague (1904), Sixty Years in Waifdom (Chas. Murray, London; Woburn Press Reprint, 1969), p.271, see page 3
- 3 See E. Thompson (1966), 'The Education of Henry Mayhew' in The Victorian Poor (4th Conference Report of the Victorian Society), p.13
- 4 J.J. Tobias (1967), Crime and Industrial Society in the Nineteenth Century (Batsford, London), p.71

RAGGED SCHOOLS

THEIR
RISE PROGRESS
AND
RESULTS.

By John Macgregor M.A.



Sampson Low & Son 47 Ludgate Hill

Similar stereotypes exist of other sections of nineteenth century popular educational provision, and what appears to be required to counter the over-simplifications they embody is the gathering of a sound base of comparative empirical evidence, through case studies from all over the country of the education that was provided for pauper and other destitute children. This collection of studies seeks to make accessible some of this evidence, and reveals a more varied situation than we have hitherto been led to expect.

The theses presented here(5) reflect three important thrusts in the provision: workhouse schools; ragged schools and industrial schools. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 made possible a more systematic, collective provision of workhouse schools for pauper children. As Ross points out in his pioneer study of this development, which opens this collection, the workhouse schools represented a state supported provision of a special type of school for a special type of child, and were in essence a harbinger of the later concept of popular collective provision in the board school system. Of particular interest were attempts to enlarge the scale of the operation by the erection of larger and more economic 'district schools', to replace the plethora of smaller establishments, provided on a union by union basis. Ross's and other studies examine the instruction and especially the industrial training considered appropriate, the general nature of life for children and teachers in these institutions, the 'placing' and 'after-care' of workhouse children, and particularly variations in provision over the country. In this latter respect, a number of regional studies are included, by Woods, on the work of the Leicester Union in particular; by Baker, on the Somerset unions; and by Purdy and O'Brien on certain Cumbrian and Lancastrian unions respectively.(6)

By contrast, the ragged school movement represented voluntary activity, exemplified in Clark's investigation of the metropolitan ragged schools, a story of unco-ordinated but well-meaning effort, focused on the rookeries of the great city, which other educational agencies preferred to neglect or ignore. In London, the number of ragged schools grew from twenty in 1845 to 196 in 1870, providing education of a sort for upwards of 20,000 children. While the structures of social and educational critics may well have some justification, Clark argues also that the movement had a seminal influence in fostering later social work ventures, and special educational institutions such as industrial and reformatory schools, as Montague had earlier claimed. But the whole ethos of the movement was voluntary, and embodied a low-level of provision. The fate of the ragged school was sealed by the 1870 Act, after which many of the type were transferred, as in London, to the school board.

- 5 No attempt is made here to define the subtle distinctions which are held to exist between a thesis and a dissertation.
- 6 Another useful thesis, not presented here, is that of F. Duke, The Education of Pauper Children: Policy and Administration, 1834-1855 (University of Manchester, M.A., 1968), which overlaps in its topic with Ross's thesis, included here.

Bloomer's thesis concentrates on certain ragged schools in industrial Lancashire, and contains a useful review of sources for the study of such schools, while Webster's authoritative study complements those of Clark and Bloomer in providing a broader national picture.

The third section consists of three theses devoted to industrial schools in one city, Liverpool, which few would have denied was 'a suitable case for treatment'. Their characteristic intake was of destitute or chronically neglected rather than of congenitally truant or criminal children, though the distinction in practice was sometimes hard to draw. For the latter group, a more penal type of provision existed. The studies included here highlight the variations in provision subsumed under the label of industrial schooling.

Sister Black tellingly illuminates the desperate need for such provision in the Catholic sector, surveys the provision which emerged, and describes the experience of industrial schooling and the placement of children on completing their industrial education. Duffy offers a micro-study of one particular school, making painstaking use of admissions registers and census enumerators' returns in providing what is possibly the fullest picture of life in an industrial school that exists. Among other vivid and intriguing detail, the fact emerges that the clientele was not confined to the submerged groups of society. Harris attends to another neglected field - the day industrial schools which were established by some authorities after the 1876 Act. He outlines the circumstances which led to the establishment of four of these in the city, clarifies their distinctive ethos, and draws attention to the esteem in which they were held locally, as demonstrated by the tardy and reluctant decision to close them, well on into the twentieth century.

Higher degree theses in the history of education, and particularly in the local history of education, have had for some time a relatively bad press, as exemplified in Morris's incisive but perhaps over-sweeping critique, published by the History of Education Society in 1972.(7) A more positive appraisal is evident in Silver's 1977 paper on aspects of neglect in the study of Victorian popular education,(8) in which a number of the theses included here are cited as invaluable gap-fillers in some of the aspects of neglect which Silver identifies.

The theses in this collection(9) contain a fund of material for the comparative study of the education of the very poor in Britain in the nineteenth century. It would clearly not have been feasible to produce them in full in a conventional format. Technological improvements in microfiche readers have made their use much more comfortable than in the past, however, and the microform format seems tailor-made for the kind of production offered here. It is hoped that this pioneer thematic collection of theses will herald more on appropriate topics in the history of education, and indeed in other educational sub-disciplines.

7 N. Morris (1972), 'The Contribution of Local Investigations to Historical Knowledge' in T.G. Cook (ed.), Local Studies and the History of Education (Methuen, London, for the History of Education Society), pp.153-68.

8 H. Silver (1977) 'Aspects of Neglect: the Strange Case of Victorian Popular Education', Oxford Review of Education, vol. 3, pp.57-69.

9 All the theses included here, apart from Professor Ross's and D.H. Webster's doctoral studies, were presented for masters' degrees.

INDEX OF THESES

THE POOR LAW AND WORKHOUSE SCHOOLS

A.M. Ross

The Care and Education of Pauper Children in England and Wales, 1834-1896
London University, 1955 5 fiches

J.E. Woods

The Development of the Education of Pauper Children in Workhouse Schools,
1834-1870
Leicester University, 1975 2 fiches

G.F. Baker

The Care and Education of Children in Union Workhouses of Somerset, 1834-
1870
London University, 1960 4 fiches

J. Purdy

The Care and Education of Pauper Children in North-East Cumberland during
the Nineteenth Century
Newcastle University, 1973 4 fiches

T. O'Brien

The Education and Care of Workhouse Children in the Lancashire Poor Law
Unions, 1834-1930
Manchester University 1975 5 fiches

RAGGED SCHOOLING

E.A.G. Clark

The Ragged School Union and the Education of The London Poor in the Nine-
teenth Century
London University, 1967 4 fiches

R.G. Bloomer

The Ragged School Movement before 1870
Manchester University 3 fiches

D.H. Webster

The Ragged School Movement and the Education of the Poor in the Nineteenth
Century
Leicester University, 1973 5 fiches

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLING IN LIVERPOOL

A. Black

The Background and Development of Industrial Schools for Roman Catholic
Children in Liverpool during the Nineteenth Century
Liverpool University, 1975 4 fiches

W. Duffy

The Early Years of the Liverpool Industrial School, Kirkdale
Liverpool University, 1976 4 fiches

F.B. Harris

The Liverpool School Board Day Industrial Schools
Liverpool University, 1977 2 fiches