

R E V I E W S

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATION.

EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY. A Sketch for an English School.
By F. R. Leavis. (Chatto and Windus; 6s.)

All those who agree with Mr. Leavis's premisses must inevitably accept his conclusions. It is a rare distinction but an indisputable one. Yet it would be an error to suppose that there is nothing to be learnt from his conclusions by those who believe that many of his premisses are almost provocatively incorrect. It is very possible to hold that his phrase 'the age of T. S. Eliot' is just misleading. It is possible simply to deny that English has a recognised position as chief of the humanities or that observation shows that persons of undisturbed classical training ordinarily take *The Shropshire Lad* to be poetry of a high order or that it has been authoritatively shown that there is a break in continuity between Anglo-Saxon and later English literature. But these are judgements which will effect the details of Mr. Leavis's proposed reforms rather than their scope.

The main point at issue seems to be that of the extent to which the greater universities in England are failing to fulfil their proper function. But here it is easy to over-emphasise the practical effects of the disagreement among those engaged in teaching in them. Beneath the unreality of so much academic politics still lies the implicit acceptance of many common standards. It is possible to hold, as I do, that the universities fulfil increasingly adequately an increasingly important function in English life, that in England they are notably better staffed and equipped than at any other period of their history, and that the general advance in university studies during the last fifteen years has been especially marked in the English School at Oxford. Yet even those who think as I do would also hold that there is a marked need for closer co-ordination among the Faculties—especially between those of English and History—that a further development in the English School might well provide the occasion if not the principle of co-ordination, that the Schools system must somehow be rendered more flexible, that this might well be done by the development of the thesis system, and that there should be an increased participation by undergraduates in seminar work. These requirements are met precisely enough by Mr. Leavis's scheme. His suggestions as to how they should be met will be found to be invariably stimulating and often practicable by all those who are interested in the post-war development of university studies.

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