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ARE WE AN INVENTIVE PEOPLE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION?¹

EVERY invention, I suppose, is made up of individual and social elements, and combines them in a way different from that of every other invention. There is no more interesting department of literary criticism, or esthetic criticism generally, than that which seeks to trace out the respective contributions of the race and the individual in any work of art. This is illustrated in a recent discussion of the distinction between the folk-epic and the art-epic,² the characteristic difference, for example, between the 'Iliad' and 'Paradise Lost.' Some Homer, in the one instance, whatever his name, gave the final form to a poetic tale that must have been shaping itself in the traditions of his people for many generations. In the other instance, in which we may distinguish the poem from the contemporary materials out of which it was constructed, the work of the poet looms large, and the work of the people back of him is obscured by his personal fame. Yet, when we analyze even Milton's art, with all of its manifestation of a fearless and independent personality, we find it related in the subtlest ways with the literary tradition of his time.

So it is in the history of mechanical invention. We have seen recently a running discussion of the origin of the electric trol-

¹An address before the chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, at Vassar College, June 10, 1907.

²By Professor C. B. Bradley, *The University of California Chronicle*, June, 1906.

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