

any one topic. Women in particular suffered from under-stimulated minds.

It was this unexploited vein of seriousness in the public that the Brains Trust tapped. The mail-bag of a regular member of the Brains Trust was a revelation. "I am isolated," people would say, "I have nobody to talk to. I would like to read about philosophy or science or psychology, but I don't know what books to read and I have nobody to tell me." One was astonished at the extent of people's information usually misapplied, or erudition almost always unappreciated.

What a lot of books and pamphlets have been written which nobody ever reads; what a lot of theories are gestated which nobody understands; what an immense mass of unsuspected cerebration goes on in the minds of unacknowledged thinkers. During the last three years I must have had well over a thousand letters conforming to the following stock-draft type:—

DEAR MR. JOAD,—

"I always listen to the Brains Trust with the greatest interest, and appreciate your contributions in particular . . . I am astonished at the wealth of your knowledge. All this makes it the more surprising that you should have made such an unmitigated fool of yourself over . . ."

Over whatever it was! Enclosed with the letters were a batch of pamphlets written by the author, and guides to Swedenborg or Ouspenski or Christian Science, or Spiritualism, or Rosicrucianism, or Astrology, or Theosophy, or Herbert Spencer, or Mrs. Eddy, or whoever or whatever it was that would put me right.

Secondly, there is the failure of popular education to satisfy the people's needs



"Then there will be a question on heredity from a listener in Buxton—but Huxley will answer that one."

or to win their interests. Something, it is clear, is radically wrong with our educational system if we are to judge by results, of which one is the bringing-up and sending into the world of a generation of young people who, taking them by and large, are without the desire to read or the habit of reading. "On a train journey not one in a hundred," I said, "can be seen reading a book." "But that," I admonished myself, "is plainly an exaggeration." So I set out to put it to the test. The train, from Edinburgh to London, takes normally nine hours, and on this occasion

was an hour late. It was full of soldiers. They had long exhausted their somewhat slender resources of conversation; the mild delights of looking out of the window had palled hours ago; there they sat hour after hour bored and low, and to not one in a hundred did it occur to relieve their boredom by reading. For I went through the train counting—counting soldiers and airmen of all ranks, and I reached number one hundred and four before I found my first book reader. He was reading *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*.

The B.B.C. was hailed as a great potential educator of adults, and there have been many gallant efforts to make good its early promise. On the whole they must be written off as failures. Like so many educational institutions in this country, like the University Extension lectures, attended by their select coteries of the cultured, like the W.E.A., with its seventy thousand gallant students, it has succeeded in appealing only to an unrepresentative handful. Education in England is for the mass of the people a thing apart. It is conducted in a vacuum; or was until the Brains Trust idea provided a new bridge to link education and the people. No doubt