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*EDUCATION AND UTILITY**

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I wish to discuss with you this morning some phases of the problem that is perhaps foremost in the minds of the teaching public today: the problem, namely, of making education bear more directly and more effectively upon the work of practical, every-day life. I have no doubt that some of you feel, when this problem is suggested, very much as I felt when I first suggested to myself the possibility of discussing it with you. You may doubtless have heard some phases of this problem discussed at every meeting of this association for the past ten years—if you have been a member so long as that. Certain it is that we all grow weary of the reiteration of even the best of truths, but certain it is also that some problems are always before us, and until they are solved satisfactorily they will always stimulate men to devise means for their solution.

*Paper read before the Eastern Illinois Teachers Association, October 15, 1909.

I should say at the outset, however, that I shall not attempt to justify to this audience the introduction of vocational subjects into the elementary and secondary curriculum. I shall take it for granted that you have already made up your minds upon this matter. I shall not take your time in an attempt to persuade you that agriculture ought to be taught in the rural schools, or manual training and domestic science in all schools. I am personally convinced of the value of such work and I shall take it for granted that you are likewise convinced.

My task today, then, is of another type. I wish to discuss with you some of the implications of this matter of utility in respect to the work that every elementary school is doing and always must do, no matter how much hand-work or vocational material it may introduce. My problem in other words, concerns the ordinary subject-matter of the curriculum,--reading and writing and arithmetic, geography, and grammar, and history,—those things which, like the poor, are always with us, but which we seem a little ashamed to talk about in public. Truly, from reading the educational journals and hearing educational discussion today, the layman might well infer that what we term the "useful" education and the education that is now offered by the average school are as far apart as the two poles. We are all familiar with the statement that the elementary curriculum is eminently adapted to produce clerks and accountants, but very poorly adapted to furnish recruits for any other department of life. The high school is criticized on the ground that it prepares for college and consequently for the professions, but that it is totally inadequate to the needs of the average citizen. Now it would be futile to deny that there is some truth in both these assertions, but I do not hesitate to affirm that both are grossly exaggerated, and that the curriculum of today, with all its imperfections, does not justify so sweeping a denunciation. I wish to point out some of the respects in which these charges are fallacious, and, in so doing, perhaps, to suggest some possible remedies for the defects that everyone will acknowledge.

In the first place, let me make myself perfectly clear upon what I mean by the word "useful". What, after all, is the "useful" study in our schools? What do men find to be the useful thing in their lives? The most natural answer to this question is that the useful things are those that enable us to meet effectively the conditions of life,—or, to use a phrase that is perfectly clear to us all, the things that help us in getting a living. The vast majority of men and women in this world measure all value by this standard for most of us are, to use the expressive slang of the day, "up against" this problem, and "up against" it so hard and so constantly that we interpret everything in the greatly foreshortened perspective of immediate necessity. Most of us in this room are confronting this problem of making a living. At any rate, I am confronting it, and consequently I may lay claim to some of the authority that comes from experience.

And since I have made this personal reference, may I violate the canons of good taste and make still another? I was face to face with this problem of getting a living a good many years ago, when the opportunity came to me to take a college course. I could see nothing ahead after that except another tussle with this same vital issue. So I decided to take a college course which would, in all probability, help me to solve the problem. Scientific agriculture was not developed in those days as it has been since that time, but a start had been made, and the various agricultural colleges were offering what seemed to be very practical courses. I had had some early experience on the farm, and I decided to become a scientific farmer. I took the course of four years and secured my degree. The course was as useful from the standpoint of practical agriculture as any that could have been devised at the time. But when I graduated, what did I find? The same old problem of getting a living still confronted me as I had expected that it would; and alas! I had got my education in a profession that demanded capital. I was a landless farmer. Times were hard and work of all kinds was very scarce. The farmers of those days were in-

clined to scoff at scientific agriculture. I could have worked for my board and a little more, and I should have done so had I been able to find a job. But while I was looking for the place, a chance came to teach school, and I took the opportunity as a means of keeping the wolf from the door. I have been engaged in the work of teaching ever since. When I was able to buy land, I did so, and I have today a farm of which I am very proud. It does not pay large dividends, but I keep it up for the fun I get out of it,—and I like to think, also, that if I should lose my job as a teacher, I could go back to the farm and show the natives how to make money. This is doubtless an illusion, but it is a source of solid comfort just the same.

Now the point of this experience is simply this: I secured an education that seemed to me to promise the acme of utility. In one way, it has fulfilled that promise far beyond my wildest expectations, but that way was very different from the one that I had anticipated. The technical knowledge that I gained during those four strenuous years, I apply now only as a means of recreation. So far as enabling me directly to get a living, this technical knowledge does not pay one per cent on the investment of time and money. And yet, I count the training that I got from its mastery as, perhaps, the most useful product of my education.

Now what was the secret of its utility? As I analyze my experience, I find it summed up very largely in two factors. In the first place, I studied a set of subjects for which I had at the outset very little taste. In studying agriculture, I had to master a certain amount of chemistry, physics, botany, and zoology for each and every one of which I felt, at the outset, a distinct aversion and dislike. A mastery of these subjects was essential to a realization of the purpose that I had in mind. I was sure that I should never like them, and yet, as I kept at work, I gradually found myself losing that initial distaste. First one and then another opened out its vista of truth and revelation before me, and almost before

I was aware of it, I was an enthusiast over science. It was a long time before I generalized that experience and drew its lesson, but the lesson, once learned, has helped me more even in the specific task of getting a living than anything else that came out of my school training. That experience taught me, not only the necessity for doing disagreeable tasks,—for attacking them hopefully and cheerfully,—but it also taught me that disagreeable tasks, if attacked in the right way, and persisted in with patience, often become attractive in themselves. Over and over again in meeting the situations of real life, I have been confronted with tasks that were initially distasteful. Sometimes I have surrendered before them; but sometimes, too, that lesson has come back to me, and has inspired me to struggle on, and at no time has it disappointed me by the outcome. I repeat that there is no technical knowledge that I have gained that compares for a moment with that ideal of patience and persistence. When it comes to real, downright utility, measured by this inexorable standard of getting a living, commend me to the ideal of persistent effort. All the knowledge that we can learn or teach will come to very little if this element is lacking.

Now this is very far from saying that the pursuit of really useful knowledge may not give this ideal just as effectively as the pursuit of knowledge that will never be used. My point is simply this: that beyond the immediate utility of the *facts* that we teach,—basic and fundamental to this utility, in fact,—is the utility of the *ideals* and *standards* that are derived from our school work. Whatever we teach, these essential factors can be made to stand out in our work, and if our pupils acquire these we shall have done the basic and important thing in helping them to solve the problems of real life,—and if our pupils do not acquire these, it will make little difference how valuable may be the content of our instruction. I feel like emphasizing this matter today, because there is in the air a notion that utility depends entirely upon the content of the curriculum. Certainly the

curriculum must be improved from this standpoint, but we are just now losing sight of the other equally important factor,—that, after all, while both are essential, it is the spirit of teaching rather than the content of teaching that is basic and fundamental.

Nor have I much sympathy with that extreme view of this matter which asserts that we must go out of our way to provide distasteful tasks for the pupil in order to develop this ideal of persistence. I believe that such a policy will always tend to defeat its own purpose. I know a teacher who holds this belief. He goes out of his way to make tasks difficult. He refuses to help pupils over hard places. He does not believe in careful assignments of lessons, because, he holds, the pupil ought to learn to overcome difficulties for himself and how can he learn unless real difficulties are presented?

The great trouble with this teacher is that his policy does not work out in practice. A small minority of his pupils are strengthened by it; the majority are weakened. He is right when he says that a pupil gains strength only by overcoming difficulties, but he neglects a very important qualification of this rule, namely, that a pupil gains no strength out of obstacles that he fails to overcome. It is the conquest that comes after effort,—this is the factor that gives one strength and confidence. But when defeat follows defeat and failure follows failure, it is weakness that is being engendered—not strength. And that is the trouble with this teacher's pupils. The majority leave him with all confidence in their own ability shaken out of them and some of them never recover from the experience.

And so while I insist strenuously that the most useful lesson we can teach our pupils is how to do disagreeable tasks cheerfully and willingly, please do not understand me to mean that we should go out of our way to provide disagreeable tasks. After all, I rejoice that my own children are learning how to read and write and cipher much more easily, much more quickly, and withal much more

pleasantly than I learned those useful arts. The more quickly they get to the plane that their elders have reached, the more quickly they can get beyond this plane and on to the next level. To argue against improved methods in teaching on the ground that they make things too easy for the pupil is, to my mind, a grievous error. It is as fallacious as to argue that the introduction of machinery is a curse because it has diminished in some measure the necessity for human drudgery. But if machinery left mankind to rest upon its oars, if it discouraged further progress and further effortful achievement, it *would* be a curse: and if the easier and quicker methods of instruction simply bring my children to my own level and then fail to stimulate them to get beyond my level, then they are a curse and not a blessing. I do not decry that educational policy of today which insists that school work should be made as simple and attractive as possible. I do decry that misinterpretation of this policy which looks at the matter from the other side, and asserts so vehemently that the child should never be asked or urged to do something that isn't easy and attractive. Do I make myself clear upon this point? It is only because there is so much in the world to be done that, for the sake of economizing time and strength, we should raise the child as quickly and as rapidly and as pleasantly as possible to the plane that the race has reached. But among all the lessons of race-experience that we must teach him, there is none so fundamental and important as the lesson of achievement itself,—the supreme lesson wrung from human experience,—the lesson, namely, that every advance that the world has made, every step that it has taken forward, every increment that has been added to the sum-total of progress has been attained at the price of self-sacrifice and effort and struggle,—at the price of doing things that one does not want to do. And unless a man is willing to pay that price, he is bound to be the worst kind of a social parasite, for he is simply living on the experience of others, and adding to this capital nothing of his own.

It is sometimes said that universal education is essential in order that the great mass of humanity may live in greater comfort and enjoy the luxuries that in the past have been vouchsafed only to the few. Personally I think that this is all right so far as it goes, but it fails to reach an ultimate goal. Material comfort is justified only because it enables mankind to live more effectively on the lower planes of life and give greater strength and greater energy to the solution of new problems upon the higher planes of life. The end of life can never be adequately formulated in terms of comfort and ease, nor even in terms of culture and intellectual enjoyment; the end of life is achievement, and no matter how far we go, achievement is possible only to those who are willing to pay the price. When the race stops investing its capital of experience in further achievement, when it settles down to take life easy, it will not take it very long to eat up its capital and revert to the plane of the brute.

But I am getting away from my text. You will remember that I said that the most useful thing that we can teach the child is to attack strenuously and resolutely, any problem that confronts him whether it pleases him or not, and I wanted to be certain that you did not misinterpret me to mean that we should, for this reason, make our school tasks unnecessarily difficult and laborious. After all, while our attitude should always be one of interesting our pupils, their attitude should always be one of effortful attention,—of willingness to do the task that we think is best for them to do. You see it is a sort of a double-headed policy, and how to carry it out is a perplexing problem. Of so much I am certain, however, at the outset: if the pupil takes the attitude that we are there to interest and entertain him, we shall make a sorry fiasco of the whole matter, and inasmuch as this very tendency is in the air at the present time, I feel justified in at least referring to its danger.

Now if this ideal of persistent effort is the most useful thing that can come out of education, what is the next most useful? Again, as I analyze what I obtained from my own education, it seems to me that, next to learning that dis-

agreeable tasks are often well worth doing, the factor that has helped me most in getting a living has been the *method* of solving the situations that confronted me. After all, if we simply have the ideal of resolute and agressive and persistent attack, we may struggle indefinitely without much result. All problems of life involve certain common factors. The essential difference between the educated and the uneducated man, if we grant each an equal measure of pluck, persistence, and endurance, lies in the superior ability of the educated man to analyze his problem effectively and to proceed intelligently rather than blindly to its solution. I maintain that education should give a man this ideal of attacking any problem; furthermore I maintain that the education of the present day, in spite of the anathemas that are hurled against it, is doing this in greater measure than it has ever been done before. But there is no reason why we should not do it in still greater measure.

I once knew two men who were in the busines of raising fruit for commercial purposes. Each had a large orchard which he operated according to convèntional methods and which netted him a comfortable income. One of these men was a man of narrow education: the other a man of liberal education, although his training had not been directed in any way toward the problems of horticulture. The orchards had borne exceptionally well for several years, but one season, when the fruit looked especially promising, a period of wet, muggy weather came along just before the picking season, and one morning both these men went out into their orchards, to find the fruit very badly "specked." Now the conventional thing to do in such cases was well known to both men. Each had picked up a good deal of technical information about caring for fruit, and each did the same thing in meeting this situation. He got out his spraying outfit, prepared some Bordeaux mixture and set vigorously at work with his pumps. So far as persistence and enterprise went, both men stood on an equal footing. But it happened that this was an unusual and not a conventional situation. The spray-

ing did not alleviate the condition. The corruption spread through the trees like wildfire and seemed to thrive on copper sulphate rather than succumb to its corrosive influence.

Now this was where the difference in training showed itself. The orchardist who worked by rule of thumb, when he found that his rule did not work, gave up the fight and spent his time sitting on his front porch cursing his luck. The other set diligently at work to analyze the situation. His education had not taught him anything about the characteristics of parasitic fungi, for parasitic fungi were not very well understood when he was in school. But his education had left with him a general method of procedure in just such cases, and that method he at once applied. It had taught him how to find the information that he needed, provided that such information was available. It had taught him that human experience is crystallized in books, and that, when a discovery is made in any field of science,—no matter how specialized the field and no matter how trivial the finding,—the discovery is recorded in printer's ink and placed at the disposal of those who have the intelligence to find it and apply it. And so he set out to read up on the subject,—to see what other men had learned about this peculiar kind of apple-rot. He got hold of all that had been written about it and began to master it. He told his friend about this material and suggested that the latter follow the same course, but the man of narrow education soon found himself utterly at sea in a maze of technical terms. The terms were new to the other too, but he took down his dictionary and worked them out. He knew how to use indices and tables of contents and various other devices that facilitate the gathering of information, and while his uneducated friend was storming over the pedantry of men who use big words, the other was making rapid progress through the material. In a short time he learned everything that had been found out about the specific disease. He learned that its spores are encased in a gelatinous sac which resisted the entrance of the chemicals. He found how the spores were reproduced, how they wintered, how they

germinated in the following season; and, although he did not save much of his crop that year, he did better the next. Nor were the evidences of his superiority limited to this very useful result. He found that, after all, very little was known about this disease, so he set himself to find out more about it. To do this, he started where other investigators had left off, and then he applied a principle he had learned from his education,—namely, that the only valid methods of obtaining new truths are the methods of close observation and controlled experiment.

Now I maintain that the education which was given that man was effective in a degree that ought to make his experience an object-lesson for us who teach. What he had found most useful at a very critical juncture of his business life was, primarily, not the technical knowledge that he had gained either in school or in actual experience. His superiority lay in the fact that he knew how to get hold of knowledge when he needed it, how to master it once he had obtained it, how to apply it once he had mastered it, and finally how to go about to discover facts that had been undetected by previous investigators. I care not whether he got this knowledge in the elementary school or in the high school or in the college. He might have secured it in any one of the three types of institution but he had to learn it somewhere, and I shall go further and say that the average man has to learn it in some school and under an explicit and conscious method of instruction. That form of education which does not consciously teach pupils these four things will not supply a maximally useful form of information, I care not what the specific content is that it teaches. You cannot limit a useful *education* to what we call useful *information*, for information varies in its utility and we may load the pupil's mind with a mass of facts that he will never have occasion to apply. But if, in gaining these facts, he has acquired ideals of study and of investigation, I am willing to put him alongside the pupil who has been limited to facts that he does find useful, but who has missed the principles and ideals that I have mentioned.

But perhaps you would maintain that this statement of the case, while in general true, does not help us out in practice. After all, how are we to impress pupils with this ideal of persistence and with these ideals of getting and applying information, and with this ideal of investigation? I maintain that these important useful ideals can be effectively impressed from the very outset of school life. The teaching of every subject affords innumerable opportunities to force home their lessons. In fact, it must be a very gradual process—a process in which the concrete instances are numerous and rich and impressive. From these concrete instances, the general truth may in time emerge. Certainly the chances that it will emerge are greatly multiplied if we ourselves recognize its worth and importance, and lead pupils to see in each concrete case the operation of the general principle. After all, the chief reason why so much of our education miscarries, why so few pupils gain the strength and the power that we expect all to gain, lies in the inability of the average individual to draw a general conclusion from concrete cases—to see the general in the particular. We have insisted so strenuously upon concrete instruction that we have perhaps failed also to insist that fact without law is blind, and that observation without induction is stupidity gone to seed.

Let me give right here a concrete instance of what I mean. Not long ago, I visited an eighth-grade class during a geography period. It was at the time when the discovery of the Pole had just set the whole civilized world by the ears, and the teacher was doing something that many good teachers do on occasions of this sort: she was turning the vivid interest of the moment to educative purposes. The pupils had read Peary's account of his trip and they were discussing its details in class. Now that exercise was vastly more than an interesting information-lesson, for Peary's achievement became, under the skillful touch of that teacher, a type of all human achievement. I wish that I could reproduce that lesson for you—how vividly she pictured the situation that confronted the explorer,—the bitter cold, the shifting

ice, the treacherous open leads, the lack of game or other sources of food-supply, the long marches on scant rations, the short hours and the uncomfortable conditions of sleep; and how from these that fundamental lesson of pluck and endurance and courage came forth naturally without preaching the moral or indulging in sentimental "goody-goodyism." And then the other and equally important part of the lesson, —how pluck and courage in themselves could never have solved the problem and how knowledge was essential, and how that knowledge had been gained: some of it from the experience of early explorers,—how to avoid the dreaded scurvy, how to build a ship that could withstand the tremendous pressure of the floes; and some from the Eskimos. —how to live in that barren region, and how to travel with dogs and sledges;—and some, too, from Peary's own early experiences,—how he had struggled for twenty years to reach the goal, and had added this experience to that until finally the prize was his. We may differ as to the value of Peary's deed but the fact that it stands as a type of what success in any undertaking means, no one can deny. And this was the lesson that these eighth-grade pupils were absorbing,—the world-old lesson before which all others fade into insignificance,—the lesson, namely, that achievement can be gained only by those who are willing to pay the price.

And I imagine that when that class is studying the continent of Africa in their geography work, they will learn something more than rivers and mountains and boundaries and products,—I imagine that they will link these facts with the names and deeds of the men who gave them to the world. And when they study history, it will be vastly more than a bare recital of dates and events,—it will be alive with these great lessons of struggle and triumph,—for history, after all, it is only the record of human achievement. And if those pupils do not find these same lessons coming out of their own little conquests,—if the problems of arithmetic do not furnish an opportunity to conquer the pressure-ridges of partial payments or the Polar-night of bank-discount, or

if the intricacies of formal grammar do not resolve themselves into the North Pole of correct expression,—I have misjudged that teacher's capacities;—for, the great triumph of teaching is to get our pupils to see the fundamental and the eternal in things that are seemingly trivial and transitory. We are fond of dividing school studies into the cultural and the practical, into the humanities and the sciences. Believe me, there is no study worth the teaching that is not practical at basis, and there is no practical study that has not its human interest and its humanizing influence —if only we go to some pains to search them out.

I have said that the most useful thing that education can do is to imbue the pupil with the ideal of effortful achievement which will lead him to do cheerfully and effectively the disagreeable tasks that fall to his lot. I have said that the next most useful thing that it can do is to give him a general method of solving the problems that he meets. Is there any other useful out-come of a general nature that we can rank in importance with these two? I believe that there is, and I can perhaps tell you what I mean by another reference to a concrete case. I have a friend who lacks this third factor, although he possesses the other two in a very generous measuse. He is full of ambition, persistence, and courage. He is master of the rational method of solving the problems that beset him. He does his work intelligently and effectively. And yet he has failed to make a good living. Why? Simply because of his standard of what constitutes a good living. Measured by my standard, he is doing excellently well. Measured by his own standard, he is a miserable failure. He is depressed and gloomy and out of harmony with the world, simply because he has no other standard for a good living than a financial one. He is by profession a civil engineer. His work is much more remunerative than is that of many other callings. He has it in him to attain to professional distinction in that work. But to this opportunity he is blind. In the great industrial center in which he works, he is constantly irritated by the evidences of wealth and luxury beyond

what he himself enjoys. The millionaire captain-of-industry is his hero, and because he is not numbered among this class, he looks at the world through the bluest kind of spectacles.

Now, to my mind that man's education failed somewhere, and its failure lay in the fact that it did not develop in him ideals of success that would have made him immune to these irritating factors. We have often heard it said that education should rid the mind of the incubus of superstition, and one very important effect of universal education is that it does offer to all men an explanation of the phenomena that formerly weighted down the mind with fear and dread, and opened an easy ingress to the forces of superstition and fraud and error. Education has accomplished this function I think passably well with respect to the more obvious sources of superstition. Necromancy and magic, demonism and witchcraft have long since been relegated to the limbo of exposed fraud. Their conquest has been one of the most significant advances that man has made above the brute. The truths of science have at last triumphed, and, as education has diffused these truths among the masses, the triumph has become almost universal. But there are other forms of superstition beside those I have mentioned,—other instances of a false perspective, of distorted values, of inadequate standards. If belief in witchcraft or in magic is bad because it falls short of an adequate interpretation of nature,—if it is false because it is inconsistent with human experience,—then the worship of Mammon that my engineer-friend represents is tenfold worse than witchcraft, measured by the same standards. If there is any lesson that human history teaches with compelling force it is surely this: Every race which has yielded to the demon of individualism and the lust for gold and self-gratification has gone down the swift and certain road to national decay. Every race that, through unusual material prosperity, has lost its grip on the eternal verities of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation has left the lesson of its downfall written large upon the pages of history. I repeat that if superstition consists in believing something that is inconsistent with rational

human experience, then our present worship of the golden calf isby far the most dangerous form of superstition that has ever befuddled the human intellect.

But, you ask, what can education do in alleviating a condition of this sort? How can the weak influence of the school make itself felt in an environment that has crystallized on every hand this unfortunate standard? Individualism is in the air. It is the dominant spirit of the times. It is reinforced upon every side by the unmistakable evidences of national prosperity. It is all right to preach the simple life, but who is going to live it unless he has to? It is all right to say that man should have social and not individual standards of success and achievement, but what effect will your puerile assertion have upon the situation that confronts us?

Yes; it is easier to be a pessimist than an optimist. It is far easier to lie back and let things run their course than it is to strike out into mid-stream and make what must be for the pioneer a fatal effort to stem the current. But is the situation absolutely hopeless? If the forces of education can lift the Japanese people from barbarism to enlightenment in two generations;—if education can in a single century transform Germany from the weakest to the strongest power on the continent of Europe;—if five short years of a certain type of education can change the course of destiny in China; are we warranted in our assumption that we hold a weak weapon in this fight against Mammon?

I have intimated that the attitude of my engineer-friend toward life is the result of twisted ideals. A good many young men, are going out into life with a similar defect in their education. They gain their ideals, not from the great well-springs of human experience as represented in history and literature, in religion and art, but from the environment around them, and consequently they become victims of this superstition from the outset. As a trainer of teachers, I hold it to be one important part of my duty to fortify my students as strongly as I can against this false standard of

which my engineer-friend is the victim. It is just as much a part of my duty to give my students effective and consistent standards of what a good living consists in as it is to give them the technical knowledge and skill that will enable them to make a good living. If my students who are to become teachers have standards of living and standards of success that are inconsistent with the great ideal of social service for which teaching stands, then I have fallen far short of success in my work. If they are constantly irritated by the evidences of luxury beyond their means, if this irritation sours their dispositions and checks their spontaneity, their efficiency as teachers is greatly lessened or perhaps entirely negated. And if my engineer-friend places worldly emoluments upon a higher plane than professional efficiency, I dread for the safety of the bridges that he builds. His education as an engineer should have fortified him against just such a contingency. It should have left him with the ideal of craftmanship supreme in his life. And if his technical education failed to do this, his general education ought, at least, to have given him a bias in the right direction.

I believe that all forms of vocational and professional education are not so strong in this respect as they should be. Again you say to me, What can education do when the spirit of the times speaks so strongly on the other side? But what is education for if it is not to preserve midst the chaos and confusion of troublous times the great truths that the race has wrung from its experience? How different might have been the fate of Rome, if Rome had possessed an educational system touching every child in the Empire, and if, during the years that witnessed her decay and downfall, those schools could have kept steadily, persistently at work, impressing upon every member of each successive generation the virtues that had made the old Romans strong and virile, —the virtues that enabled them to lay the foundations of an Empire that crumbled in ruins once these truths were forgotten. Is it not the specific task of education to represent in each generation the human experiences that have been

tried and tested and found to work,—to represent these in the face of opposition if need be,—to be faithful to the trusteeship of the most priceless legacy that the past has left to the present and to the future? If this is not our function in the scheme of things, then what is our function? Is it to stand with bated breath to catch the first whisper that will usher in the next change? Is it to surrender all initiative and simply allow ourselves to be tossed hither and yon by the waves and cross-waves of a fickle public opinion? Is it to cower in dread of a criticism that is not only unjust, but also ill-advised of the real conditions under which we are doing our work?

I take it that none of us is ready to answer these questions in the affirmative. Deep down in our hearts we know that we have a useful work to do, and we know that we are doing it passably well. We also know our defects and shortcomings at least as well as one who has never faced our problems and tried to solve them. And it is from this latter type that most of the drastic criticism, especially of the elementary and secondary school, emanates. I confess that my gorge rises within me when I read or hear the invectives that are being hurled against teaching as a profession (and against the work of the elementary and secondary school in particular) by men who know nothing of this work at first hand. This is the greatest handicap under which the profession of teaching labors. In every other important field of human activity a man must present his credentials before he takes his seat at the council-table, and even then he must sit and listen respectfully to his elders for a while before he ventures a criticism or even a suggestion. This plan may have its defects. It may keep things on too conservative a basis; but it avoids the danger into which we as a profession have fallen,—the danger of "half-baked" theories and unmatured policies. Today the only man that can get a respectable hearing at our great national educational meetings is the man who has something new and bizarre to propose. And the more startling the proposal,

the greater the measure of adulation that he receives. The result of this is a continual straining for effect, an enormous annual crop of fads and fancies, which, though most of them are happily short-lived, keep us in a state of continual turmoil and confusion.

Now it goes without saying that there are many ways of making education hit the mark of utility in addition to those that I have mentioned. The teachers down in the lower grades who are teaching little children the arts of reading and writing and computation are doing vastly more in a practical direction than they are ever given credit for doing; for reading and writing and the manipulation of numbers are, next to oral speech itself, the prime necessities in the social and industrial world. These arts are being taught today better than they have ever been taught before,—and the method and technique of their teaching is undergoing constant refinement and improvement.

The school can do and is doing other useful things. Some schools are training their pupils to be well mannered and courteous and considerate of the rights of others. They are teaching children one of the most basic and fundamental laws of human life,—namely, that there are some things that a gentleman cannot do and some things that society will not stand. How many a painful experience in solving that very problem of getting a living could be avoided if one had only learned this lesson passing well! What a pity it is that some schools that stand today for what we call educational progress are failing in just this particular—are sending out into the world an annual crop of boys and girls who must learn the great lesson of self-control and a proper respect for the rights of others in the bitter school of experience,—a school in which the rod will never be spared, but whose chastening scourge comes sometimes alas too late!

Yes, there is no feature of school life which has not its almost infinite possibilities of utility. But after all, are not the basic and fundamental things these ideals that I have

named? And should not we who teach stand for idealism in its widest sense? Should we not insist, in court and out, that this nation of ours was founded upon idealism, and that, whatever may be the materialistic and individualistic tendencies of the moment, its children, at least, shall learn to dwell among the sunlit peaks? And should we not ourselves subscribe an undying fidelity to those great ideals for which teaching must stand,—to the ideal of social service which lies at the basis of our craft, to the ideals of effort and discipline that make a nation great and its children strong, to the ideal of science that dissipates the black night of ignorance and superstition, to the ideal of culture that humanizes mankind? For if we have these great human truths well implanted, although our work may keep us very close to Mother Earth, we can still lift our heads above the fog and look the morning sun squarely in the face.

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