

## THE EDUCATION OF TOMORROW

**T**OMORROW is a flexible word. Some one has pointed out that two hundred years ago, or even two years ago, is as much the past as is two thousand years ago. I therefore hope that we may think of the education of tomorrow as being frequently exemplified in the best practices of the experimental and forward-looking schools of today—indeed as being capable of illustration in some part, large or small, in any good school system. I wish it also to be clear at the outset that I come to you in no spirit of destructive criticism of the work of the schools in Harrisonburg and the State of Virginia. I want rather to offer a definite challenge to you, as business and professional men, for assistance in bringing to pass needed changes in attitudes and points of view that must precede any really significant attempt to prevent our schools from becoming ultra-conservative and formal in an age of which the most prominent trait is change, and in which marked progress has been made in so many lines.

### *Two Pictures*

I greatly wish I were an artist and could paint for you two contrasting pictures of our contemporary life. As it is, I shall try to call them to mind by asking you to follow in your imagination my brief descriptions.

The first picture I would call "progress." It would show the giant skyscrapers of the giant city. It would show the conquest of the air by airplane and dirigible. It would show the ever-present automobile—of which there are now over twenty-six million in the United States. It would show the vast network of lines of telegraph and telephone—the latter to be found at more than twenty million American homes. In it you would see the radio, now a blessing in twelve million American homes. It would show the marvels of modern lighting, the

great gift of Edison. It would show the vast factories in which millions toil to turn out products for a waiting world. It would also show throngs of pleasure seekers at the beaches of Florida and other watering places; millions more on their way to and from the movies; and still other millions finding ways and means to recreation not dreamed of by our fathers.

On the more ideal side it would show signs of the spirit of tolerance toward those of other color, race, and religion. It would illustrate good sportsmanship in the things that make for a finer social life. It would portray the results of magnificent philanthropies. It would give evidence of enthusiastic living and virile activity in a world fuller of opportunity for the common man than any world of the past.

The second and contrasting picture I would call "defeat." It would show thousands waiting in bread lines, in the shadow of the great cities' great commercial and financial institutions. It would show the vast army of unemployed, estimated at from three to seven million. It would show not only China's but America's crying, hungry women and babes. It would show men fearful of the future, because the "machine" towers over them and takes their jobs and their sustenance.

This picture would also show the jazz mode of thought and energy. It would show lawlessness and open defiance of the law. It would portray jealousy and selfishness and utter disregard of the principle that "I am my brother's keeper." It would show over-filled jails and crowded court dockets. It would show the dangers of violence, of racketeering, of the mob in action, trying to secure the wealth of America's favored three per cent and to distribute it wrecklessly to waiting hordes.

Some of us are inclined to see but one of these two pictures, while others of us constantly try to see both and to assess both in terms of future generations—generations

yet unborn, in which laps we shall probably lay these problems still unsolved.

*A Race Between Education and Catastrophe*

But perhaps you have been asking what has education to do with this dilemma in which modern America finds herself. Probably the answer is: Education has all or nothing to do with it, depending upon the ends we make it serve, depending upon the relation of its activity to the needs of the society it serves.

Many lessons may be learned from the past. In Sparta, one of the little city-states of ancient Greece, the leaders subordinated every interest of home and individual to the ends of the state. Every youth was trained from babyhood to be a warrior, or, if a girl, to be the mother of a warrior. The time came when Sparta had an opportunity to strike, and strike she did, to the utter ruin and confusion of Athens, her cultured rival. But out of that ruin Athens—confounded and her citizens scattered—gave a marvelous contribution to the world so that today we think of Athens, not Sparta, as synonymous to Greece.

More recently we have had an illustration in Germany. After her defeat in 1870 the schoolmasters of Germany began to center their instruction on those things which would enable her to win back what was lost. History, geography, and religion were made to serve military ends and, when the war broke, German boys with this tutelage at the hands of German schoolmasters knew that the shortest route to Paris lay through neutral Belgium. It would appear that German efficiency would have won the war had not the valor and initiative of American youth stopped the tide and turned it back. Today a visitor in the countries of Europe returns with the feeling that talk of peace is hopeless over there. Generations of children who know not war are being taught to hate their neighbors. Among the great powers the only real exception to this is Great Britain. In eastern Europe

that slumbering, uncouth, behemoth, Russia, is girding its loins with education and with machinery, and with military training, perhaps to emulate the Kaiser and to spread his culture to the ends of the world.

It therefore appears evident why one writer has said that we are now engaged in "a race between education and catastrophe." In the United States there is evidence that education has in some respects become the greatest industry. Two billions of dollars are being spent annually for schools. The endowment of a number of our universities runs above a score of millions of dollars. Whereas a few decades ago an elementary education was considered sufficient, today society and business are demanding high school and college education. A time of drought and depression sees no let-up in the numbers of college students. In America we have believed in, if not always practiced, equality of opportunity. We have pictured the educational system as a ladder, to the highest rung of which he who had industry and ability could climb irrespective of birth, or creed, or color. To quote another recent writer, the school has become "the American road to culture."

It is true that our expenditures for education are distinctly disproportionate to our immense expenditures in road building and the payment of and preparation for the costs of war. It is also true that many times we see in the school a less effective institution than we could wish because it remains conservative, artificial, and unrelated to life.

*Traits of the School of Tomorrow*

We can only dream of the future in terms of progressive and forward-looking tendencies in the present. Private schoolmasters, untrammelled by the lockstep of the "system" and by the lack of finances, have demonstrated many of the features of the "school of tomorrow." It is to be greatly hoped that public education may be increasingly free from the domination of

politics in order that it may utilize the best of these experiments undertaken through private initiative. In such an era of depression as we are now passing through our citizenry must be steeled against the schools becoming a football of the politicians, and against education being controlled by the folkways of the past rather than by the ideals of the present and the future.

#### *A. The Aims of the New Education*

It will be remembered that historically our schools have grown up as independent units. In Virginia the first unit was the University of Virginia, developed under the inspiration of Thomas Jefferson over a hundred years ago. Our system of free public elementary schools dates from the carpet-bagger regime of 1869-70 and was brought into concrete existence under the direction of William Ruffner. The high school, the intermediate link in our Virginia system, did not displace the private academies in any but the larger communities of the state until after the opening of the present century.

In Virginia, as elsewhere, as the state system was consolidated, each higher school dictated to a large extent the policies of the one below. The university and college prescribed what should be studied in the high school, and the high school determined in large measure what preparation elementary pupils should bring. The minority group of educators thus exerted a powerful influence because no teacher wanted his pupils "unprepared." Thus it came about that the aim which dominated the high school and to a lesser degree the elementary school was "preparation for college," supported by an apparently plausible but very false argument that preparation for college afforded the best preparation for life.

In recent years America's youth have crowded to overflowing the classrooms of both our high schools and our colleges. Careful studies have shown over and over again that the great majority of our boys

and girls who go to the public high school are not sufficiently intellectual-minded to profit by the typical college preparatory course or the older type of college education. Consequently educators and parents alike are insisting upon something other than "ready-to-wear" education—an education aimed at "training for life and living." The aims of the new education must center in the needs, ambitions, and interests of individual pupils who come from and will return to every conceivable walk of life. Such a concept as this requires

#### *B. A Revised and Broadened Curriculum*

Our program of studies in the elementary and high school—the pupils' intellectual menu—if it is to fit for life and living this great army of youth must be definitely reconstructed. It is significant to note that thirty-three of the individual states in the United States are now revising their state courses of study. Almost immediately upon entering into office, Dr. Sidney B. Hall, Virginia's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, has proposed a plan for a three-year study of our elementary and high school courses of study looking to their complete overhauling. Citizens as well as teachers, elementary teachers as well as college teachers, and even children themselves will be participants in constructing Virginia's new curriculum and paving the way for the introduction of the ideals of the "school of tomorrow." Let us note then along what lines these revisions must be made.

a. Training for living and life must include vocational training, that is, training focused at other goals than the professions which are bound to dominate with the college preparatory ideal. Even now the program of studies in Virginia calls for a course in vocational guidance, and the schools are beginning to supplement the voluntary efforts of the Kiwanis and other service clubs. The last ten years in Virginia has seen remarkable progress in building up

in the counties, with the aid of the Federal government, a fine vocational program centering in agriculture and home making. Our cities large and small need to extend greatly and diversify our present program if the great mass of children are to be served in the matter of vocational guidance and preparation.

b. Life to be effective must be built squarely upon a foundation of good health. Training through the school nurse, training by the school nurse, courses in school hygiene, athletics that focus on the wholesale training of sound bodies, and not in building a winning athletic machine—these will supplant less necessary items of instruction, be they parts of our present program in arithmetic, or Latin, or grammar, or what not.

c. Living and life call for a concrete understanding of, an ability to practice, good citizenship. Who does not remember studying and memorizing the duties of various Federal officials, yet how many of us could frankly say that in school we learned the primer of balloting, of weighing political issues irrespective of party, of thinking through the problems of taxation and of local government? Pupil participation in school government will be more essential in the school of tomorrow than the knowledge of the fourth book of Cæsar or of the intricacies of higher mathematics.

d. Living and life will continue to center in the home. It is not enough that the school teach a girl how to make good biscuits for her husband or how to mend his shirts. The school of tomorrow must teach both boys and girls frankly and definitely the duties and obligations of parenthood and home-making.

e. Living and life go on in leisure time. Leisure time is greatly on the increase in America. The stress on knowledge for knowledge's sake, on ability to pass formal examinations, must be supplemented by training and appreciation, and abilities to

choose wisely, and participate in, a wide range of re-creative activities. It is gratifying to note that courses in high school English are no longer confined to difficult and ancient "classics" from which the pupil turned naturally, in reaction, to the cheap, trashy stuff sold on the news stands.

f. Furthermore living and life require solid discipline, not the discipline of doing disagreeable things because they are disagreeable, but of doing hard things because they are interesting and worth while. Forward-looking teachers are finding that children love hard work if they have a hand in locating and finding their tasks and that they greatly prefer liberty under law to license.

#### C. *An Increased Financial Support of Schools*

A period of financial depression does not seem to be the time to talk of money and of increased outlays. Yet what good business man stops advertising, or cuts down a varied stock with which to appeal to prospective customers? Rather, he develops a more progressive program in both advertising and salesmanship.

Or let us change the thought a little. Many of us no doubt know even now where we could purchase an old "buggy," considered a good vehicle a few years ago. Yet how many of us have thought of getting it out, polishing it up, buying a steady horse at depression prices, and giving up our car for the outfit. Rather have we not thought of a new and improved car, one giving a better return for our investment? Have we considered giving up the modern range, the telephone, the radio, the electric refrigerator? Speaking frankly, we appear frequently to compare the school to the tools of an older civilization even though in the same breath we think of it as the largest single means for making men and women to live in an era where rapid and progressive change is the most outstanding characteristic.

14

Harrisonburg is proud of the fact that she devotes sixty per cent of her two dollar tax levy to schools, but an examination of estimated receipts and estimated expenditures indicates that we are spending for schools, less than eighteen per cent of our annual income, a figure far below accepted national standards. Until we shall be willing to spend more freely we shall be in danger of criticism that we are patching old machinery and not providing new, and that we are not doing justice to the boys and girls in our little city, especially to those who are not going on to college.

#### *Virginia's New Program*

You have noted recently that Dr. Sidney Hall, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Virginia, has asked the budget commission and the next legislature to provide \$2,000,000 in additional funds for the improvement of the public schools. Simultaneously he has shown his vision by announcing that Virginia will undertake, like a number of other states, a three-year study for the revision of her elementary and high school curricula. The request for financial aid to keep her schools up even to present standards is meeting with great opposition, particularly from those most impressed with the fact that Virginia is suffering financially. If, however, we examine the matter, we find that Virginia, with a long established record of a very low educational rating among the forty-eight states, nevertheless was this year one of two states in the nation which made a larger return than in the previous year in Federal taxes. Her financial rating in every statistical report is ahead of her educational rating.

Although we believe that education is essentially a function of state government, we learn with no surprise from the last report of the State Comptroller that the State of Virginia gave to the elementary schools of the state slightly over \$7,000,000 as against over \$20,000,000 to road building and maintenance. Should any one reply

that we have had a school system for some time but are just in the past decade or so undertaking seriously a road program, I challenge him to leave our magnificent Valley pike and go a few miles to one of our many one-room schools. There he may find building, equipment, and teacher on a par with conditions in his childhood—a school that is an antique. No one would be quicker than I to acknowledge the need of a road-building program, but I would not willingly neglect even more essential things. May we not paraphrase without blasphemy the words of the Master and say "What shall it profit a state if it gain the commerce and tourist trade of the nation at the expense of its children and youth?"

In the city of Harrisonburg, real progress has been made. Mass meetings ten years ago in which the study of city problems arose always stressed the need of lights, water, and schools, and in that sequence. Having attained the first objective and made real progress toward the second, we have also built a fine high school building and are housing our pupils more adequately than ever before. Today, however, Harrisonburg, like many another city, must take stock not only of adequate housing for its pupils but also of a more versatile and practical program of instruction for the whole of its citizenry and not for the limited few.

In conclusion, may I end as I began, by saying that the purpose of my talk today is to lay before you the needs of education in a modern era, of such education in the state and in the city, as shall make for the best training of citizenship? As Kiwanians—Builders—may you help meet the challenge being made to an educated and civic-minded citizenry by State Superintendent Hall and by the educational leaders of the nation, to stand behind a program that will make education a genuine safeguard of democracy and a bulwark against those ills that might turn the nation's progress into defeat.

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