

The more widely you read, the more illustrative material you know, the more you have travelled, the more your students will know that Robert E. Lee was a real man of flesh and blood and not an idealized figure of Southern mythology.

And, lastly, you are to encourage thought questions. Of course you will not fancy that they are thinking when you do some thinking out loud before your pupils today, and tomorrow they hand it back in perfect agreement with you. Oh, no, they are quoting — and flattering — you. Most thinking is disagreeing. Have you courage to allow a child to differ with you? Is it so vitally important that the child be right in his thinking? Isn't it more important that he be encouraged to try his wings, even if he is an awkward fledgling? Let him once learn to think for himself, and he will correct his mere factual error, but let him learn to accept what is handed him, and he is safe only so far as his pedagogical nurse follows him. What will you do with the boy who says, "I don't think the South had any good reason for secession"? Shoo him down with horror? I hope not. Tell him, "Well, there were a good many Southern people, especially in Virginia, who thought that way in 1861. Now keep on studying and see if you can convince the other children that you are right, but if they convince you, say so." Encourage that same boy to ask whether, if the Southern Confederacy had maintained its independence, it would have joined the United States in the World War. There is no past event which cannot in some way be likened to present-day happenings. I have a college senior now who must have had an excellent teacher in her freshman high school history. She can see Roman parallels to practically every present-day event, and having learned to judge Rome in terms of today eight years ago, she still thinks independently.

Don't you sometimes wish you could know whether you are really succeeding?

Latin and mathematics teachers have easy ways of measuring their success or failure. How shall I know? A student who knows more dates than I ever did was one of my poorest students. This is my only test: Can she stand on her own feet? Can she think for herself even if she happens to differ with me? And, a more deadly question, will I permit her to do it? Do any of us ask our students to think, and then dare them to do it? My old professor at the University of Chicago, Dr. A. C. McLaughlin, used to say, "The happiest moment in a real teacher's life is when he is met in combat by one of his own students—and beaten."

We might as well accept the fact that if *we* teach, *they* will think. And in their hands lies our fate.

"By all ye do, or fail to do
Your silent sullen *pupils*
Shall weigh your gods and you."

JAMES ELLIOTT WALMSLEY

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DESPAIR

THERE are numerous evidences that there is a growing feeling of despair among the people of our country. As one travels among country folk, he finds that many farmers have ceased planting certain otherwise productive crops and have neglected to harvest those ready for gathering, because, as they say, "What's the use?" In agriculture it is now as it was thirty years ago. The farmers' needs receive less attention and the farmers as a group seem unable to produce a sufficient number of outstanding leaders to reconstruct (if such a thing is possible) the system of agriculture and rural life to meet changed and changing conditions. Abandoned farms, crops without markets, and products sold at less than cost of producing them, not to say anything of other factors, have made many say "I give up. There is no use of doing anything."

Banks have failed and continue to do so, causing thousands suffering. Industrial enterprises of long standing have closed their doors and the employees are without means of a living. Credit is "frozen." Even the efforts of the Federal government seem destined to failure in restoring confidence and renewing industrial and commercial activities. Business men, once wont to plan and execute various enterprises, are now no longer active. They, in many cases, see no clear road to travel to overcome the difficulties they recognize. They too are saying "There is nothing I can do. It's no use trying."

In the last forty years, the common people of the United States have changed their standards of living to a higher level. This is true as regards health. It is true as to the kind of homes in which they live. It is true as to what they eat and wear. It is true as to travel and transportation. But now they are saying, "We must revert to standards of living of an earlier day. It's no use. I've tried and there is nothing that can be done except to give up the struggle."

If one examines the conditions that exist in inter-racial relationships throughout this world, he finds a similar condition. Notwithstanding the advances made in a better understanding, and in co-operative effort, there are vast areas in which we seem to have made no headway or to have reverted to a more undesirable condition. In the United States, we are most familiar with the "stress and strain" of relations between blacks and whites. But in certain parts of the world the white and yellow races maintain something akin to an armed truce. If we look at India, Brazil, Australia, and some other countries we find the same conditions there. Racial animosities and bitter conflicts seem inevitable to many. Instead of a brotherhood of man, there is a possibility of armed camps of races. These conditions lead many to view the improvement of racial relations as hopeless. They say

"What's the use? We can do nothing."

Even in educational circles, we say find something of the same spirit. At the recent sessions held in Washington, a dean of a college of education made this remark: "I find a spirit of despair and compromise. Our group has lost its crusading spirit."

Religious literature reflects the spirit of despair in varying degrees. But to such sources we should be able to go for better things. Other examples could be multiplied showing that now is a time when many accept the philosophy of despair.

What is the philosophy of despair? It is a surrender to baser things. It is acceptance of cynicism. It is acknowledgment of complete defeat. As students you, too, may at times feel tempted to accept such a philosophy of life. But if you do, you must reckon with the results.

Where will such a philosophy lead? It will lead you to neglect the best things of life—the delights of friends, the companionship of kindred souls, the glories and beauties of literature, art and music, and the support and solace of a better belief. It will carry you further—it will make you a pessimist, then a cynic, and finally a supercynic, despising all that is good and beautiful in God's world. It will make you ill at ease, and miserable. It will prevent any development; it will cause retrogression. It will finally lead to destruction!

The teacher's philosophy of life must *not* be a philosophy of despair. As a cynic he will infect others with this quality of a seared soul. A superintendent of a large city school system recently said: "The worst thing that happens to our young new teachers is contact with the few old cynics in the staff." The teacher with the philosophy of despair neglects human values and, hence, the best interests of childhood. The teacher whose only work is that of "hearing classes recite" may be one who has the philosophy of despair rather than an overload of work.

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As young people, you may make your choice of many different philosophies of life and work. I have tried to describe one to you. Are there no better? There are many that are better. May I present one to you, and a second on a much higher level. In Shakespeare's Hamlet, as Laertes is about to leave on a journey, the aged counselor of the King, Polonius, speaks to Laertes in the following vein:

"There; my blessing with thee!
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

This is a wise man's advice, you say. True it is. And it is a better philosophy by far than the alternative philosophy of despair. He who would follow such advice would be classed a successful man, but he may not have done his fellowmen much good.

The second life-view is a very complete, dynamic view, of which I shall mention but three cardinal principles of action. The first principle of our faith is that this is a world of law, which, if understood, works for the best. There are many who doubt this. I invite you to examine carefully even the greatest of disasters, and you will find that they occurred because of great laws functioning in our universe. Likewise, the many good things so exist. But if we know not these laws we can neither utilize them

nor guard against their operation upon us. Even too much affection can be given a child! Time will not permit a further elaboration of this principle.

The second principle was given us about two thousand years ago in these words: "Ye shall know the truth and it shall make you free." This principle follows the first as a supplement to it. If we discover a fact in science, we gain control and hence greater freedom of action. If we discover that life may be lived more abundantly by service to others, we find another line of activity freed—opened to us.

In the service of education, this principle is illustrated many times. The advances in the psychology of learning have given teachers greater control over guidance of learners—if teachers "know the truth." A more profound idea about the value of truth was probably never uttered.

The third principle follows the second. If we believe this a world of laws, and laws which are good, and if we believe that the "truth shall make us free," then what truth of all truths is probably most important for a sick and worried group of human beings? It too is, in my judgment, an old truth, but one scantily used by men. "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another." On this we can build a whole social fabric of living together happily and in a well worth while life. The inhabitants of this globe are slowly—painfully—discovering how fine it is to love one another. They are discovering that it is, as Henry Drummond put it, "the greatest thing in the world." It implies many subordinate principles of action and service. If we could marshal before us today those men and women both high and lowly, who have accepted this creed, what an array we would find! Can you guess what their testimony would be? They would have little to say of riches, little to say of power, but much to say of the wealth which comes of things

not material. These experiences come to the real teacher.

Some of the things I have said, I find in a few verses written by John Bretnall. They are worth repeating:

THE TEACHER

"If I but had my chance amid this world of stress
Wherein men press and plot and grasp,
Crowd virtue back, court their own prejudice,
I'd set a new apprenticeship for life,
Within the scheme to train the youth
I'd make for wiser purpose, content, plan.
Life would be learned in doing,
Things taught as they are,
Opening a way to stop our waste,
Cure social misfits, hold back the flood of hu-
man tears,
All this I'd do if I but had my chance—And
knew the way.

I have my chance,
Each day there come to me some souls
Unnurtured to the world. My opportunity,
My work shall be to find their need
And help survey a path
That leads to the supply;
Then give them learning as a life to live
Not as a garment to be worn,
Help them gain courage, endurance, fairness, in-
quiry.

From out the mass, mayhap, that here and there
Shall come a life equipped with skill
To heal some gap in industry,
Divide in honesty the shares of gain,
Help law learn justice,
Or build a better breed of men.
I may inspire some soul to seek
The magic of the Universe,
Reach out a hand to grasp
The harp of science, pluck its strings,
Till from their throbbing tunes
Some deep secret of the Master Mind,
Another thought of God made new to man.

The race turns slowly but it travels far.
Though small the angle,
Its rays, extended, wide diverge,
A latitude dividing right from wrong.
Though small my part,
I, too, may touch redemption for the race.
Some spark that I shall kindle may burn on
To glow in life, to gleam in immortality.¹

¹John Bretnal in *The Journal of the National Education Association*, April, 1931.

A. R. MEAD

Life is only a school in which the wiser men are, the longer they go on learning.

—SIR WILFRED GRENFELL

"HER VOICE WAS . . . SOFT"

WE HAVE read with a good deal of sympathy the advertisements of various salesmen offering to teach the correct use of English. The institutions they represent are the beauty shops of language. Here the poor aint's and he dont's and we was's and ought ofs go in to be stretched and lifted and smoothed until the speaker can open his lips without toads falling out of them. We are, frankly, a little skeptical of the results often promised, for the idea is too commonly expressed that a little grammar and spelling will accomplish what really needs a mental development. Good English comes from a good mind, and no other. And if the mind is good and the English irregular there may be merit in its irregularity.

But another kind of cultural beauty shop, if it exists, has few customers. The thronging girls on the noon-hour streets of a great city are hysterically aware of the need—

Still to be neat, still to be dressed
As if you were going to a feast.

And they patronize, we suspect, the grammar shops occasionally, for an overheard conversation will sometimes have an almost priggish correctness in the selection of words. But, O the voices! And O the enunciation! The Darwinian idea that fine clothes, like fine feathers, are sex appeals and nothing else was much too simple. A good share of this finery has nothing to do with sex. It is an attempt to assert the social position of the wearer in a great anonymous civilization where the individual must assert or be unknown. The hat says, "I am not too poor"; the dress, "I have some taste"; the shoes, "I know style when I see it." This is what advertisers call, in its inverted form, the snob appeal, but the term is harsh. Put a strange chicken in a chicken yard and watch; it after awhile begins to plume and strut a little, as if to say,

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