

ON THE EDUCATIONAL BUNCO.

BY L. A. SHATTUCK.

WHEN the American soldier in France stopped hammering at the Hindenburg line on November 11, 1918, at that precise moment did educators, shell game operators, medicine men, and failures in all the professions commence firing at the head of American youth their salvos of preparatory literature regarding education. The country was, and is yet, full of this literature. At the moment of the Armistice came a need for the wooing of the engines of peace rather than the engines of war. Through magazine, newspaper, and periodical of every sort and condition, came a rain of educational literature that has inundated the country. The Polish immigrant was appealed to for the study of English and botany; the newly arrived Zecho-Slovak was regaled with the munificent return that a course in chiropractic would make; our own soldiers, sailors, and marines were bombastically threatened with absolute failure in the race for life preservation unless they enrolled in a school of finger-printing or doughnut making. And this irrespective whether they happened to be good rivet-heaters or farmers.

The causes of all this have been manifold. The suddenly acquired new viewpoint of the soldier who had come in contact with new languages, new faces, and new ideas, i. e., the enlargement of the provincial purview, the military thoroughness which by its "Attention!" and "Eyes Right!" had taught him the gift of taking orders; also a certain amount of the old sang-froid and the slouchiness in performance of work had been driven out of him; his outgrowing of the old job, i. e., no matter what work he performed excellently before the war had taken on a pettiness in appearance due to what he considered his newly found executive ability; the old kind of independence had given place to a newer kind or what he considered initiative. He had seen corporals giving orders as pompously as generals; coxswains he had seen commanding like captains, and

he imagined in civil life the same method should be as successful. As a consequence he believed that if he could get away from his old shopmates, his old office and store associates, and learn a new vocation he felt assured that he would become one of the world's captains of industry. Hence the service man has been the direct cause of this flood of educational literature and the craze for erudition.

These mental processes of the service man which were the cause of these effects would not, however, have taken place if there had not been one or more contributory causes. While it may be possible that in a few isolated cases the service man's mind may have, without a stimulus, functioned in this manner, and by the process of repeating these ideas to others, the desire for education and new jobs may have become prevalent, it is hardly probable. First, by reason of the numerical amount of those that have been effected, and secondly, by the wide latitude of its scope. Both the service man in France and the service man here had no intention of going back to the old job after the germ of education had become imbedded. From camps in New England to camps in the South and West it was the same. They all had ideas of becoming educated to a new line of work.

There were also, it is true, one or two organizations having educational courses that had representatives in the field, principal among which was the Y. M. C. A. But the main cause was not this. When the Army Vocational Schools commenced sending forth their literature and collecting their data overseas, in Army Camp, in hospital, and in training camp, that, and that only, was the initial mental stimulus of the educational "bug." Good plasterers immediately wished to become human bloodhounds. All the camp literature containing the "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "Vidoq" and "Craig Kennedy" became the reading of the moment. Fine *cidevant* horseshoers had aspirations of becoming world famous artists. Gibson, Flagg, and a host of other illustrators were the recipients of mail requesting testimonials for schools of art. Men who were excellent hotel cooks back home were ambitious of becoming magicians and all the tricks of Hermann and Kellar were assiduously practiced. Literature by the ton describing these courses went its several ways. And eventually, from the Army and the Navy, this educational bee stung everyone in this country.

The U. S. A. immediately upon the signing of the Armistice was practically in a state of chaos. The sudden termination of hostilities had metaphorically taken away the breath of every business man in

the country. As a result the immediate cry was "Reconstruction"—the getting back to the old basis of doing business; the discharging of a few (very few!) employees who had replaced the heroes (sic!) and the making of a place for these latter. There was an attempt on the part of employers to adapt themselves to a condition the majority of them had never met with in their business careers. There were calls from these employers to the colleges of the country to train men for new lines of work, such as the experiments as had been made for the chemical and dye industries during the war; also, the expected augmentation of business. All of these were causes to fit new men for new jobs. And it was obvious that a good many men would thus have to be fitted. While there were several industries engaged in manufacturing the same product on war orders as they made in peace time, as in the case of the garment and shoe trade, these latter had the simple problem of only adding to its force of employees, whereas in the industries in which the whole fabricating process would have to be overturned in order to get back to normal, this fitting of new men to new jobs became a highly complex one.

While employers were paving the way to a new accession of business under these new conditions, some few legitimate schools had been preparing the way educationally. But these latter who knew mob psychology were not to have monopoly of this teaching. Others there were, of a more degenerated order, who desired the mighty dollar, even though they obtained such blood money and exacted their pound of flesh from the ex-service men who stood as a wall of might and who protected them and their filthy kind from the ravages of war. These fakirs, with the cessation of hostilities, commenced their educational propaganda. Gobs and doughboys by the thousands were enrolled in these courses; became enamoured as it were with every species of industrialism—some legitimate and some not. But by far the most of these courses were not. Business, the arts, the sciences, as well as charlatanism were among the curricula of the illegitimate pedagogues. While fortunately the ex-service men have had a rude awakening from their dreams of all becoming Alexanders of business, railroading, etc., this had an adverse effect upon business men for the following reasons: First, being improperly trained, or rather not trained at all, by these educational hawks and with which training, or lack of it, ex-service men have been given a position with a responsible employer. Secondly, the discharging of the same for inefficiency, for no employer could help but become readily aware that the training has only been superficial. Thirdly, repetition of the above, and the employer

passes the word along to hire no more ex-service men. No employer can afford to be continually making experiments for while his patriotism may be of the very highest grade, he can't, nor will he, continually sacrifice his business interests to sentiment. These are sheerly the reasons why at the present time that a large element of the unemployed are ex-soldiers and sailors. By leaving the training of the returning valiants to chance rather than persuading them to go back to the ploughshare we have allowed them to come in contact with medicine men and charlatans. Instead of warning them against this evil of education we have rather encouraged them. Though it is true that each man is responsible for his own welfare yet many of these so-called students were little more than children in mind. We have taken them away from their childhood desires and put into their minds what once would have appeared to them the desires of demigods. The desires of the youth of the southern mountains, were, before the war, as archaic as were the desires of their great-grandfathers. To-day there is a great dissatisfaction with both the old and the new, caused by this germ of education. A timely warning against evils of the mind as well as against evils of the body (venereal talks) would probably have saved many of these a great many dollars and saved their ambition for something constructive. Many through this educational idea have become disheartened and lost ambition through their first real defeat.

These courses in education which were made to appeal to the doughboy, the gob, and the marine, range from accounting to zoroastrianism. If you will pick up a periodical dated November, 1918, and get all numbers of that periodical until the present date you will notice how these advertisements increase by leaps and bounds. And why? Sheerly by reason of the phenomenal success of the courses. Education of every kind in this country is now at its height. But there is no limit to the kinds of it. Every mail order quack in the country can, with a few dollars and a slight knowledge of advertising psychology, raise a shoe-string into a presentable bank-roll, if he has a good pen, a good printer, and a good medium. There is no law to stop him from running a course in swimming or piano playing by mail. Every line of endeavor can be made the means of causing the golden shower to return to him. He can, with this ready pen of his, influence the carpenter to become a Bahaist preacher or the billing clerk an embryo Jack Dempsey. The pen of the charlatan can raise images to the illogical that have no limit. The office boy can be made to see himself in the president's chair and the lady typist is raised to the heights of divine contemplation of having a

fur coat, a Rolls Royce automobile, and envisions the colored chauffeur who opens the door of the car while the steamer awaits the coming of the Chief Foreign Buyer.

It will be readily perceivable how imbecile all this is when we must consider the ground and framework that is necessary to clothe all these diverse minds. No matter what kind of seed you plant it must fall upon fertile ground to obtain a product. You can't throw corn among ashes and get a growth unless the corn happens to seep through to the soil underneath. Neither can you plant ideas in a clerk's head relative to poultry raising unless he has a peculiar aptitude for poultry farming. To get results from any form of education you must have a carefully prepared foundation. I am, of course, speaking of averages. One man may have the adaptability of doing several things well, but the average man certainly has not. Given a certain amount of preliminary education a man can become a mediocre anything if he has the will, but as for him becoming exceptional he must have the adaptability. I can't say whether or not a good farmer could ever become a detective like Burns, but I certainly can say that the average man will not. Nor can I say whether a tinsmith or a waiter could ever become another Faurot or Bertillon but certainly he would be the exceptional exception if he did. You have to have analyses of the character, the will, and the mind before any of these super-exceptions can be brought to pass. It's ridiculous to think that without these things you can be trained in anything but being a *verdampft* fool. Each man has a different mental makeup. You can't educate yourself to any line of work unless you have the peculiar aptness necessary—if you would be highly successful—no matter if the dean in every college in the U. S. tells you otherwise.

One of the greatest of faults (in addition to others) of these educators in the "arts bizarre" is the attempt to educate by mail through pamphlets as similar as are two peas. They advertize individual instruction but it is hardly so. And what is true of these educational medicine men is true of legitimate schools. They all leave no choice to the students mind. They never allow the latter an alternative. There is one effect, and one only, for every cause. There is a constant adhering to the wishes of the trustees and financial backers. If a man holds a contrary view of a subject to that of his instructor, immediately that man is put down for a radical—everything but what he is—a straightforward thinker. We should encourage youth rather to think different and be wrong than to compel them continually to say "c'est" because an instructor told

them so. More than half of the time the instructor himself doesn't believe the essence of what he teaches and it hinders true thinking by arbitrarily saying this is so and this is not so. It would be better to let the student discriminate between what is and what isn't than to make him believe a thing which he'll have trouble to unlearn in after life. This method of arbitrary teaching is true of all schools, extension as well as resident. The schoolmen of to-day are little different from the schoolmen in the days of Aristotle. While they have accumulated a few more ologies and isms they have the same stock of platitudes and truisms they had two thousand years ago. In all their tutoring they never take into consideration the individuality but the mob—the class—always the mob. You can, it is true, lead sheep and other cattle with bells and shepherd dogs but you can't really educate nor really lead intelligent human beings with a crack of the educational whip. We shall soon learn (as business men are now learning) that it takes a long while to strip the men and women of to-day of class-room demonstrations. Had the students made these proofs within their own minds there would have been rather less necessity of ridding them later of these illogical inferences. Schoolmasters and school-mistresses of to-day reason one way. It must be always according to form and syllogism. If it is not according to prescribed order then it is wrong. Thus they reason. And which with modern methods of doing business has been outlived. We must allow our students the right of synthetically reasoning out every proposition rather than to harangue and to abuse them because antediluvian mentors and others of to-day concur in orthodoxy. The result of the present methods of instruction is like giving a scythe to one hundred men and expect each to cut the same amount of grain. By the law of large numerical averages they may cut pretty nearly the same but to expect one hundred students from any school equipped mentally the same to cut any figure in the world of business is idiotic. Teach them rather by mathematics, logic, or the sciences to think at all times for themselves. It will do the coming wheelwright as well as the coming engineer more good than a world of superfluous ologies.

These correspondence schools, in particular, take as a main premise one thing—and that is a similarity of brain functioning. (Though of course the gullibility of the mob is the premise upon which the correspondence school industry is founded.) It takes for granted no other convolutions in the brain of John Smith than it does in the brain of Jacob Isaacs. Each given a problem according to the mail method get one answer. All of the ramifications of that

problem never enter into the mind of either unless the student is exceptional. While such may be true for the exact sciences, viz: that if A plus B equals Z, then A equals Z minus B, etc., it is hardly true for any of the arts, but these advertising pedagogues assume this in every case. While I do not wish to detract from the commendable work that some few correspondence schools are performing I think it would be well to make adaptability tests and individual research (as a few colleges are now doing) before assuming they can force ability upon those who have it not. I grant that this would entail much work and also that it would tend to nullify the money making power of the institution but still they could enroll the prospective scholar in courses to which by a reasonable amount of persuasion and search they found him to be most fitted.

Many of the things above pointed out will cause a student to at all times, and not part of the time, depend upon himself. It will teach self-reliance. The present system makes too much for laziness. The resident student bones when he has to and so, too, does the home study man. The latter though is less remiss in this respect than the former. Oftentimes for this reason does the self-taught man do far better in the professions than does the college man. And this because he is compelled to shake off laziness. He is far from the scene of a classroom; he has less direct supervision; he has no fraternity "hops" to worry about; and he has more time for self analysis. He realizes his faults of education whereas the college man and others of their type are generally so puffed up with second hand ideas that they have no time for seeking within themselves the truth of a proposition. They very seldom, if ever, dispute a professorial syllogism, or constituted authority. They accept, *prima facie*, the evidence of the representative of the Delphi oracle, the *alma mater*, i. e., the instructor.

There is no greater need in our modern methods of education than the need to teach self thinking. The time was when the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic, the "Three R's" so called, were the fundamental principles of education. These fundamentals and these only did the average American of other years obtain. And from these quondam students have come some of the greatest lawyers, editors, physicians, statesmen and writers that America can boast. Not that I necessarily mean to infer that this humble form of education was the cause of them becoming great; they would probably have come to the estate they did with a college education, just as we have many college graduates, too, who have been exceptional, but they did have the aptness, the will, and the

character, and the need for self reliance was inculcated in them earlier than had they been later graduated from the higher schools.

As long ago as in the days of Montaigne some few educators and others have been ranting against the above methods of education but it seems as though no matter what means a writer may take to alleviate it the learned gentlemen of our colleges, high schools, and correspondence schools turn to it a deaf ear. The writer of this article makes no pretensions to being an educator; he makes no pretensions to any exceptional learning but he has been a business man and a fairly accurate observer of the errors in logical reasoning made by the average student-savant of these institutions of learning, and as a result, he, too, wishes to butt his head against a stone wall. He, too, must add his infinitesimally small voice of pretended philosophy against the teachings of the orthodox because logical reasoners are the exception rather than the rule. Though a large part of the method as taught by the "Emile" of Rousseau is now out of date it would be better to adhere to that system rather than the present one. A concerted effort on the part of parents and others interested toward abolishment of the present methods is the only thing that will make the majority, rather than the minority, retailers in new clothes and not wholesalers in second hand ones.

Thus you see that given equal fallow soil to plant your seeds of education you must consider all the things that I have before enumerated. No college, no detective school, nor any home correspondence course can have effect unless the individual is considered as one particular entity. As the one and only one in which to instill educational stimuli of any kind. Each man and woman owe to themselves this self analysis: whether or not they are adaptable; whether they have the requisite ability, and whether they have the common sense (which we all *think* we have). Fundamentals only should give a good grip upon the latter and no college, no accountancy school, no traffic course, or school of exporting can ever add to it.

We have all more or less been stung by this educational bee in one form or another—and if we haven't we shall live to see the day when we shall become members of a matrimonial agency or a post card club. But an examination of the reasons as set forth here should give ample proof of the fallacy and the inconsistencies in these educational courses.

The writer of this article has received circulars describing fully how to become rich by taking one hundred different courses in instruction. Electricity, Salesmanship, Languages, Chiropody, Telephony, Memory, Auto Mechanics, Finger Printing and dozens of

other pamphlets describing these courses have all found their way to the waste basket. The first gives a conservative salary of \$175 a week; the second, \$10,000 a year; the third unlimited return; the fourth \$20,000 a year and so on. Of all the bunco that ever happened, this educational one should be handed the grand prize, or as "Tad" would say "The Fur Lined Frying Pan." To imagine there are people who actually fall continually for this line of gilded chatter. Admittedly, there are instructors of all the arts and sciences who can teach these subjects but cannot practice them; they can explain but that terminates their ability as far as the art or science is concerned. But, while this is true of a good many instructors in colleges and high schools it is hardly the case with these advertizing quacks. Do you suppose the majority of these instructors are getting over \$40 a week, if that? Why do these instructors in these mountebank institutions go on working for a paltry \$40 a week when \$10,000 is ready for the taking? It's quite a mind feat to be able to encompass this fact. Also it is incomprehensible why expert finger print detectors and such like are not patriotic enough to lend their able assistance to the Government in this time of criminal strife. They are still pulling, and will go on pulling, the same old stuff of making great detectives out of village cut-ups by presenting him with a full set of instructions, a whistle, and a tin badge, all for the small sum of three bucks! Will America never grow up and get away from these puerilities? Will it never outgrow the shell game and three card monte?