

EDUCATION—PRESENT AND FUTURE.

BY L. A. SHATTUCK.

“Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagee, car chacun pense en etre si bien pourvu, que ceux meme qui sont les plus difficiles a contenter en toute autre chose n’ont point coutume d’en desirer plus qu’ils en ont.”

Descartes.

THE PRESENT.

IN the Year of Our Lord 1921, a quantitative analysis of the question of education in the United States discloses that we have an educational institution of some kind for almost every square block of our urban territory. There is not an art, a science, a phase of charlatantry, or any intellectual pursuit within the range of the human mind, that is not being utilized as a means toward a large monetary return—philanthropic or otherwise—or what is still worse—is being used as a feed hopper to fill the maw of the ever-needful economic machine. If the question were asked what these feeders turn into this machine, mediocrities would be the only answer that could truthfully be made. It turns out doctors, lawyers, engineers; untold legions of D. Ds., L. L. Ds., C. Es., M. Es., and innumerable other gentlemen well bespattered with literal honorifics. A constant stream of professional gentlemen, if you will, but mediocrities, nevertheless.

Thwing, in an address to the teachers of Minnesota some years ago, said: “Never rest till you have got all the fixed machinery for work the best possible. The waste in a teacher’s workshop is the lives of men. And what becomes of the waste? They live on and they hang heavy on the neck of progress; they form the cumberers of the ground, or worse, who drag down the national life”. What becomes of the waste, he asks. Is it not daily seen, this waste? The aforementioned lettered gentlemen, for instance.

Are not our cities sweltering with waste? And this waste is daily, like a volcano, letting off its poisonous gases. This waste is our demagogues of politics, the harum-scarum monkey trainers, and what-not. They spout, spout, spout, day in and day out, the faults of the world and the people in it. They are never appreciated, they will tell you. No, nor they never will be. Thus do we obtain our embryo American Bolsheviks. Our educational system has done for them just as it will do for millions of others if we do not change it.

We shall not deal here with elementary education, or with the reasons and causes for illiteracy, statistics of which will disclose to one who will investigate, the astounding news that one out of every five of our voting citizens in our Southern States can neither read nor write; or that one out of every twelve males in the United States with the suffrage privilege is in the same boat. But our subject here will not deal with these questions or people for no doubt our public school students and illiterates of today will be the absolutely law abiding citizens of the morrow. However, our subject is with the question of the so-called higher education, i. e., high and preparatory schools, colleges and universities, in every shape, form, and manner, and the whyfore that men and women returned from these institutions are mediocrities. Is it suppression of knowledge, or what? No, dear reader, it is not. It is attempting to impart too much knowledge of the wrong kind. It is the wrapping of knowledge around a square peg expecting it to fit into the round hole. It is suppression of the right kind of knowledge; in this respect it is as cruel as the mighty economic thumb-screw under which the serfs labored in the 15th Century. In ten folio volumes, brilliant type, we might say that the reasons for it were well laid bare but here we can only say: dogma, precedent, authority, and a thousand lesser influences which retard progress in this world.

Take, for instance, the system of teaching. There is no teaching of any system of logic to a boy or girl. There is no method by which they may distinguish the worse from the better reason. No teacher does ever, or did not in the writer's experience, make the students seek solutions to their own problems. They never make a boy or girl use their own intellect. The teacher is a prop, the connecting link between authority and nonentity, ever-ready to help their pupils toward parasitism.

We admit that help along life's highways is very altruistic but no help with the problems of school days is building anything

for the future structure to come—self-reliant men and women. There would be some justification for this help if the teachers were constantly implanting truths in the heads of adolescence. But they are not. And they know it. Unless their sophistication is at the same mental level as the youngsters.

When we take a bottle of truth and a bottle of falsehood, mix the two in another container, and then force our students to drink the resultant concoction the effect is nauseous—to them. To others, it likens itself to infanticide. With no emetic in sight our students go forth from their *alma maters* without one fear they will ever purge themselves of the odious mixture. But they do. If they do soon enough all's well—but otherwise—some more waste.

And the reasons contained in the forced-feeding belief is explained by the one word—docility. All the modern teacher asks for is this. Teachers themselves, being products of an educational system the principal dogma of which is authority, ask nothing from their students but that they conform to the same system of tractability. And the spawn of this system is quack doctors, legal shysters, poverty stricken engineers and professional hocus-pocus.

Most of our teachers are always laying down laws upon this or that. They are born dictators. They say to a student—this is right or wrong. Do it this way—not that—and so on interminably. They are what Shaw so aptly calls the “amateur pope.” It is this amateurish papal authority which is the bane of our educational existence. America is one galaxy of “popes.” From the demagogue with his political axe to grind down to the writer who has no axe but a large pile of lumber in his garret to cut—if you will pardon the unintended witticism—we all want to wear the papal crown.

A few decades ago, Herbert Spencer, in speaking of education in England, said it was what he would call a “moving equilibrium.” That is just what we have here in America today—our educational system is a “moving equilibrium”, though a root should be extracted from the “moving”.

Education is anticipative. Anticipation of the future of the student is the *sine qua non* of school-day training. As the great Lessing expressed it, education is to perform the same functions experience will perform only in less time. This being the duty to be fulfilled by education it is quite incomprehensible that Greek mythology is anticipative of the student's future life. Are the dead languages, which are still being taught in some schools, preparation

for the morrow? Is the ability to distinguish between three flats and an appoggiatura in a musical scale preparation for the morrow? Will the future be one long night of darkness to a student if he is unable to tell whether a buttercup is a flower of the genus *Ranunculus* or a container for a milk product? Will a student be helped if we prepare him with Dante's "Inferno"? No, for outside of the material Hell he will attain after school years are over there will be many moons pass by before there will be such a thing in his life as "Paradise Regained". We are not detracting from the benefit conferred upon prospective Haroun-al-Raschids by mythology, nor the effect upon coming bass-viol players in moving picture theatre orchestras in the study of music, nor botanical knowledge or bug knowledge upon tomorrow's botanists and entomologists. But we have few whose future aspiration is writing, fewer still who look toward music, and even less expectant botanists and entomologists. Why inflict this knowledge and spoil every young life for the benefit of the few? We are not deploring the value of these things but we are deploring the stunting of the mind and temper at the time of life when it is most receptive to the things upon which one's future depend. As Von Humbolt said: "Whatever we wish to see introduced into the life of a nation must first be introduced into its schools". And what do we wish to see in the life of this nation? The answer is self-supporting, self-reliant citizenry. And the knowledge requisite thereto *must* be introduced into our schools. Knowledge of bugs does not make for this nor does music. We should concentrate only upon the things that do make citizens and then if these citizens are thoroughly satisfied they wish to make a collection of such things—well, we will have performed our duty toward them, at least.

The foregoing being true as a right basis upon which to found our future education it is idiotic to use some of the text-books now used in our higher schools. Text-books which lend not one whit of weight to facts in the scale of life. Our object as teachers—if it is necessary that we retain our papal mantle—is to send our students forth to meet a modern Goliath and, as modern Davids, they will have to be provided with something more efficacious than the obsolete sling-shot if they wish to do any slaying on their own account.

Centuries ago Rabelais advocated a system of realistic education. And we are still pursuing the will o' the wisp of "cultured" self-preservation. As if there were such a thing. Culture has a

place in our life, it is true, but the opinion of the writer is that the cultural things may better be left until competency in the material things of life is attained. No matter how we may theorize about esthetics in this matter of fact world, it is solely a question of tending to the wants of the body first and the brain will have plenty of food—thoughtful and otherwise—afterward. Culture should be left to the unoccupied years of one's life seeing that it takes the first half of that life hustling for the pounds, dollars, and francs. There is plenty of time after school-days to delve into Epictetus and Aristophanes if one so sees fit, but for the present, the essentials, and not the finals, of mind building architecture are needed.

Also, there is the question of "fads", with which the curricula of our scholastic institutions are well sprinkled. Both philanthropy and politics are more or less the cause of them. A philanthropist or a politician may believe in phrenology, "jazz" music, absolutism, New Thought, Futurism, or anything of that nature and he will seek to introduce it into the particular school, or set of schools, he may select for his, unknown to him, animosity. We should do away with this species of public benefactor. An endowment made to a school with a provision that such and such a thing be introduced into the curricula is not philanthropy or public benefaction. It is sheer fanaticism and it is stultifying to the school which makes claim to education. On the other hand, politicians who have relations with school boards should interfere in no way with the prescribed course of study put in effect by the boards. The members of such are supposedly trained educators and it is safer to leave our engines with trained mechanics than it is to leave them with potterers.

Dr. James Ward, in speaking of education, said that the laboring man wanted education because it would make them better, happier, and wiser men. Yes, and are they not better and happier men for economic independence? If they have attained to this latter they can then take up the classics, or art, or anthropology, if they wish, and they consequently become wiser men. Show us a man with economic freedom and we will show you a man with contempt for authority—not governmental authority unless it encroaches too much on his rights, but the authority upon which the improperly trained man of today takes everything for granted as long as one of the "amateur popes" says a thing. This does not make for citizenry. It makes sheep. Even the writer who for nearly ten years has been trying to put the halo thrown about "Heroes and

Hero Worship" out of his sight is occasionally bothered with the authority and precedent method of teaching. And does this nation want a population of thinkers or open-mouthed parrots?

A German writer once wrote: "Gentle reader, have you ever felt that the school you used to attend as a child really gave you the education which you now see would have been the best? Are your own youngsters at this very minute being educated so as to turn out quite healthy and able to do some good in the world"? Do you, gentle reader? Do you think that your education was in a large part rubbish or have you utilized every educational brick in building up your dwelling place of happiness in the world? If you have you are fortunate, we assure you.

The writer has not failed to notice that here in the United States, in speaking of averages, the earlier a boy leaves school the correspondingly greater his common sense in early manhood. Coming in contact with worldly forces sooner, which gives him a practical basis upon which to do later study, he is better fitted for retention of real knowledge than another whose schooling is not finished until the early twenties. Why this is so can only be attributed to the teaching system. It is obvious, also, that despite the immense strides forward, numerically, that our educational institutions have made, there has been no decrease in poverty and misery. If, as no man may gainsay, that education is the only method for breaking down the monopoly of wealth, why is it that we have done nothing toward this—education being so rampantly present? It is evident there is nothing wrong with the educational hypothesis as a whole but it is still plainer that there remains only the one corollary—that of wrong teaching or wrong subjects. We know there are various elements in America attributing this failure to ameliorate poverty and misery to everything from alcohol to indecent moving pictures. These are *not* the causes, if indications are worth anything. The causes are contained in our education. Thus Huxley, three or four decades ago: "At the cost of one to two thousand pounds of our hard earned money, we devote twelve of the most precious years of your lives to school. There you shall toil or be supposed to toil; but there you shall not learn one single thing of all those you will most want to know directly you leave school and enter upon a practical business life. You will in all probability go into business, but you shall not know where, or how, any article of commerce is produced, or the difference between an export or

import or the meaning of the word Capital. . . . But at school and college you shall know of no source of truth but authority."

It may occur to the reader that we are quoting many authorities. That we are, in brief, doing the opposite to our sermon *au sucre*, but, we have to. The writer, too, is a product of the system—and for further reference to authority *Vide* John Milton's "Tractate" or the works of Bacon, Copernicus, Vives, Da Vinci, Galileo, Descartes, Kepler, Grotius, Rousseau, Rabelais. Of the moderns we could quote a dozen: Oliver Lodge and Dr. Eliot, for instance. All of these were realists on the question of educational values if one would seek stronger authority than the writer.

A recent actual happening in the writer's experience gives a concrete example of the results of current pedagogical methods. The following dialogues took place between the writer and a man recently returned from college. They are metaphysical in their scope and no slur is intended by any of the interrogations:

Writer: "Mr. X, do you believe in the theories of Friederic Nietzsche"?

Mr. X: "No, I do not".

W: "Why don't you believe in them"?

Mr. X: "Because all my professors in college said Nietzsche was insane when he wrote his books".

W: "But, Mr. X, if an insane man writes that π is equal to 3.1416 or that two plus two equals four, it is just as true as if a mathematical wizard said it".

Mr. X: "Maybe that is so, but he *was* crazy, wasn't he"?

W: "Have you read his works"?

Mr. X: "No".

He admitted he had never read the works of Nietzsche and he accepted, *prima facie*, the evidence of some of his instructors that the German philosopher was insane. The sickening overdose of classics will ruin him for the rest of his days as a really intelligent man.

The second dialogue:

Writer: "Mr. Y, do you believe in the theories of Charles Darwin"?

Mr. Y: "No."

W: "Why don't you believe in them"?

Mr. Y: "Because I believe in special creation for every species".

W: "And why do you believe in this"?

Mr. Y: "Because I was brought up to believe in the Bible and several "profs" gave me ample proof of the truth of it while in college. They know more than you or I".

W: "But Mr. Y, untold numbers of famous men have believed in the Darwinian theory—all greater men than your 'profs'. For instance, Thomas Henry Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Ernest Haeckel, and Oliver Lodge. They believed in the transmutation theory. Aren't these men conclusive proofs of the errors of your instructors"?

Mr. Y: "Well, they might have been wrong after all. I suppose I had better look into the matter farther".

But he never does. His mind until his dying day will be a mass of chaotic ideas such as this—unless he, in army terms, "snaps out of it". It never entered his head during the discussion there have been thousands of famous men who have believed in the special creation hypothesis. He could have ended that part of the discussion *reductio ad absurdum* had he known the first principles of logical reasoning. At present he is a moron and at that level he will remain unless——.

But supposing the instructors referred to in the dialogues—if they insist that philosophy is needed in college—had said to the students: "Here are the works of Nietzsche, of Darwin, and the Old Testament. Truth may be relative. I do not know which of these books state the true facts of life. I have opinions, that is all. Use these books and draw your own conclusions". What do you think then would be the result? Would it be the hodge-podge with which our *ci-devant* students are encumbered and with which they gaily saunter into an unsuspecting world? They are at one with Comte in their positivism gleaned from—not philosophers—but "popes".

When the writer was a good little boy he attended a high-priced "prep" school not so many miles from New York City. All the other good little boys used to remove their hats when the headmaster took his afternoon stroll. Later, in college, all the "profs" used to hold an indignation meeting if any student anywhere, any-time, ever dared to dispute an august, professorial syllogism. But it is a peculiar thing that it is the school-room anarchists who "get by" in this rough, old world.

And the others—the docile lads who quote passages of Shakespeare by the yard; those who can refer you to line 6, page so and so, of such and such an authority, what becomes of them? Dear

reader, there are many hundreds of thousands of them walking our streets today either unemployed or earning a pittance compared to the preparations they made for a business career. These students who return from college with the ready-reference mind in respect to authority on bugs and flowers and Perseus and Andromache, in a word, the eukalele prodigies, are not wanted by business men. Business does not require this "junk", as it is called. Business houses want a man who can spell "believe" with the "I" and not "E" *after* the "L"; they want a man who can add a column of figures correctly. Logarithms, and calculus, and surds, and simultaneous equations, and all the rest of the mathematical syllabus is not much good if you cannot divide four figures by two. For engineering these things are very desirable—but for the average business house they are useless. In the business world today you cannot sell "junk". Commercial dreadnoughts are made up of first-class Bessemer steel. From bow to stern, cage-mast to keel, starboard to port, these dreadnoughts are masterpieces of the best hardened steel in the world. They have to be. Commercial supremacy is one long, sweet battle of competition. The result depends upon the sinews, i. e., the brains, behind and in the armor-plate.

In our schools let us get rid of the "junk". Let us not lay down laws—let us say, rather, student: "Here are the facts of life. You are reaching into a grab bag. There are so many black balls of untruths and so many white balls of truths contained herein. Now use your knowledge of the mathematical law of probabilities and take your pick. Each truth you pick will be one fact nearer life's happiness. Your teacher will not suffer if you pick wrongly."

What passes for scholarship has now become the possession of the many. No longer may we assail the fact that it is the possession of the few, but, we ask, is this kind of scholarship synonymous with knowledge of the right kind? Is any man in possession of a great mass of unrelated fact in possession of as great a pearl of price as a man who owns one fact relative to life's existence? Is not a man in possession of this one fact, which he can use advantageously, far better off in educational goods than a man who displays a stock-room full of unsellable garments? The answer is evident. Rather there is the question how we shall give our students facts and not fancies. How? By eliminating from our schools and colleges, the mentor, the text-book, the school-superintendent, the trustee, the philanthropist, the politician, the educational board, municipal or state, that didactically says this is so and that is so when they are

not sure they know what they are talking about. In brief, to put our education upon a sound basis let us rid ourselves of the dictatorial method in our teaching and let us do away with such things as botany, anthropology, and other like things.

These are our educational problems of the present. The solution we may leave to the great mass of educators in America who practice the greatest humanity for the sheer love of it. The rest will seek no solution nor will they ever *wish* to be confronted with the problem.

THE FUTURE.

The principal tendency of education at the present time is psychological. Every school and university throughout the United States is daily becoming more receptive to the psychological idea. Reactionary schools are becoming overwhelmed by the tons of psychological data which is being scattered broad cast by pamphlets and books of every kind and description. It is like a universal snow storm—flakes are sweeping through every ingress into our school houses. Schools, particularly those with obsolete curricula, are abandoning text-books, discharging superannuated teachers, and making paths for the new educational régime to come.

Naturally, the growth of this new idea in pedagogy has been slow. The voice of psychology, like that of philosophy, is hardly ever heard except as a whispering as from a remote distance, even though such whispering, were it properly attended by the people to whom it is addressed, would be more beneficial than would the combined roar of a million demagogues.

As heavy cannonading brings about the storm so has the verbal volleys of demagogues been the impetus for the raging storm of psychological facts with which ye olden time schoolmaster is now confronted. For years his head has been caught in the jam of the school-house door—like an ostrich, its head in the sand—always looking within the school-house, never seeing the storm without. But at last the coldness about his nether extremities has caused him to face the storm—or be blanketed forever by it.

For years psychology has unostentatiously been making its way through dogma and precedent until it stands as a science—young and withal healthy. One by one it has swept out of its way charlatanry of one kind or another. The phrenology of Spurzheim found it too rugged for battle, as did Spiritualism, hand writing and character analysis, and other buncombe. For years psychology

has been snowing us under with truths—truths—raw, naked and bleeding. Today, psychology is not a homogenous mass of perfect truth, but it is a heterogeneous mass of truth and half truth and surely that is better than congeries of half truth and falsehood.

In our old school days the proof of the extraction of a correct root from a quadratic was the multiplication of these roots. So with questions of education. If we extract educational roots from economic quadratics and these powers do not “prove” then the educational roots are wrong. And from a survey of economic conditions at present we should say these roots do not even approach the solution. On the one hand we have statistics on record which state that of one hundred men who are self-supporting at 25 years of age only four are independent at 55. Again, we have failed to seek the cause of what is known as casual labor—the great drifting army who are stevedores one day and members of a railroad construction gang the next. Some would impute the causes of this to birth, environment, and lack of character; others, to social evils—alcohol and the like. It is none of these. It is solely our failure to perceive that a high wage return does not make contentment and the only thing in which a man may find this is in his right vocation. There is not an interest—mother, father, wife, children, country or home that transcends this interest, notwithstanding the romantics’ howl to the contrary. If we wish to see dogged pertinacity let us watch a youth who has found his life’s work; he will never swerve to right or left until he has attained his goal. And is there a man in the world who has not one paramount interest? The psychologist of the future will point it out.

Labor troubles today, which we claim are being caused by insufficient wages, poor housing, supply and demand, and economic catch phrases without number, are caused sheerly by this one thing—discontentment. Discontentment—not with wages, not with housing, nor with the whole gamut of the verbal economic syllabus, but solely with the kind of labor itself. We have been attributing to labor, unions, and capital the causes for economic unrest as we sympathized with one or the other of these three sides of the industrial triangle. Capital imputes to labor too great wage demands; labor’s rebuttal is that wages are insufficient; the surrebuttal to which is that both are partly wrong. Labor under the condition of contentment as before pointed out would be willing to accept less wage return; capital, under the same condition, due to greater production, would be willing to pay more. We have maintained

through centuries the outworn doctrine of fitting the man to the job instead of fitting the job to the man. If labor's demands are high, so will they be higher. We have been trying to make return to the worker in money the return we should make in felicity. Money can only pay for his material needs; it can never pay for his mental ones. This is the indispensable condition toward settling labor disputes—find if your man is adapted for the work or not. No arbitration or conciliation boards can ever make peace in the industrial world until by psychology or other means we have classed individuals into a vocational status. If capital would spend as much money in psychological laboratories as it does in strikes and lockouts a few brief years would see the end of present troubles.

We are not claiming that psychology will be infallible in these tests. But if not infallible neither will it be profuse in its promises. Science cannot—or will not within its knowledge—lie. It will hold out real and not utopian value to its purchasers. And this is surely better than shooting at targets with guns, the inventors of which claim will shoot around corners. And when the hit or miss method of education has been done away with we shall see such things as Marxism disappear from sight like chaff before a hurricane.

If today laboring men "eat up" Socialism and Bolshevism and other *isms* of the verbal artists it is because their mental energies have been misdirected. If the psychologists had been put to work on them in youth as they shall be in the future the doctrines of Engel or Marx would be treated by them as super-imaginative mythology.

But in the past what have we been doing but digging with the wrong end of the shovel? Instead of attempting to find a level for our youths—or even allowing them to find their own—we have been preaching determination, persistence, "a rolling stone gathers no moss", and other copy book maxims to them until by repetition even we elders believe our own platitudes. We have told our youths, in brief, if they would only stick to a thing long enough they would surely find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But they find no gold nor will they. If youth finds its *metier* there is no necessity to advise "determination". If youth has a predilection for one particular vocation it will have more determination and "stick-to-it-iveness" than will ever be found in the lexicons of its admonishers; there will never be a time it will cease to gather moss, if we are sure that is what should be gathered.

We have been literally digging graves for our sons by "our"

and not "their" liking for a vocation—or using the guide posts of science. If our sons rise from these graves they become highly successful carpenters—which is much better than remaining buried as mediocre lawyers. Mother says: "I wish son to be a doctor". Father says: "I wish son to be a dentist". And poor son, who is the center of the opposingly-pulled wishbone, is never considered in this vitally important (to him and to society) matter. We have been training blacksmiths for carpenters, bricklayers for passementerie workers and vice versa. If you don't see how impractical it is try to imagine Francis Bacon planning Napoleon's battle of Austerlitz, or imagine that military genius writing the "Novum Organum". When we see a man persisting in what we believe impossible of accomplishment we call him several kinds of a profane fool but when we see him giving up the unequal battle of trying to accomplish something just as impossible, i. e., become efficient in a work to which he is not adapted we say he has no determination or he lacks character! In the future, psychologists will save parents this trouble—and the concomitant burial rites.

In the future we may look to psychology to bring peace and happiness to many spheres. The haphazard method in education and employment problems is now out of date in this age of progress. The laws of Mendel and Galton plus the laws of psychology are sufficient in number and scope at present to look toward the future with equanimity.

An interpretation of our past economic history is sufficient upon which to base general predictions as to the future. The predictions of Marx have, we know, over a period of sixty years, failed to materialize. Upon results of past statistics we know that monopolies instead of becoming more centralized are really becoming less. This is sufficient ground upon which to say that man is becoming more and more his own economic prop, i. e., independent as an economic factor. The future may disclose even greater decentralization. As real education grows and as psychology becomes more the *modus operandi* toward settling industrial disputes the more man will cleave to the class which divides him from others above and below him, viz.: the artisan will wish to remain the artisan, the herdsmen or agriculturist will wish to remain as such and it will be impossible to uproot the vocational need of any man.

The right method of education is the only thing to break down the monopoly upon wealth. Wealth will commence to be more evenly divided only when the vast intellectual differences between

man and man begins to disappear. Wealth will always, as long as we believe in the moral doctrine of right making right, remain the rightful possession of the individual earning it; assuredly it will never become society's until the latter earns its right by efficient labor—and by efficient labor we mean labor that works to the limit of its ability—insofar as it is psychologically possible to work to that limit—either manually, mentally, or mechanically. Consequently, there will never be an economic upheaval that is not first preceded by an educational upheaval.

Every year this country spends thousands upon thousands of dollars in Americanization propaganda. This money would be better spent on strictly American problems; the alien problem will then take care of itself.