

TENNESSEE'S AID TO EDUCATION

BY SMITH W. CARPENTER

WONDERFUL is education, and glorious is the concept of an educated nation, a citizenship of educated men and women, each intelligently following his own true and substantial self-interest. How exalted was the dream of our forefathers when they established a nation-wide free school system, and put higher education within the grasp of every ambitious youth! Yet that dream was as impossible as was Lenine's dream of a co-operative commonwealth, and for the same identical reason; they didn't understand this creature called man; they overestimated his attributes. When books were scarce, and with difficulty obtained; when educational institutions were few, and the obstacles in the way of their attendance many; then was the soul of youth fired with the will and determination to acquire education's priceless boon. My own grandfather had his book lashed to the plow handles, and the girl he married had her's affixt to the head of her wheel, where she could glimpse a line each time she walked up to wind her yarn. They got their "kick" out of overcoming obstacles, out of doing the thing forbidden to them by circumstances. The youth of today, with pre-digested knowledge most delicately spiced and flavored, and tendered in a spoon, loathes it; its acquirement affords no "kick"; so he goes in for athletics where there are obstacles to overcome; or he creates obstacles by running counter to the rules of the institution, the laws of the land, or social conventions. Often it has occurred to me what a splendid thing it would be if we had a tyrant who should outlaw education, put our colleges and universities underground, with laboratories hidden away in cellars and class rooms in attics; let both instructors and students attend at their peril.

Something akin to that desideratum is coming to pass in Tennessee. Science is outlawed there, and outlawed in a manner so techni-

cally perfect that the court decision that would save it will have to be subversive of popular sovereignty. The people of the commonwealth have spoken. They are not establishing a religion; they are ruling out of their schools a doctrine which they hold to be inimical to public interest, and antagonistic to the religion held by a majority of them. In the latter contention they are right insofar as the ancient Jewish creation myth constitutes Christianity. Science having been outlawed, worthy and well intentioned parents will cull out and destroy text-books, preachers and other good men will trample upon learning; we may look forward to public burnings of books, and to similar spectacles enacted by militant ignorance.

All of which will be a great good thing. Into the lives of those farmers and hill-billies will surge a great religious incentive. Most of them will, of course, line up on the side of pious ignorance, but a few will procure books, or secrete those they already have, and they will study them as they have never before studied, and some of them will think, will actually think and arrive at their own conclusions. The opposition of the law will put the "kick" back into learning. Perhaps it is too much to say that this desideratum is otherwise unattainable, but all the pedagogues under old glory have so far failed to do it.

How long truth is to remain an outlaw I would not attempt to guess. Whatever the time it is likely to be too short. I suggest the scheme of writing fundamentalism into the state's constitution, and to submit it to a vote of the people now, in the heyday of triumphant bigotry; and to couple with it the provision that this amendment shall not be altered save by the affirmative vote of a majority proportionate to that by which it was adopted. There would be something worth working for, and the amendment would likely carry by a three-quarters' vote. Still, at the worst, the law that has just passed will likely last until Tennessee gets to turning out thinking men and women at a rate unexampled in any southern state.

THE NEW CRUSADE

How little any of us know of the mind of man! For years the author has been cogitating upon the question of how there might arise a new crusade to revive the religious spirit of the nation, and how to give to educational subjects a sporting interest. His notions were vain and far fetched, and painfully inadequate. Perhaps they

were logical—fatal defect. Then, out of what some of us thought was its tomb, comes galloping that ancient Lochinvar, Bigotry, and instantly there is put under way both of those longed-for revolutions. No, it is true that no plan of the author to achieve those ends made a scapegoat of science, but, aside from national humiliation, what of it? In such a culture bed was science born. Scopes will not lose his eyes, his tongue, or be otherwise mutilated; yet he confronts the same spirit that piled the fagots around his great predecessors.

In fairness to the persecutors of that earlier day we ought to note the really admirable character of them today, for in all likelihood the same spirit and motives ruled then that do now. The majority element of Tennessee are an earnest, serious, law-abiding people; very pious, tolerably educated, fairly intelligent, fairly industrious, and decidedly respectable. The worst that can really be said of them is that the crust of convention is rather hard baked upon them. Among them are none that you or I would call thinkers, but that does not indicate mental deficiency, it indicates merely a static condition of mind, such as has possessed the great majorities of all times. If the masses in our northern cities were the equal of the masses of Tennessee, it would be exceedingly well for America. We can not accuse them of failing to produce intellectual leaders either, for the intellectual minority we exclude when we consider the dominant element of Tennessee. The intellectual have always been a minority, and, barring the possibility of further evolution, will always be a minority save in occasional small neighborhoods. That many are called and few are chosen is true of leadership everywhere and at every time. Despite the general equality of educational opportunity it is probable that of real thinkers we have little advanced in our century and a half of national experience. We are leading the great masses to the spring of knowledge; they won't drink; so we bathe them in it. They acquire urbanity, a superficial acquaintance with a lot of things, and, perhaps, a bit of real knowledge along the narrow line of their calling, but how to use their minds as thinking machines is the incalculable advantage of the very small minority. Nor is the polish acquired by the majority without its compensating cost. They lose something; they lose that unquestioning faith that is so necessary to firmly established institutions. Perhaps the Fundamentalists are right; perhaps it is the smattering of evolution that they pick up that works the mischief. They absorb just enough to shake the foundations of their

ancestral faith, but not enough to gain the vision of the scheme of the universe, the stupendous Religion of Science; that same vision that has been glimpsed or sensed by the prophets of all time, and so variously told in myth and in legend.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

If the anti-Evolutionists succeed in raising their banner in all the other backward states, they will have achieved for this nation two of the greatest boons that could possibly be asked: a mighty religious quickening, and a new incentive to learning. Religion is so incomprehensible a subject that it is difficult for the scientific mind to appreciate our need of it. When the American plan of government broke down in Williamson County, Illinois, few of us thought of it as a preacher's job to restore law and order. Then an evangelist opened up a series of meetings in Herrin, and hundreds of the most turbulent element were touched by that strange elixir. I have not heard his views on evolution, but I'd wager my right arm that he is against it. I know the sort of ambrosial learning of his class; I know how void it must have been of scientific truth; yet he was the man for the job, and he achieved something that all the evolutionists in the land could not have done. I confess to understanding so little of the nature of religion that I dislike to make any affirmation concerning it, but I believe that the debacle of law and order in Williamson County was preceded by a religious breakdown, and that the reason why all the rest of the country is not so badly off is due, partly at least, to the stronger position of religion. In other words it is religion that sustains law and order, and when religion grows weak, and law and order fails, it is religion that must repair the damage. Our need for religion is too basic to quibble about any price that we have to pay. What I call the Religion of Science could not cope with Herrin; it is for the few. The religion of the masses is very, very ancient, the product of almost infinite time. It is as old as civilization's roots; when it fails the social compact is easily broken, and men return to their sub-human heritage.

In ancient days learning was the exclusive privilege of an esoteric cult. Our modern ideal is to make learning the common property of all. We have been failing through the incapacity of the young people to absorb it, and now the world hands it back, turns away, and closes its eyes. Perhaps a majority of a good share of

the country will do that. That comes pretty near restoring the ancient conditions, only the exclusiveness is no longer that of learning but of ignorance. Ignorance is becoming esoteric.

How thankful we all should be that the ordering of our national life is not turned over to science. The world needs the anti-evolutionist as much as we need the second blade to a pair of shears. I can't explain our need for him by any logic that I can set down on paper. I don't understand why TRUTH howsoever established should be inimical to any human interest. Indeed, I am sure that it should not be. But that is because men *should* be as they *are* not. For men as they are the religion of truth is unfitted. The undeveloped human mind must have its atavistic pabulum. So it seems to me; yet I may be vastly over estimating the intellectual class. The human mind at its very best is illogical and unreasonable; its springs of action are beyond our comprehension. Man is the greatest mystery of all time. How he became civilized few of us know. How he is to retain his civilization it is doubtful if anyone knows. How he is to complete his civilization it is perfectly clear that nobody knows. Civilization is not the product of human intelligence; yet without intelligence there would be nothing to civilize. Clearly civilization was hatched out of the ovum of brute heritage fertilized by religion. Religion is bigger and more essential than science. If religion says that the street is not broad enough for it and science to walk abreast, let science drop behind or take to the alley.

THE COMPREHENDING MIND

A number of crusaders under Richard I. were captured and chained in a passage-way. By the side of each was a tiny chink through which a bit of landscape could be seen. One, looking out, exclaimed that there lay the road to Antioch. His neighbor on the right declared that it was not a road but a threshing floor. He upon the left said that it was no distant object at all, but a beam projecting from the castle wall. Another called it a lane, another a bit of plowed ground, and so it went, each disputing the others and upholding his own opinion. The lord of the castle heard them, and ordered that they be brought up to him upon the battlements. Before them lay the broad road, the lane, the plowed ground, the threshing floor, and out from the wall projected the gallows. Then said the Sarcean:

"Behold! Learn now how broad is the Truth. Each of you declared truly his own narrow view. So is it ever with man: like a mole he peeps out of his earth-bound crany; those few blades of grass he esteems to be all of God's creation. Only he who dwells with Alla upon the housetop hath the comprehending mind."

So in truth are we all chained. The intellectual outlook of some of us is wider than that of others, but none of our housetops are high enough to take in all knowledge. The chinks by which the orthodox brotherhood are chained differ from those of the crusaders in that they are in focus; they each take in the same corner of the landscape. Fortunately there lies within it a phase of spiritual truth which affords them a wonderful and beautiful solace. In the whole horizon is no greater mystery. From it is derived inspiration to right living and a solid, substantial basis of good citizenship. That they with the narrower view can not comprehend the descriptions given by them of the wider view is to be expected; so to the other side do we turn for the comprehending mind.

As nature always begins a new life back where all life began, and over a foreshortened route conducts it up to the status of the parent organism: so should we, whenever practicable, start our argument from the inception of life, or of civilization, and with more or less detail review the familiar early stages of evolution. Consider, then, the brute heritage of man, and the devilishness of it with intelligence added. Then consider its development under the influence of religion. That very religion which shed that weak but benign influence down the long corridors of time was this very Christian religion that is professed today—an early stage of it, differing from it as the embryo differs from the adult, or as early ancestral types differ from the living. The Christ was one of a long line of reformers. His religion was not new. From the dawn of intellect that religion has been the one never-failing fount of vitalizing principle whence has come directly or indirectly every good thing we know. Save for it there never would have been a start; higher evolution would never have begun.

Let us admit that religion is a most strange and awkward tool with which to achieve civilization. It seems as though almost any man might have designed a better one. Unfortunately, however, the job was not man's job; it was achieved by our blind, insensate old mother, Nature, and it was begun before there occurred in the mind of man that polarization when, out of Nature, there was born a good god and an evil devil. If you and I are scientific we consider

things as they are, not as we would have made them, nor as we think was the logical way for Nature to have made them. This strange religion we may analyze, discover its source and origin, and trace its evolution, but we can no more deny its attributes and functions than we can by chemical analysis controvert the properties of matter. The sea is not abolished by showing that water is oxygen and hydrogen, nor is psychological analysis more potent.

GODLIKE COURTESY

Nature's plan is always to fight it out. Frankly, I am not in favor of that plan. There always seems to be another alternative, a milder, gentler, more god-like way. The only trouble is that nobody will walk therein! To my mind this whole anti-evolution uproar could have been averted by a little considerateness on the part of science. Perhaps I can illustrate better than I can explain: I attended a Methodist college where evolution was taught even in Darwin's own day. Over and over have I heard the institutions position defined in substantially these words:

"We do not teach evolution as established truth, but as a working hypothesis. It rests upon precisely the same sort of evidence as the molecular and atomic constitution of matter. Nobody ever saw a molecule, and there may be no such thing. We have even less confidence in atoms. The whole doctrine may be exploded any day, but meanwhile it affords a basis for results; the whole science of chemistry is founded upon it. Similarly is the doctrine of evolution reducing the natural sciences to a basis of provable accuracy. Use it then to stand on while you work. Entertain all the mental reservations you see fit in favor of the Mosaic account of creation, but try, as best you can to harmonize the two. You will find that inferences drawn from evolution work out; prophesies based upon it come true."

Fundamentalists, as we now would call them were in control of the institution, but that credo of the department of natural sciences was impregnable. I fancy, too, that the quality of instruction, thus imparted humbly, under a hypothesis, was quite as competent as though it were imparted arrogantly, as a theory. Furthermore, I believe that the humbler attitude of mind was the more scientific and the more truthful. There was no compromise in principle in thus making allowance for the mental states of them who were not

yet brought into harmony with the new doctrine. Actually the distinction was but one of courtesy. If science would but lift its hat to religion, how much trouble we would be spared.

When the Tennessee case arose it was unfortunate that Mr. Darrow was called into it, for thereby has all that is hateful to Christianity been identified with the cause of evolution. It will not be easy for the average mind to distinguish Mr. Darrow's agnosticism from the atheism of Moscow.

Then it seems to me that the case was conducted wrong: Mr. Darrow was not fighting for a decision by the court or by the jury. That was conceded before the jury was drawn. The only purpose of it all was to make out a case before the American people. Mr. Darrow should have realized that ignorant and unfortunate as the Tennessee law may have been, it was enacted with no intention to abridge learning; that it was inspired by an intense religious feeling which science, while regretting, should respect. True, it was a difficult position, but he who could not take the housetop view had no business to stand in Mr. Darrow's shoes.

Let me again illustrate: Not long ago I stopped at a country hotel at the same time with a geologist from the state university. We dined together and our talk drifted into evolution. A gentleman present inquired if he would be willing to repeat his remarks to the preacher. Accordingly, that evening a young Lutheran divine was brought in and introduced. He was a most attentive listener, his head nodded, and he yes, yessed almost every statement that the geologist made; so that the speaker was manifestly urged to his best endeavor. He produced an exhibit of some fossils from a local quarry, and a simpler ancestral form which had come from a distance, where the deep underlying strata outcropped. He drew a section of the formations and delivered an altogether capable and convincing lecture. When he was through the minister picked up one of his exhibits and said:

"Admitting all your facts, they prove to my mind something quite different. I find in these shells only evidence of Noah's flood."

The geologist stifled natural reaction, and replied in all seriousness that while Noah's flood might account for surface shells, it could hardly have lasted long enough to account for those deeply buried in the earth.

"But," he replied, "you forget that our God is an Almighty God. It is as easy for Him to put a shell down a thousand feet as to put it on the surface."

"And you forget," answered the geologist, "that our God does nothing in vain. He is not a deceiver of men. He never arranged the evidences of ancient life so as to suggest and confirm a false doctrine."

"Oh, no, no, He didn't! God didn't do that! That was the Devil who set a trap for man wise in their own conceit. The Devil has ample power for that sort of thing, and angels a plenty to do his bidding."

The geologist concluded, "I find that you are a student of Job. In that early day Jehovah and Satan were pals. They liked to put it over on one another. The God of Science is infinitely more mighty. His work is bedeviled by no mischievous imps. Our Bible is the Universe of Nature, the land, the sea, the starry skies, and all that in them is. The mind and heart of man is a chapter of that book. It was written, every word of it, by the very finger of God, not through an intermediary, an inspired clerk. The scientist is the priest of God's temple; his job it is to read that book, and to translate it for the common understanding of men."

The gallery, there were a dozen of them, had manifestly come to cheer the home team. but they shook the geologist's hand in parting. Then, after a conference in the hall, a committee returned to invite him to address the men's club of their church.

Such I deem to be the attitude of mind of him who dwells with Alla upon the housetop.

THE FAITH OF THE FATHERS

Of all the exhibits in the museums of the world there is none so dear to me as the Faith of the Fathers. The furnishings of their minds are so vastly more important than those of their homes. At a time more or less remote every myth and fable contained in the Bible, and every creed founded upon them was literally believed. Each and every of those crude, harsh, unjust, impossible, and childish things was a part of the living and sustaining faith of good earnest men, your fathers and mine. They constituted the foundations and pillars of their religious edifice. They simply can't be pulled out without wrecking the whole superstructure. Consequently, they are left alone; they are seldom referred to, largely ignored. Even Mr. Bryan has his mental reservations. Drive a man of his stamp into a corner—"Do you believe this or that? Answer yes or no."—

one compels an affirmative answer. Anything short of it would be fatal. It would bring the temple of his faith tumbling about him.

Science might be for the multitude just as history, physics, higher mathematics, or any other abstruse subject is for them. You and I as well as the people of Tennessee take a large share of our learning upon authority, without pretending to master the principles ourselves. As an authority, however, the preacher outranks the teacher in the estimation of very many people. The preachers and them who stand shoulder to shoulder with them are generally a bit above the average both in education and in intelligence. Hence it does not tend to turn away their following, but to arouse prejudice and determination when a man of Mr. Bryan's stamp is called an "ignoramus," and the common faith of orthodoxy a "fool religion." I believe that I am as modernistic as any man need be, but I resent that slur upon the Faith of my Fathers.

Leave the old creeds alone. Don't change a letter in one of them. To improve them would be easy, but they would still remain creeds. Relief should be found in the loosening of the bonds of church discipline. The mind and soul of the communicant should be set free. Let him entertain such reservations as he will, but of the old forms change not a word till the end of time. No, not one. Beyond measure are they hallowed by ancient custom, traditions, and memories. Let every venerable land mark stand.

Consider the parallel sanctity which surrounds the customs and ceremonies attendant upon British royalty. Some of them are screamingly funny, ridiculous, grotesque—if you want to take that view. But how dear they are to the Briton's heart! Those forms and ceremonies were established by the Conqueror, and copied by him from customs we know not how ancient. They are so commended by hoary antiquity that they are sacred, they have actually become religious. It is thus that our churches should cherish the ancient, for its sanctity, for the aura of holiness that attends it. They should be content with the appeal to sentiment, feeling, and conscience. The truth that they should proclaim is moral truth. The church's field is no more scientific than it is mathematical or grammatical. To distinguish scientific truths is no part of its function. Let the agnostic howl, it need outrage them no more than does our outcry affront the British when our ambassador dons knee pants. A lot more of us would seek the heart balm of the altar; a lot more of us would fill the pews, and contribute to the support of the church if we could, without stultification or abdication of sound senses,

attend the old church around which cling so many memories, so much of family tradition.

With all my heart I believe in the practical efficacy of the gentler, politer methods of him who dwells with Alla upon the housetop. I believe that it is God's plan, but pshaw! what's the use of advocating it? God doesn't control men. It's Nature that rules. Old non-differentiated Nature, she who is neither good nor evil, she who embraces the utter totality of all that is. It's a fight, a finish fight with no quarter and no mercy. And so what has happened has been right, and all that shall hereafter happen will be right. Some day in the far distant future, after long and bitter strife, we will do the thing that we might just as well do now in a spirit of good fellowship and love.