

# THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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### EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

#### THE SCHOOLS' GREATEST NEED—AN INTELLIGENTLY SYMPATHETIC PUBLIC

It seems probable that before a sufficient supply of properly qualified and adequately salaried teachers can be secured to reopen the thousands of schools now closed for the want of even "below standard" teachers, a public intelligently sympathetic towards the schools must be created. To be genuinely sympathetic one must understand; but an understanding of a great complex institution, such as the modern public school system, demands more than the patronizing attitude resulting from a few childhood recollections. The menace that confronts this nation in the present school crisis resulting in part from the rapid dwindling of the forces of qualified and experienced teachers, demands an intelligent study on the part of those who have the best interests of the nation at heart. The salary question, no doubt, has something to do with the withdrawal of many thousands of teachers from the profession; but the realization on the part of teachers that the salaries would be properly adjusted, if the attitude were what it should be on the part of the public, possibly has even more to do with the critical situation in which the school are finding themselves. Many teacher have come to the

conclusion that it is not worth while trying to carry on the really Big Business of the nation and suffer the penalty of small public esteem for their efforts, as shown in salaries, as well as in other ways. Hence, it seems that the schools' greatest need at present is an intelligently sympathetic public—one that is capable of appreciating good schools as the nation's greatest asset, and one that is therefore willing to put such valuation on those in whose hands they rest as is eternally fit and right.

#### AN UNDISCUSSED CAUSE OF SHORTAGE IN TEACHERS

When will the men in charge of our schools and school systems discover that low pay and working strain are not the only reasons why so many young men and women who would have made efficient teachers are now entering other fields? For young women especially, one of the chief deterrents is a genuine fear of growing into the so-called "schoolmarm" type.

Almost every teaching staff contains one or more sufferers, not from occupational disease, for the profession has none, but from what is no less distressing—an occupational loss of charm and social balance. Everybody knows the type—the man or woman who is mere school teacher twenty-four hours in the day, Sundays and holidays included; over-conscientious over precise, caring more for pronunciations than for thought, less for results than for rule, prim and stiff, fussy and dogmatic. Although this uncomfortable type is, of course, the exception, it is so pronounced that not a few observers take it for the usual outcome of continued teaching. With the boys and girls themselves, the peculiarities of such a narrowed man or woman too often pass for the very badges and credentials of the teacher's calling.

Not far from Boston are schools in which the teachers' meetings could well be adjourned every other time for an hour of required dancing or free romping in games on the gymnasium floor. All about us are hundreds of teachers and thousands of pupils who miss half the good of their schooling because they do not see that the relation of teacher and pupil ought normally to be as frank and kindly and spontaneous as the relation of a



coach and his crew or of an Anzac captain and his men. Our most admirable schools are just those in which these human relations best hold their own against mechanical systems.

Superintendents and principals owe it not only to their present staffs, but to the future, to safeguard their teachers one by one against professional desiccation.—*Boston Herald*.

#### EDUCATION FREE TO EX-SERVICE MEN

From contributions not used during the war, the Y. M. C. A. has set aside a fund for the education of demobilized soldiers. The scholarship fund makes it possible for ex-service men in Virginia to attend the State Normal Schools' second term of the summer session without any expense. There are but two conditions: honorable discharge from the U. S. army or navy, and academic preparation sufficient to enter upon the course he elects.

Any one interested may communicate with either Dr. W. J. Gifford, Dean, State Normal School, Harrisonburg, Virginia, or with Virginia Educational Service Committee, 902 Chamber of Commerce Building, Richmond, Virginia.

#### A MODEST PROPOSAL

"A Modest Proposal for the Present Educational Crisis," signed by "A Renegade Teacher," and published in *School and Society*, is the source of the following excerpt:

"The following June, I resigned from the teaching staff and went into business. At the end of two years I was making over \$4,000 in commissions. Recently I refused a salary of \$6,000. My friends think I have made a great success. In the quiet of my own soul I know I have made a colossal failure. I was born a teacher. I loved boys and girls. I loved teaching. I gave up teaching because I could not get food, clothing, and shelter for a family of five for \$1,800 a year."

#### SCIENCE TO SOLVE AMERICA'S PROBLEMS

That solution of many great economic and social problems facing the United States depends upon advances brought about by scientists was the declaration made by Dr. Vernon Kellogg, secretary of the National Research Council, published in the *Baltimore Sun* of recent date.

The problems include those of food and fuel supply and use; national health, and industrial expansion and independence, Dr. Kellogg asserted.

"Germany's formidable effort in the war, so largely based on science, was only overcome after America and the Allies had similarly developed and applied science to their effort. The outcome of the economic and industrial war-after-the-war, already being silently but vigorously waged, will similarly depend largely on our scientific activity," he said.

A step toward bettering food economic conditions was described by Dr. Kellogg in the undertaking of the council division of biology and agriculture in its research on food and nutrition. Chemists and nutrition experts will cover animal and human nutrition in their investigation. On the human side special attention will be paid to nutrition of children; on the animal side it is planned to formulate a national policy of animal food production to be based on a survey of present practices of feeding stock for meat.

An up-to-date social problem, that of aiding personal efficiency, is under consideration by the council division of psychology and anthropology, which is continuing the studies and methods of group tests of intelligence, developed in the army during the war. A special committee, supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, has just completed the formation of similar group tests for children in elementary schools.

Investigations with a direct bearing upon betterment of industrial conditions include those being carried on by the council division of engineering. The council is co-operating with governmental agencies in an effort to produce more economic and durable road building materials. A single research concerning the "fatigue phenomena of metals" is supported by \$15,000 annual appropriation for two years.

The division of chemistry and physics is compiling for publication a list of "physical and chemical constants" necessary for scientists. When the war started it was discovered that the only tables of this nature in existence were in the German language and almost impossible to obtain. The national Research Fellowship Board has \$100,000 annually for the next five years to support special research fellowships in chemistry and physics.



Other means of developing investigations are being promoted jointly with the General Education Board to improve research conditions in colleges.

The council's research information service is compiling a reference list of the research personnel of the country, including information concerning more than 300 American industrial research laboratories.

#### LAUDS LIFE OF THE TEACHER

Over the signature of Dr. William L. Ettinger, Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education of the City of New York calls attention to the advantages of teaching as a profession, among them being: "Self-respect through elevation of occupation, public appreciation, freedom from worry, and opportunity for personal growth." The fact is cited that teaching is a career and, further, that it serves as a broad general training for other work for those who do not wish to make it a life work.

"Educational opportunity is a fundamental principle in American life," says Dr. Ettinger. "Teaching, an occupation vital to the country's welfare, is therefore elevating as a career." "Personal worth," says the Superintendent, "counts for more in teaching than in many other professions."

It is pointed out that freedom from worry is secured because teaching is not usually a seasonal occupation. Employment is at least annual, and becoming more and more protected by civil service regulations assuring tenure of office.

"Freedom from worry is an important asset in life, and especially so when it extends throughout one's career and when it will continue after retirement through pension provision," says Dr. Ettinger.

"No other work gives greater opportunity for personal growth. The teacher engaged in actual teaching not more than two hundred days in the year, has week-ends and vacations affording her leisure to cultivate personal tastes, or talents, to enjoy music and pictures, to be outdoors, to travel, to form enriching friendships."

It is pointed out that there is nothing of the temporary makeshift about teaching. Those who find it congenial may make it a

life work. "They may specialize and advance to increasingly responsible positions, gaining in salary and enjoying the greater challenge to their powers and abilities," the statement reads.

However, for those who do not wish to remain teachers, the advantage of teaching as a broad general training for other work is emphasized: "Once a teacher need not mean always a teacher. But 'once a teacher' has meant to former teachers, who responded to a call to perform some other kind of service, a foundation in outlook, executive ability, poise, and knowledge of human nature that has enabled them to outstrip their fellows in the new field."

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#### BRIEF REVIEWS OF IMPORTANT RECENT BOOKS

*SOCIALIZING THE THREE R'S*, by Ruth Mary Weeks. New York: Macmillan. 1919. 182 pages. (\$1.12.)

This little book is bound to fill a unique place among the recent books on education. Despite the title, the contents include a careful analysis of present-day tendencies in this country, social, political, and industrial, which clearly mirrors the hope of our idealists of the latter part of the Great War period and which is profound and thought-provoking.

The author then proceeds to a careful but brief discussion of reading and writing, arithmetic, history, art, manual training, general science, and social play (music, drama, etc.), from the point of view of the necessity of their complete re-organization to meet the changed social demands of the present day. Her point of view may best be given by a quotation: "To teach the child the history of human civilization throughout its various stages, to lead him to understand the forces at work in the world today, and to fit him for his share in the common life—this is the function of education." The whole field of elementary education is therefore sketched in broad outlines with no effort to treat of detailed re-organization of curriculum or method. Appendices are added with valuable suggestions as to the teaching of social arithmetic and with lists of suitable books for reading to supplement the work of the elementary grades.

W. J. G.