EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

ADULT EDUCATION

Students of child psychology have ever been impressed with the plasticity of children's minds. They are so easily and quickly molded, and they retain with such firmness the stamp of others' influence. Adults, on the other hand, have been thought of as fixed in the lines of their childhood and youth. William James said: "Outside their own business, the ideas gained by men before they are 25 are practically the only ideas they shall have in their lives. They cannot get anything new."

Recent studies of the capacity of grown people to acquire knowledge and fresh skill indicate the scrapping of an old notion. A booklet issued by the American Library Association is filled with such a variety of proofs that adults can learn, and moreover that they are eager to do so, that enthusiasm about the possibilities brims over. One of the most interesting reports is that of Professor E. L. Thorndike of Teachers College, Columbia University. During the past two years he has conducted experiments with two groups, one averaging in age 42, the other 22. Both were compared with a group of children. The adults were taught to write with the wrong hand, to operate the typewriter, and there were classes in algebra, science, foreign languages, etc. For all three groups there were classes in reading, spelling, arithmetic and other elementary school subjects. In general, both adult groups learned more rapidly than the children. The older group of adults learned almost as rapidly as the younger—roughly, about five-sixths as fast. The conclusion is that ability to learn increases until about 20, when it remains stationary for a time, and then declines very gradually. No one under 50 should be deterred from trying to learn something new by the fear of being too old, and even after 50 the decline is so slow that the attempt to learn is still well worth while.

Not lack of ability, but lack of opportunity or desire to learn, now appears to be the reasonable explanation why adults so seldom learn a new language or a new trade. Both opportunity and desire have greatly increased everywhere in this country in recent years. Which one causes the other, if they are cause and effect, cannot be decided, so closely have they moved together along a rising plane. Correspondence schools are a part of the general development. Perhaps they have somewhat stimulated the yearning for higher education; certainly they have taken advantage of it. The Public Library of Newark reports that about ten thousand young people in that city, mostly men between 20 and 32 years of age, pay yearly more than $200,000 to correspondence schools. These young men have had little formal education and are mostly working at trades not requiring great skill. They are keenly aware of the handicap of ignorance, and enthusiasm and the simplicity of the first lessons carry them on until the fourth or fifth, which are apparently made very difficult for the purpose of discouraging the purchaser of the course. He has paid in advance for ten or twenty lessons, but seldom takes more than three. Newark
investigators say that "less than 10 per cent. complete the courses for which they pay."

The Newark Library is bent on giving these would-be learners help. It cannot take the place of an honest correspondence school, with its special text-books, lessons in series and checking up of students' papers. But it is making out lists of books suitable for students of technical subjects, and the advisers are prepared to give personal advice to student-workers who want to "learn to do better work and to get better pay." Last year a million books, not novels, were loaned to Newarkers.

Personal contact between borrowers and the library staff in any town points to an interesting phase of library work. The librarian of the Bangor Public Library observed that a remarkable increase in the reading of poetry among adult borrowers had taken place. It was explained by the fact that the two assistants in charge during the busiest hours of the day had an unusual knowledge and interest in that department of literature. They had fired their clients with a like ardor. Exchange of personal letters in thinly settled rural districts gives the isolated student a similar incentive. The librarian of Missoula, Mont., had been sending books by parcel post to a homesteader's family in the mountains ninety miles away. It is worth while to quote from a letter written by the homesteader's wife, for it reflects the happiness of thousands of others who are finding delight in reaching out for knowledge. She first acknowledged receipt of Taine's "History of English Literature" and Arnold's "Essays in Criticism," which were supplementary reading in a correspondence school course she was taking. In formation of other study follows:

My husband wishes to thank you for the many informative books he has had on forestry, geology, soils and the birds and animals of this particular region. We have extended our horizon and look forward to many happy hours to come, where formerly we dreaded the winters. Surely no better place could be found for quiet study of deep subjects.

It is a long letter, with accounts of neighbors who have come ten or fifteen miles to "study the book on precious stones and minerals," or "to study the Alpine flower book," preparatory to identifying the flora of the near-by glacier. The entire letter, like the entire subject of adult education, may be drawn to a point in one sentence of hers—"It is to renew one's youth."—New York Times.

SWIMMING AND THE RED CROSS

The great universities accommodating thousands of young men made splendid progress the past year in teaching proficiency in water-rescue and swimming. The colleges concede the pre-eminence of the Red Cross in fostering and developing water safety, swimming and first aid courses. The athletic programs of the universities were well adapted to specializing in this field. Yale turned out from 100 to 150 men trained in swimming and water-safety. Dartmouth was not far behind, while at West Point and Annapolis the poor swimmer was the glaring exception.

Swimming is frequently chosen as the winter sport in many colleges. From the indoor tanks the swimmers emerge to engage in summer activities, such as participation in Red Cross Life Saving Institutes held annually. The girls' colleges are just as keen as their brothers in acquiring water proficiency. Smith, Wheaton, Bryn Mawr and Western College hung up notable records the past year. The technical colleges avail themselves of other Red Cross instruction courses with gratifying results. The pulling power of these courses lies in their being essentially practical. They mean something to the possessor, not only in college but afterwards.

The Annual Membership Roll Call of the American National Red Cross will be held as usual from Armistice Day through Thanksgiving — November 11-24 — thereby
affording the college students of the Nation an opportunity to endorse their Red Cross, and by participation through membership, insure the maintenance of each of its services.

FAREWELL TO THE FLIVVER

The world pushes on, relentlessly discarding, in its dotage, instruments that once worked incalculably for its progress. In America the pace is swift. Men not yet old have but dim memories of things that helped them vanquish the frontier, and today lie discarded. These memories take an ever deepening tinge of romance as they fade. There was the pony express. How we look upon it now! Ah, they were men, those riders, and they lived in a golden age of romance. All the sordid side of the pony express—and there must have been one—has been forgotten.

America has just discarded as outworn another great aid in the everlasting thrust against frontiers—frontiers not alone of our own country but of the world. It is the Ford flivver, unlovely and almost ridiculous now, because it is so familiar. The days of the old Ford are ended. Production stopped some months ago, and, it is said, repair parts will be made only five more years. Soon after those five years, the Ford will join the covered wagon and the pony express and become a memory.

That memory will take on romance. To the pioneers, a covered wagon was just a wagon; a lumbering, rough-riding conveyance that was forever bogging down in sand, casting a tire or breaking an axle. Romantic? Hah! Just an eternal nuisance. But it helped build a nation. Epic books have made it their theme, now that its commonplace side has been forgotten, and it has been made the subject of at least one great motion picture.

The pony express and the covered wagon began where the railroads left off, serving because nothing else would go where they went and do it so quickly. In 1903 Henry Ford put his car on the market. It, too, went where nothing else would go so quickly. It pushed down great barriers. It brought utility and pleasure to millions. In nineteen years Henry Ford built fifteen million cars, as alike in their essential mechanism as peas in a pod. He built one of the greatest enterprises in the world. He fashioned a fortune so great it cannot be comprehended.

Little has come from Ford himself in these days of transition, when the old car, outclassed now, is being abandoned for the new. But from a word here and there, it is apparent that Henry Ford is not laying aside the old Model T without a pang of regret. It was completely his, from first to last. Perhaps he, better than anyone else, knows that with its passing goes irrevocably a part of America.

It is too soon to write the obituary of Model T. But it is getting on, and it will do no harm to have a few notes set in type. The model T, more, perhaps, than any other piece of machinery, had a personality. It was a friendly, familiar thing, and its surname—Ford—was rarely used. A Cadillac is a Cadillac, a Chevrolet a Chevrolet, a Buick a Buick, and a Dodge a Dodge. But the Model T was a Henry, a Lizzie, a flivver. For convenience in pronunciation, a Cadillac may become a Cad and a Chevrolet a Chewy, but the Model T alone had genuine nicknames.

This was partly because it insisted on being something different. The others had different pedals, transmissions, levers; they changed often in appearance, sometimes so much that the children could not be recognized as belonging to their parents. But the Model T remained its individual self, although toward the last it took on a measure of dignity. Its clothes became more stylish. The old rugged corners and the brass were discarded—but with them went some of the friendly familiarity that made everybody call the Model T by a nickname, and their
passing marked the beginning of the end.

The deeds of the flivver drip with romance, and they are recorded wherever the white man has traveled. The flivver has clambered the mountain ranges of the world. On the thirsty Sahara and in the jungles of South Africa it has carried the white man and his civilization. Many a veteran of the A. E. F. remembers a thrilling story of some brave, battered little flivver which took him careening over battlefields on a mission of importance, its very motive power dependent upon a safety pin or piece of baling wire conscripted in an emergency. Some day these deeds will be told as they should.

It is safe to say that, no matter what automobile Henry Ford makes, it will never take the place of the old flivver. It may be the best car ever built for the money, and it undoubtedly will be a more luxurious car, in keeping with the new age of luxury. But it will not be a pioneer.—The New Republic.

COLLEGE SALARIES ON PRE-WAR BASIS

The Representative Assembly of the National Education Association has directed that a careful study of college professor's salaries be made during the coming school year. In many colleges instructors and professors are being paid on a pre-war basis. This startling fact is pointed out in a letter I have just received from the president of a leading college in West Virginia. He says: "The young people whom we graduate each June go out into high schools to teach at salaries averaging considerably above that paid to those who have taught them. We know this should not be. It handicaps those who would make a larger preparation, because they cannot afford it. Some of them would borrow and go ahead to school were it not for the fact that they can see no way to repay the borrowed money. Practically every other profession, outside of the ministry, holds within itself the possibility of making not only a comfortable living but the accumulation of a degree of wealth. The college professorship holds no such possibility."

Situation Alarming

I have many letters from college presidents expressing alarm over the salary situation. They see the large freshman classes passing into the hands of untrained instructors who receive less pay than that of leading public school teachers. It is no wonder that a university president reports that 58 per cent of the freshman class drops out before the end of the junior year.

The public has a right to demand a high type of instruction for these big freshman and sophomore classes. It should investigate the reasons why the promising high school graduates sent to the college or university drop out before completing their first year.

College professors as a rule are interested especially in their subjects and in their technical organization. They are not very active in the profession, although some of the best workers in the Association belong to this class. Their work in the absence of fraternal relationships moulds them into technicians and individuals. They do not look after their own welfare problems. The college president is helpless unless backed up by the profession and the public.

The state and national associations are to investigate conditions and to place the actual facts before the college authorities and before the public. I predict immediate results. It is not a college problem half so much as a community problem. In the face of facts, what community will permit these conditions to continue from year to year? The community that believes in having professionally trained teachers in the public schools would be unwilling to put up with inefficient teaching in the college.

The public will stand for such incomes for instructors and professors as will attract good teachers to the college and such
as will provide the dignity and comfort which the college instructor deserves along with the other members of the profession. It will not be satisfied with less than that.

J. W. Crabtree

A USE FOR LEISURE

The sentimental, and what may without offense be called the evangelistic, view of education looks upon indefinite continuance under school and college instruction as desirable for every youth. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this. School and college are but one set of educational agencies, and after the general foundations have been laid up to the age of adolescence the school and college become a specialized agency adapted to particular talents, ambitions and types of mind. It is almost as important to keep certain young men and young women from going to college as to induce others to do so. Work, systematic, intelligent, productive work, is an educational agency of unequalled effectiveness. If this work be begun, as in so many cases it should be, at the age of adolescence, it must not be permitted to become mere dull, unreflective routine. If so, the individual will soon be merely a part of the machine which his brain or his hand operates. He is to be kept alive, awake, and intelligent not only by gaining a new understanding of the principles, the methods, and the purposes of the task which occupies him, but by being kept in touch with ideas, with standards of thought, feeling and appreciation, and with books, both new and old. Every such individual should be induced to give a part of his week to the furtherance of his systematic education through instruction and through books and reading, through visiting museums and great collections of science or of art, and through coming to know what these collections signify and reveal. If leisure be the term applied to the hours not given to work, then the problem is the teaching of the best possible use of leisure. When this is effectively done, the argument for a shorter working week will be unanswerable, since the effect of these influences upon the life and effort of the individual will be greatly to increase both his capacity for production and his desire to produce. University Extension and adult education generally are therefore movements which reach to the very foundations of the social and economic order and make for their steady and far-reaching improvement.—President Nicholas Murray Butler, of Columbia University.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS IN THE PERIODICAL WORLD

It is said that the first magazine that really deserved the name was the Athenian Gazette which appeared in London in 1691. It was much like the present Notes and Queries that is still published there. Gentleman's Magazine starting in 1731 is the real beginning of the monthly magazine such as we know it in recent years.

In this country, Boston and Philadelphia were early centers of magazine publishing. The North American Review started in Boston in 1815 destined to be as famous as its British prototypes, the Quarterly Review and the Edinburgh Review, which started some ten years earlier. The Massachusetts Magazine of 1789 and Carey's American Museum published in Philadelphia in 1787 are interesting early examples of American magazines. In 1820 Godey's Lady's Book started and was famous for many years for its fashions, and the prints are still eagerly sought by collectors who use them for tray and lamp shade purposes. Harpers Magazine was born in 1850; Atlantic Monthly in 1857; Scribner's Magazine in 1873, and soon after the deluge of modern magazines started, about seven thousand being now listed in the latest volume of Ayer's Newspaper Annual.

According to Ayer's Newspaper Annual, last edition, the births in the periodical field
including newspapers were last year 952, while the mortality during the same year was 942, an interesting sidelight on the great number of changes in a year where the total publications varied only ten titles. —Abstract of address by Frederick W. Faxon before American Library Association.

REMARKABLE PHOTOGRAPHIC LENS AT YERKES

Development of a new photographic lens which will depict as many as 100,000 stars on a plate has been completed by Professor Frank E. Ross, of the Yerkes Observatory of the University of Chicago. With the new lens Professor Ross has secured what is considered the best photograph of the greater part of the constellation of Orion, which formed the frontispiece of a recent number of the Astrophysical Journal published by the University of Chicago Press.

The new lens covers twenty-four degrees of the sky and the images resulting are unusually sharp, bringing out many details of luminous and non-luminous nebulous matter more clearly than they have been revealed on any previous photographs with which the Yerkes observers are familiar. The picture of the Orion nebula was taken by Dr. Ross in January of this year, with an exposure of five hours.

BOOKS

A TIME-SAVING TEXTBOOK


The teacher of freshman composition is confronted with two problems—both somewhat baffling to him: effective presentation of his materials and, from the avalanche of text books that descend upon him, choice of the best one for his purpose. What he desires in his book will depend somewhat upon the time allotted to cover the subject and upon the varying needs of his students. In any case the alert teacher will keep his eye on his students. He will want to win their attention and good will; for, failing in this, he knows full well they will be unlikely to apply in everyday writing and speech what he has taught them in the classroom. To satisfy him in this, the book must be practical in matter and manner, and it must possess literary charm. Moreover, the busy instructor will most certainly prefer that book that enables him to economize his time and conserve his energy. With this feature in mind, he will insist that the material be brief but comprehensive, and be logically arranged; that essentials stand out in bold relief; and that a system of reference be ready to hand, be simple, but at once adequate and engaging. Shewmake and Carmer’s College English Composition, “A Handbook of Writing and Speech,” meets these tests so well as to commend itself strongly for use in freshman classes.

Charles H. Huffman


This reader is designed to be used with beginners. The subject matter deals with experiences common to all children. The material is so arranged that they may have practice in both oral and silent reading with frequent review lessons. The vocabulary is sufficiently small for the children to gain mastery over it; it is simple enough for them to gain independence; and the illustrations are vivid enough to make them want to read.

M. L. S.


This new book is designed to supplement the first Lewis and Hosic book in high school English. It therefore presents material especially suitable for students in the