

from an ecclesiastical cashier for all deposits on the credit side, is quite as material as though the account was in the physical coin of the realm rather than in spiritual values. She must lose *herself* in order to find her true life.

It will also help her to remember that civilization which depends on educational or religious institutions demanding blind obedience and using form and pomp to impress the ignorance of their constituents can not last. Such things do not suggest the simple greatness of the person of Christ. To imitate humbly that frank and abiding simplicity is the greatest privilege which Michigan can crave.

We must cherish that phase of education which is a living *Force* and must always realize that our material progress is a means to an end, cold and empty as a tomb unless the unselfish and coöperative energies of our combined efforts and ideals are used to people it and to give it life.

Michigan must be and can be so close to humanity that it is housed, not in great buildings or in ceremony, but in the hearts of its men and women, whenever and wherever they meet. An institution which is to endure must be built not upon rules, edicts, and punishments, but upon the intangible and eternal qualities of spiritual strength.

Again and again in the future we shall be faced with disappointments and with apparent failure. Ignorance, superstition, and prejudice are age-old enemies of mankind, but the time has come to call upon Youth to help destroy them. It is my hope that in this work Michigan may never falter or waver. *Let us blend our personal desires in a common task and let us imagine again and again three great qualities applied to three great purposes. Three great attributes of Christ which we pledge ourselves to bring if we can to three great potential agents for the service of humanity. Faith, Hope, and Love to Michigan, to our country, and to Youth.*

CLARENCE COOK LITTLE

FREEING THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

RICHER results may be obtained from the school child than has ever been believed possible in any other period of public education. What would have been called the work of genius a few years ago is now the expected product of a whole class of school children. From the educational laboratory comes the proof. In an educational experiment covering a period of five years a class of children were furnished with a literary environment different from the usual and accepted curriculum of the schools wherein they were allowed to roam at will and choose, without "lessons" or reprimands, the food on which creative young spirits rightly feed, and the results, as partially shown in *Creative Youth* (Doubleday, Page) are a continuous astonishment to parents and educators generally. "The exhibit is nothing short of astonishing," writes Louis Untermeyer in *Living Literature*. "I doubt if any school in either hemisphere, short of Franz Cizek's amazing department in the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna, could show nearly an average of downright accomplishment." James Oppenheim hails it as a sign of the awakening of America to an appreciation of the arts and declares that what has been done once under special laboratory conditions may be reproduced anywhere in America, provided only the same spirit of approach to young life is maintained.

It is my privilege tonight before this professional audience to touch on some of the phases of that experiment and to present concrete illustration of the results. And in so doing I am aware that I shall be giving only one side of the story; for in the environment set up as part of the experiment, wherein free play was given to the instinctive artistry of childhood, where their fears of precise authorities were put at rest, where they were invited by sympathetic teachers to summon the best that was in

them, self-expression found its culmination in achievement in all phases of school work, history, mathematics, science, music, and the graphic arts generally. *Creative Youth* gives illustration of the literary enrichment of the lives of these children; there is abundant other material from the first grade through the high school classes which has not reached the public, except by way of traveling exhibitions, because of the difficulty and expense of adequate reproduction.

All of this, if rightly known and comprehended, would justify our faith in the creative powers of childhood, of our faith in those native impulses which the usual curriculum and the usual method of class instruction either conceals or deliberately kills.

To narrow the discussion to a single phase, we began our literary experiment with certain definite bits of knowledge about children; children do have natural artistic gifts; nearly all children draw in various media of chalk, pencil, and paint, invent stories and jingles expressive of their rich imagining lives, play the serious actor in vivid dramas of their own spontaneous construction; and they do all these matters with an energetic absorption in the performance that makes our own exertions seem in comparison tame and lifeless. We knew, too, that they do their very best work at tasks that are self-initiated. We knew of the enormous energies of childhood, the patience and self-control of children, their persistence in the presence of failure, their untiring pitting of strength in the solution of the significant problems of their own significant lives. These facts we knew and sought to use for our own purposes in the schoolroom.

We also knew how abruptly all the quick spirit of their lives is destroyed by ignoring the children's own conception of life values and substituting our own. We knew how easily they were stilled by authority, and

how easily they could be induced to surrender their own free spirits at the word of command from us. Of their obedience to our wishes we had ample evidence, so we began with something new in education, and salutary—we began with a distrust of our own power to lead! Youth, we felt, had something to teach us, a worthy something heretofore inarticulate; and we resolved, if possible, to discover it.

First, then, we set ourselves the task of finding those secret products of the expressional side of youth which are done, as we knew, with all the intense striving of the artist—verse, imaginative stories and sketches, "books" in imitative print, puzzles, mysterious languages, plans of startling new "inventions," a life that is rarely if ever shown to teachers—and while all of these types and more came forth shyly when we had won the right to have them shown to us, we centered our interest, we "English" teachers, upon prose and verse.

At the very start—it was an eighth grade—I found three girls who had been secretly writing verse ever since they could remember. They had already composed veritable books, but at no time had they dreamed of exhibiting this precious work to a teacher. One of these verses I present here as a type of dolly-lullaby which is common enough as an expression of young girl interests, but not by any means commonly expressed:

THE WIND IS A SHEPHERD

A Lullaby

The wind is a shepherd;
He drives his clouds
Across a field of blue.
The moon puts her face up
Behind them now
And sings a song to you.

So sleep, my baby,
And the wind will keep the clouds,
And we'll look at them tomorrow,
Me and you,
As he hurries them through meadows
And they lay them down to rest
In a field of blue.

The mere assumption of interest in these early scrawling efforts to express the emo-

ital side of their lives was enough to stir these young people to a continuous making of verse. It led to a gradual growth in expressional power until one of them, the author of the poem printed above, was represented some three years later in Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse* as worthy of a place among the best contemporary poets. Another of the group has been praised by Louis Untermeyer, in the article quoted at the beginning, as among the poetic wits of America; and all three have received recently, five years after their first juvenile attempts were welcomed into the classroom, the tribute of a publisher's request for a volume of their combined verses.

Here is the way one of these girls expressed last year her thought about the first swirling night of December snow:

FIRST SNOW

Pierrot
Shows off to the stars
Tonight!
In his spotted costume
Spotted white,
Painting the skies,
Gilding the moon,
Balancing pearls
In a silver spoon—

Pierrot
Shows off to the stars
Tonight!
Paling winter
In violet light,
Spilling the spoon—
And laughing to see
Pearl upon pearl
Falling on me!

Is it any wonder that publishers take notice, even if teachers commonly do not!

One of our discoveries was of a youth with a remarkable facility in clearcut unconventional rhyming. Whether it was due to our encouragement or to a native gift that would have survived even the coldest or least discerning of school teachers, we may never know, but his muse grew increasingly prolific and skilful until one April day he gave us a spring song that—I judge from its constant reprintings—must already have given joy to thousands:

SPRING VENDERS

O, blessed be the venders in the street
That flaunt their jaunty splendors in the street:
Violets and daffodils,
Whirligigs and windmills,
Bright balloons,
Rusty tunes,
Doughnuts strung on spindles.
Yet, the doughnut-vender never sells his crullers;
Just the odor serves to make the children sigh;
While balloons and toys sell only for their
colors—
The flimsy stuff they're made of who would
buy?

No one wants the music or a flower.
Who flings coins to hear machinery start,
Or pays for blooms that wither in an hour?
He only buys the April in his heart.

All this and more I have illustrated in *Creative Youth*, along with the method, so far as there was a definable method, that led these young persons not only to create literature but to read literature with joy and understanding. One might test one's own appreciation and knowledge of literature, be he teacher of letters or mere lay reader, by an inspection of the titles of an anthology of the best modern poetry which these boys and girls selected in their eleventh grade. Some two thousand poems were examined during the year by committees of the pupils; of these about five hundred were thought worthy of a public reading; of these, again, about two hundred were chosen finally as worthy of a place in a permanent collection. Space does not permit more than a listing of the first forty, those that they rated best of all:

Class I: William Rose Benet, The Falconer of God, The Horse Thief; Adelaide Crapsey, Triad; Robert Frost, Mending Wall, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening; Ralph Hodgson, Eve; Sidney Lanier, The Marshes of Glynn; Vachel Lindsay, The Chinese Nightingale; Amy Lowell, Patterns; Edna Millay, The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver; William Vaughan Moody, Gloucester Moors; Ezra Pound, A Ballad for Gloom; Dudley Poore, Marigold Pendulum; Francis Thompson, The Hound of Heaven.

Class II: William Rose Benet, The

Asylum; Rupert Brooke, The Dead, The Great Lover, The Soldier; Nathalia Crane, My Husband; Adelaide Crapsey, The Warning; H. D., Oread, The Pool; Walter de la Mare, The Listeners; Robert Frost, Birches, Good-bye and Keep Cold, the Road Not Taken, Wild Grapes; A. E. Housman, From Far from Eve and Morning; Orrick Johns, Wild Plum; Alfred Kreymborg, The Tree; Vachel Lindsay, The Congo, The Leaden-Eyed; John Masefield, Sea-Fever; Alfred Noyes, The Highwayman; Carl Sandburg, Cool Tombs, Fish Cryer, Fog, Grass; Alan Seegar, I Have a Rendezvous with Death; R. L. Stevenson, Requiem.

The point to be emphasized here is that the beginnings of a genuine artistic taste, both in creative power and in appreciation of the creative power of others, is probably lying undiscovered in every classroom in the country. The beginnings are represented concretely in the strivings to write which are kept as secret as first love, and which the schoolroom, because it is really love, rarely discovers. To find them and to touch them with delicate sympathy is the new work of the artist-teacher; and to encourage that first faint spark into a glow is one of the richest possibilities of the new education.

HUGHES MEARNS

BUILDING STONES

I. *What the Children Did*

- A. They made a survey of Harrisonburg to find what kinds of building stones were used.
- B. They made a table showing:
 1. The name of the stone, the part of the building for which it is generally used, and where it is found.
 2. The distribution of building stones in the United States.
- C. They made hectograph maps showing distribution of building stones in the United States.
- D. They gathered and identified samples of the following stones: limestone, sandstone, shale, marble, slate, and granite.
- E. They gave individual reports and discussed in class these topics:
 1. The history of the great ice sheet.
 2. The lasting effect of the great ice sheet on New England and the prairies.
 - (a) Upon manufacturing
 - (b) Upon farming
 - (c) Upon transportation
 3. The disintegration of rocks.
 - (a) Mechanical changes
 - (b) Chemical changes
 4. The value to man of the disintegration of rocks.
 5. The formation of limestone, marble, shale, slate, and granite.
- F. They took the following excursions:
 1. To a nearby stream to observe worn stones and banks.
 2. To a rocky cliff to observe furrows and the effect of plant roots upon rocks.
 3. To a cave to study stalactites and stalagmites.
 4. To see the cross-section of stratified rock.
- G. They performed these experiments:
 1. Pour hydrochloric acid on a piece of stone; if it is limestone or marble, the acid will cause a foam as soon as it touches the stone. Marble may be distinguished from limestone by its crystalline structure.
 2. Put a bottle full of water outside on a cold night. Tell what happens.
 3. Break open a limestone rock; compare the outside with the inside.
 4. Boil a gallon of lime water from a stream until it evaporates; or look on the inside of a teakettle which has been used a long time. Explain.
- H. They collected pictures of caverns, glaciers, volcanoes, Natural Bridge, Colora-