

THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

A MASTER TEACHER

Seldom does a teacher have such recognition from his own profession as has been given Dr. Edward Lee Thorndike, who, just past 50, has finished twenty-five years of incessant service in the cause of education and has a sure place in its history, which cannot be written "without giving prominence to his name." One of his fellow-psychologists and teachers, now a dean in a mid-western university, said of him that no school is uninfluenced and no humanistic science is unaffected by his labor. A celebration beginning at high noon and extending through the rest of the day into the night was held in his honor on Friday at Teachers College. Messages came by telegraph and letter from near and distant parts of the world. A volume of tributes from those best able to appraise his varied activity and incredible productivity, together with a bibliography of "some thirty books and three hundred articles," has been published to mark the end of a quarter century which finds him going on with tireless energy in researches which his "prodigious intellect" is ever projecting for itself. Thousands of graduate students who have studied under

him are scattered over the world and hundreds of thousands of school teachers, principals, and superintendents, college professors, and even laymen, who have never seen him or heard his voice, have, as President Suzzalo of the University of Washington says, modified their thought and practice in education under the influencing currents of his mind. Some one writing of "Thorndike in China" testifies that his is one of the four or five best known foreign names in educational circles in that land, and adds that to write an account of his influence in that country would be writing the history of the new educational movement in China during the last six years, for many of the leaders in that movement are "Thorndike disciples."

Dr. Thorndike began to develop his "laws of learning" through his researches in the field of animal intelligence—studying not only their sagacity but their stupidity. "Never," said he early in this period, "will you get a better psychological subject than a hungry cat." Years later he announced the conclusion, in terms of the human mind, that the work of education is "to make desirable activities pleasurable and to inhibit their opposites by discomfort," which quite contravenes the philosophy of those who seek perfection of character and fruitful achievement through doing what they most dislike to do. But as another of Thorndike's pupils, now a professor of education in a Canadian university, remarks: "Practice does not make perfect if the resultants of the practice are painful"; and he adds that nobody achieves perfection in sitting on a pin or poking a fire with his finger.

But the Thorndike thesis which challenged the tradition of the ages and provoked most contemporaneous discussion and conservative alarm was that "improvement in any single mental function rarely brings about equal improvement in any other function." Following this psychological bombshell fell another menacing even wider demolition to long-cherished theories. It

was that the difference between studies having greatest influence upon the gain in the power to think, ranging from arithmetic to sewing and stenography, was "almost negligible." If it is true that languages and mathematics have only slightly greater power to improve the mind, as a whole, than forestry, nursing or agricultural science, it is well that the world should know it—and the best wish that the world can offer this humanistic scientist is that he may have another twenty-five years in order to complete his demonstration. It appears that what a man can do, says Dr. Cattell, who was once Dr. Thorndike's teacher, "is prescribed at birth," but that "what he does is dependent on circumstances." Dr. Thorndike had a most generous prescription at birth. Untold thousands hope that "circumstance" will continue to be propitious.—Editorial in *The New York Times*.

DO EDUCATIONAL MEASUREMENTS PAY?

Does Johnny Jones read as well as a nine-year old boy in the fourth grade should read? Is he having the kind of reading teaching that his individual needs require? Does Mary Smith know as much in arithmetic as a girl in the eighth grade and of her age should know? If she is weak, just what facts are needed to round out her knowledge of arithmetic? Teachers once guessed at the answers to questions like these. The best teachers now use fairly accurate measuring scales which have been developed for the purpose. But many teachers are still guessing—expecting too much or too little from the children and never quite knowing where the real trouble lies. Why guess when accurate measures are available and the children's happiness and success are at stake?

Speculation or Knowledge?

Is the Longfellow school doing better in spelling than the Whittier school? In arith-

metic? In reading? How does the achievement of pupils in Lincoln, Nebraska, compare with what they are able to do in Denver, Colorado? Are the schools of Clay county doing better work than the schools in Webster county? What results should the superintendent expect of various schools? What shall the principal expect of various teachers? These are vital questions in the wise management of schools. A generation ago school officers would have guessed at the answers. Now measures are available which enable them to compare results with other schools, cities, counties, and states.

Put to the Test

Does it pay to employ supervisors to aid the county superintendent in the improvement of schools? In an attempt to answer this question two supervisors were put in each of two counties. The work done in basic subjects in the schools was carefully compared with that in two similar counties without supervisors. The schools with skilled supervisors did more and better work than those without. Those with supervisors covered as much ground in eight months as the others covered in ten. In other words, they increased the efficiency of the schools twenty-five per cent. The service they rendered measured by the most careful tests saved four times its cost. Can facts like these be gathered for other counties and in relation to other important points in school management?

A million school children in America fail to make their grade each year. It means that teachers, seats, and supplies must be given a million children for another school year. It means that these children will enter the next grade or the work of life a year later than their more fortunate classmates. Most important of all, it means that at a tender age they have been given the deadening sense of failure just when they should be learning the joy of work and achievement. Much of this terrible loss can

be avoided by an intelligent use of what is now known about child life and teaching.

Investigations bearing on problems like these are being made in many states, cities, counties, and individual schools. The results are so little known that many teachers do not profit by them. One of the duties of a Department of Education would be to collect and distribute such information.

JOY ELMER MORGAN

ECONOMIC PRIZES

In order to arouse an interest in the study of topics relating to commerce and industry, to stimulate those who have a college training to consider the problems of a business career, and to aid in constructive economic thinking, a committee composed of Professor J. Laurence Laughlin, University of Chicago, chairman; Professor J. B. Clark, Columbia University; Professor Edwin F. Gay, Harvard University; Hon. Theodore E. Burton, Washington; and Professor Wesley C. Mitchell, Columbia University, has been enabled, through the generosity of Hart Schaffner and Marx of Chicago, to offer in 1927 prizes for the best studies in the economic field to certain classes of contestants.

Classes A and B

Class A includes any resident of the United States or Canada, without restriction; the possession of a degree is not required of any contestant in this class, nor is any age limit set. Class B includes only those who, at the time the papers are sent in, are undergraduates of any American college. Attention is expressly called to the rule that a competitor is not confined to topics proposed in the announcements of this committee, but any other subject chosen must first be approved by it. As suggestions, a few questions are here given:

1. The German Monetary Experiences, 1914-1925.

2. Extent and Effects of Installment Selling.

3. The Present Position of, and the Problems arising from, the Modern Development of Water Power Resources.

4. Have the Federal Reserve Notes aided in undue Expansion of Credit?

5. The Facts and Consequences of Foreign Investments by Americans.

6. The Actual and Theoretical Differentiation of Commercial Banking in the United States from Investment and Land Banking.

A First Prize of one thousand dollars, and a Second Prize of five hundred dollars are offered to contestants in Class A; a First Prize of three hundred dollars, and a Second Prize of two hundred dollars are offered to contestants in Class B. No prizes will be awarded if, in the judgment of the committee, essays of sufficient merit are not submitted. The committee reserves to itself the right to award the two prizes of \$1,000 and \$500 of Class A to undergraduates in Class B, if the merits of the papers demand it. The winner of a prize shall not receive the amount designated until he has prepared his manuscript for the printer to the satisfaction of the committee.

The ownership of the copyright of studies to which the right to print has been awarded will vest in the donors, and it is expected that, without precluding the use of these papers as theses for higher degrees, they will cause them to be issued in some permanent form.

Competitors are advised that the studies should be thorough, expressed in good English, and, although not limited as to length, they should not be needlessly expanded. They should be inscribed with an assumed name, the class in which they are presented, and accompanied by a sealed envelope giving the real name and address of the competitor, together with any degrees or distinctions already obtained. No paper is eligible which shall have been printed or published in a form to disclose the identity of the author before the award shall have been made. Contestants are warned that in

submitting essays in more than one contest they may disqualify themselves by disclosing their identity. If the competitor is in Class B, the sealed envelope should contain the name of the institution in which he is studying. The papers should be sent on or before June 1, 1927, to J. Laurence Laughlin, Esq., University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

A MISSION FOR TEACHERS

The steady, if slow, interpenetration of peoples and nations and their several cultures by the interchange of teachers and students is the surest single means to advance the cause of international understanding, international sympathy, and therefore international peace. Governments will doubtless continue to go their blind and blundering way, but peoples, who are now everywhere superior to their governments and often most inadequately represented by them, can and will find ways and means of their own to establish those human contacts and to bring about those interdependencies which are implicit in any state of society which calls itself either civilized or Christian—PRESIDENT NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER, of Columbia University

BOOKS

NOTA BENE, PLAY PRODUCERS

HISTORIC COSTUME: A Résumé of the Characteristic Types of Costume from the Most Remote Times to the Present Day. By Katherine Morris Lester. Peoria, Ill.: The Manual Arts Press. 1925. Pp. 244. \$2.50.

This is an excellent book for teachers, historians, costume designers, and play producers. One is at once convinced of the absolute accuracy of the facts presented therein, based upon much foreign and American travel and detailed study of designs, paintings, sculptures, documents, and descriptive and poetical literature of ancient and modern times. The author discusses the ancient desire for costume which arose from body decorations; the scant dress of

the ancient Egyptians; the full dress of the ancient Asiatics (Phrygians, Persians, Medes, Syrians, Parthians, and Amazons); the rhythm and beauty of Grecian and Roman costume; the costume of France in the Middle Ages, Renaissance and modern times, and her early extensive influence upon other countries in these ages and all ages following; the interesting development of Colonial American costume, with its various foreign influences, and American costume up to 1920. In each of the above mentioned discussions we are shown in a clear, definite, and attractive way how the mode of dress, head gear, and accessories of the different peoples developed simply and grew out of the natural needs, climatic conditions, historical atmosphere, and influence of others.

The binding is substantial, the print clear, and the illustrations artistic and well executed. Color notations are given. But how much more attractive and useful the plates would be in color and slightly larger, although this would involve much expense and other difficulties for author and publisher. College, university, and senior high school students will find the book interesting.

The subject matter, presentation, illustrations, good print, and adaptability to various demands should make *Historic Costumes* a useful book and a good text.

MARY ALICE AIKEN

APPLIED ART

ART IN EVERYDAY LIFE. By Harriet Goldstein and Vetta Goldstein. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1925. Pp. 465. \$3.50.

In this volume the authors have enabled the layman as well as the student of art to appreciate the artistic beauty about him every day and to help him solve the problem of making more beautiful his personal appearance and surroundings.

One of the strongest features of the book is its great number of fine pictures illustrating the principles of design and how