

Robertson whose *Caste* took up the thread of English drama where Sheridan dropped it in the eighteenth century, and the inimitable W. S. Gilbert who lifted light opera into the realm of high art and—along with Dickens—is perhaps the most vitally alive of any writer from the years 1830-1890.

Saved then are five poets; five novelists; five other prose writers; two dramatists—for a total of seventeen, though, of course, another list—and doubtless a better one might be made which might include as few as a dozen names—or as many as twenty.

But let us stick to the figure seventeen. Too many—for the theory of necessary rejection? No! For it must be remembered that the Victorian Age is much nearer than the Romantic is. And, in any case, seventeen is a happier number than the fifty or more offered at present by those who seek to purvey the culture of the reign of Victoria.

Is reduction to seventeen too drastic, with reference to the accepted canons of today? Yes! But no prohibition is to be laid on persons who wish to read Morris's *The Earthly Paradise*, Bulwer-Lytton's *Richelieu*, Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* and all the rest of the good minor classics of the Age of Victoria. But henceforth, let not a mastery of these and like works be deemed essential to the possession of a common culture.

In conclusion, let it be stressed that nothing arbitrary is intended by this paper. If Shelley and Leigh Hunt should be added to the list and Lamb dropped, the author would voice no protest. Nor would he militantly oppose the throwing overboard of Swinburne and Rossetti and the rescuing of Arnold. The point is that the nineteenth century must have its hundred or so writers of masterpieces drastically reduced—to a dozen or two—if, in general, the people who constitute America are going to pay any attention to them as masterpieces.

The nineteenth century is the test case. If it can be successfully trimmed, the num-

ber of blocks in the block house of literary culture need not be so great that the structure will fall.

JOHN O. BEATY

EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

A DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT OF THE PRESENT
STATUS OF EDUCATION IN AMERICA, WITH
SOME ANALYSIS OF PROGRESS TO
THE PRESENT

EDUCATION is an undertaking so thoroughly accepted in the United States of America that we would not know how to go on without it on some such basis as at present. There are, however, as many kinds of notions about the operation of the system of schools and the products of operation as there are people affected. It is appropriate to take stock of the educational establishment from time to time to see what we have and how we come to be that way.

I. Some Signs of the Times

Where schools are so generally carried on, there must be some fundamental agreements which all accept. At least some tacit understanding of main principles must exist. What things distinguish American education? A few elementary points are here stated as they seem to apply in the present.

1. *There is public demand.* Education has become the American way. Being "born free and equal" has come to mean just as much the opportunity to get an education as the enjoyment of certain political privileges and immunities. Education is an important figure in the pattern of any life, a definite step up the hill in the direction of success, an open sesame to all the closed doors for every youth possessing it. It matters not that education does not seem to light a rosy path for some youngsters, and that there is some sniping along many fronts by honest or dishonest agitators who see the shortcomings of the schools. These

are exceptional cases which scarcely count in the silent and overwhelming acceptance of education as a way to the fuller life. The faith of the people in their schools is little short of amazing.

2. *Children do go to school.* Statistics indicate that a great many children go to school—about one in each four people of the total population is a school child at school. It is the exception to find children under age fifteen or sixteen not in school. In some cities attendance is better than in others, but it is good in all; in cities it is better than in the country, but it is passably good even in the country; in some states that have good school systems more children go than in others where the schools are not so good. Over ninety percent of the children are enrolled the country over, and over ninety percent of those enrolled attend rather regularly. About seventy-five percent of those of eligible age are found in the high schools any school day, and the major part of these continue to some sort of graduation. During the past sixty-eight years the increase of the enrolment in relation to the eligible population has averaged one percent a year! Girls are accepted on a full-fledged basis in about the same numbers as boys. Just a hundred years ago they went but little, many of them on part time, and to only a few schools. It is a certain fact that American children do go to school, for ten or more years on the average, and for terms 152 to 195 days per year in different states.

3. *Schools vary greatly in quality.* There are good schools and others not so good. Below them in scale are numerous other schools that are quite ordinary or downright poor. It is unfortunate that many of the things that go to make a good school cost considerable money, more money than is available for schools in many localities; it is fortunate that the personal equation in education, mainly the teachers who do the real work of the schools, often produces a good school in spite of low salaries and but

little of the needed facilities to work with. The fact that wealth and income are so unevenly distributed between city and country, and between sections where industry or farming prevail, complicates the chances of adequate education of children. Some localities or even sections can maintain acceptable schools at one-sixth or one-tenth of the effort required in another section to maintain a poorer school. As a still greater difficulty, the sections least able to provide schools have the most children to go to school.

4. *Still better schools are needed.* Right now the outlook for increased education in all the states of the South, which make up the lowest quarter in any ranking of state systems of schools, is far from bright except through some plan of providing acceptable schools in all parts of America by national effort. The South is simply too poor to pay for the education of its greater percentage of children in the population. Many states are able to carry on at all, even their present systems, only because teachers work for salaries that are only thirty to fifty percent of the nation's average. It is also fortunate that plans are operating in many states that guarantee some distribution of funds so as to assure educational advantages below which no community in the state will fall.

5. *Schools are a public affair.* The struggle for public support of schools dates from colonial days. Control of the community school was a subject of debate in the town meetings three centuries ago. All localities and all states now pay some of the costs of the schools. The national government comes more into the picture each year with the support of special phases. There are many indications of more extended and general support of education in the states by the federal government. The principle of public support is fully established, however far the effort to support may fall short or however little the people realize the inadequacy of support. There

will not be further debate as to the principle, though plenty as to purposes, amounts, and which units of government shall pay.

With support goes inevitably the complementary principle of control. City councils, state legislatures, various bodies representing the public interest go on deciding educational issues, wisely or unwisely, fairly or for political advantage, because the schools are public in nature, supported and controlled by the public. Only the soundness of public opinion can make the schools constructive or save them from wreckage at the hands of governing bodies politically controlled. The schools right now are the greatest vested interest of the rank and file of the people. As such they are the public's most public affair.

6. *The schools are nearly free.* Starting with tuition fees, followed by education at public expense for children too poor to pay, through many variations in practice in different times and places, finally attaining outright public support, the schools are in principle open to all children without cost to the individual. As long as there are requirements that individuals pay any part of the costs, education is to that extent a private matter—even in case of such necessary items as books, writing materials, or school lunches. Schools that are actually free are more nearly attained each year. Some systems now provide completely free schools. They are not so far from reality in most parts of the nation. With the passing of all sorts of fees other more social restrictions are apt to disappear. Almost from the beginning religious tests have not been a barrier. In the three important matters of religion, social standing, and ability to pay the costs of schooling, education in America may be thought of as free, or nearly free, to all children.

II. Concerning Beginnings

The beginnings of education in America had their roots in European practices. Many later practices were also adopted from the

old countries. The matter of European influence is only noted at this point. It could well serve as the basis for a separate article.

We are concerned with the past as it contributes in some tangible way to the present. Only the scholar finds the history of education an end in itself. By reference or implication present status or trends are sometimes made clearer in terms of the past. That is the attempt here. Some threads of the past which connect directly and causally into the present system of schools are mentioned briefly for what they may contribute to understanding.

1. *The first three hundred years was a period of trial.* The colonists in each location transplanted their chosen version of schools from one of the countries of Europe. In this way many patterns or modifications of educational ideas took root and were followed out in practice. Many of them died out with rapid changes in developments in the new land or were replaced with newer ideas from time to time. Forms of government and new political allegiances in the ever-shifting picture of colonial empire greatly changed the attempts at education in all but the strictly English colonies of New England and some parts of the South. Only in the hundred years of national growth following establishment of government under the constitution did America develop any tradition of uniformity or solidarity in educational practice.

By the process of trying out many ideas, by modifying the structure as needs dictated, by substituting to fit changing conceptions, and by adding to the set-up from time to time, American education took on form and direction by 1890. It may be said that permanent gains had been made by that time which served as a basis for the rapid growth and sweeping change of the last fifty years. It is inspiring to believe that developments came step by step as needed and that there was always the forward push to correspond with progress in national prosperity and in other fields of social striv-

ing, resulting in a system of education original in design and peculiarly adapted to American ideals and needs. The student thrills to the knowledge of struggle, the amount of personal sacrifice, even the essential element of crusade that marked some of the gains.

It must have been a sensation of the time when the town fathers of Boston laid the first tax on all householders to pay for the community grammar school, or when Ben Franklin announced plans for a new institution in Philadelphia to supersede the traditional Latin school. Few events have more appeal than that of Horace Mann's tilt with the Boston schoolmasters and the consequent publicity in Massachusetts for common schools by public support. The epoch-making court decisions in the Dartmouth and Kalamazoo cases must have been recognized as landmarks even by the people of those times, and we certainly have much in the present that harks back to them as precedents.

2. *Tremendous progress has been made from small beginnings.* In America as in Europe there was no early conception of extended education, even for all those mentally able to go forward in the schools of the times. Education was a select affair, valued for its exclusiveness. The present widespread conception of universal education is less than a hundred years old, so far as any general acceptance of the idea goes. One has only to read the statements of leaders previous to 1840 to be convinced that the conception of the founding fathers has already been far surpassed.

In Franklin's proposal of the academy as a reform institution about 1750 it is clear that he had in mind training for the professions of the ministry, law, and medicine, and incidentally business leaders. The subject matter proposed would be considered rather traditional today. It is plain no mass education was thought of and that there were strict time limits. He wrote:

"As to their studies, it would be well if they could be taught everything that is useful and everything that is ornamental. But art is long and their time is short. It is therefore proposed, that they learn those things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental; regard being had for the several professions for which they are intended..."

"All interested for divinity, should be taught the Latin and Greek; for physic, the Latin, Greek, and French; for law, the Latin and French; merchants, the French, German, and Spanish; and, though all should not be compelled to learn Latin, Greek, or the modern languages, yet none that have an ardent desire to learn them should be refused; their English, arithmetic, and other studies absolutely necessary, being at the same time not neglected."

Take the following from Jefferson, written in a note to the Virginia legislature in 1799, a part of his plan for schools in the Old Dominion:

"...to lay off every county into small districts...and in each of them establish a small school for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. The tutor to be supported by the district, and every person in it entitled to send their children three years gratis, and as much longer as they please, paying for it...These schools to be under a visitor, who is annually to chuse the boy, of best genius in the school, of those whose parents are too poor to give them further education, and to send him forward to one of the grammar schools, of which twenty are proposed to be erected, for teaching Greek, Latin, geography, and higher branches of numerical arithmetic....Trial is to be made at the grammar school one or two years and the best genius of the whole selected, and continued six years, and the residue dismissed. By this means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually...At the end of six years' instruction, one half to be discontinued (from among whom the grammar schools will probably be supplied with future mentors); and the other half, who are to be chosen for the superiority of their parts and disposition, are to be sent and continued three years in the study of such sciences as they chuse....The ultimate result of the whole scheme of education would be the teaching of all children of the state reading, writing, and common arithmetic; and turning out annually ten of superior genius, well taught in Greek, Latin, geography, and the higher branches of arithmetic; turning out ten others annually, of still superior parts, who, to those branches of learning shall have added such sciences as their geniuses shall have led them to...."

Jefferson's plan provided only a free primary school of three years; twenty grammar schools for the whole state, where a selected pupil too poor to pay from each one-teacher school would be tried out for a year or so, with twenty per year from the

whole state to be carried on for six years; finally, ten scholarships a year at the College of William and Mary. Of course, the plan implies that the substantial people of Virginia who wanted an education for their children would pay for it in private schools.

3. *Present high schools have absorbed all predecessors.* For three centuries each development has merged into another one. The older Latin schools were designed to prepare ministers and professional men through a magic of mental discipline which first attached to Latin and in turn was assigned to each subject as introduced. The academy was supposed to liberalize education and make it practical through subject matter more useful and diversified, but in the end it formalized every subject in about the same way as the Latin school and taught as much Latin as before. The high schools for a hundred years have been reaching out for new subject matter. They have also been sloughing off some of the original ideas handed down, in the face of the more fertile teachings and experimentation of the newer psychology as to educational values. At the same time nearly all of the old subjects have been carried forward on a much revised basis and rather limited demand. All has survived that deserved to survive and much has been added. Within the past twenty-five years some most significant departures have been made. Of course, some ideas and practices currently held will be replaced in due time, as more of the older subject matter will disappear. Always there are the balanced tendencies to preserve, to discard, and to invent. The useful is not lost, the passing fads drop out, the valuable finds its way in. Thus it always has been in America, and the process bids fair to go on at a faster pace.

4. *The greatest development in the schools is a changed spirit.* The early schools were for the few—those intellectuals of a social standing which suggested they could do the work in the schools and use it

in the ministry or higher professional endeavors. With all the changes in program and enrolment an exactly opposite situation has been reached in the present. Exclusiveness has changed to inclusiveness. Education has become a way of life. The schools are for all; the unfinished task is to make them count in the lives of all. On this monumental undertaking probably no more than a slight beginning has been made. It is bound to be the next development.

Until recently the schools were cast in the pattern of competition. This was the counterpart of business practice which is known by the catch-phrase of "rugged individualism." As American frontiers have disappeared both ruggedness and individualism seem out of place in a world where all must co-operate in working out a scheme of living that is not possible through older practices of business. The consumer is more important than the producer; the buyer's interests come ahead of the seller's; the guest at the hotel can give pointers to the management. The health of all outweighs the profits of a few; the safety of the many must prevail over the personal liberty even of those who drive automobiles recklessly. These revised ideals can be learned by a nation through many agencies, but the chief of these must be the public schools. They are now entering upon such an undertaking.

The spirit of democracy calls for education of all its members, education that includes all people and all benefits, taught and learned in an atmosphere of co-operation. The educational ideals of Franklin, Jefferson, and Horace Mann—not necessarily their plans of operation—have grown into the ideals of the nation. As "the mills of the gods grind slowly, but exceeding fine," so democracy is arbiter of education in the last analysis. No intellectual aristocracy can do more than contribute. As John Dewey stated in "Democracy and Education" twenty-five years ago:

"...We note first that the realization of a form of social life in which interests are mutually interpenetrating, and where progress, or readjustment, is an important consideration, makes a democratic community more interested than other communities have cause to be in deliberate and systematic education. The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact....A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment in its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing social disorder."

5. *The schools become everything to everybody.* As life becomes more industrialized, specialized, and standardized, the individual home has less opportunity of giving diversified training of youth for life's responsibilities. Where the home was once training ground as workshop, social unit, and religious center, it is fast becoming just a place for parking, filling, and resting in life's faster merry-go-round. The schools have had thrust upon them, for better or worse, the increased load of all-round training, as the home has abdicated its high place of former days. That the schools can ever succeed distinctly in the larger undertaking many thinking people sincerely doubt, but the issue is at least clear. If the schools do not, who will? Where once the main job of the schools was to provide "book learning"—some mastery of elementary skills and knowledge in fundamental school subjects—in a brief time borrowed from the active affairs of life, to supplement home and community efforts, now we see the schools taking on an increasing load from new areas in the attempt to provide complete training for citizenship, including homemaking, vocation, and cultured living.

The demand for vocational fitness as a product of schooling is central in the educational scheme, a steady growth and faith from Franklin's time to the present. Current thinking is not at all clear as to how the essential contradiction between practical training for a vocation jibes with the

demands of scholarship as formerly emphasized. The theory of mental discipline has broken down, leaving a dilemma of proportions in education. Some people feel that scholarship dwindles as the demands for practical, socially valuable things are emphasized. It has always been argued so. The answer to this riddle is the unfinished task of the schools. We may be certain that the answer in America will be along practical and useful lines, probably closely related to the dollar sign, and not a harking back to traditional concepts held in the heyday of exclusive education.

6. *Out of a background of trial solid ground has been reached.* The schools have expanded upward, downward, and outward to embrace a great variety of interests. By the process of natural growth in response to popular demand and public support the educational ideal is widespread. No nation has ever before attempted education on such a broad scale. The schools may be said to represent in the present stages an organic effort of the nation to preserve its integrity and spread benefits to its citizens through the beneficent enterprise of education. Whatever the practical difficulties in working out, this may be thought of as the principal result of 300 years of beginnings of education in our democracy.

PAUL HOUNCHELL

SCHOOLS WORK TO REDUCE ACCIDENTS

ONE of the most serious problems confronting the communities of the nation is accident prevention. This is strictly a state and local problem which must be dealt with in the various communities. Nor is accident prevention confined solely to the highway. Every year there are hundreds of thousands of accidents in the home, in industry, and in many unthought-of places. While it is true that last year