



# *Are High Schools for* **MORONS ?**

*By Albert L. Bell*

**M**ORE multi-million dollar high schools, and more indolent pupils to fill them, are panaceas offered by "progressive" educators for our present educational ills. It is taken for granted that every boy and girl of high school age should annually doze through 180 days of school. What happens to the child's head while his posterior is being supported is of secondary importance.

Since 1900, our public education has grown into a mammoth enterprise. If mere statistical showing of rise in costs and quantity were proof of rise in quality, we might rejoice;

but bigger is not always better. More and bigger buildings, more and bigger gadgets, audio-visual teaching aids and what-not do not necessarily improve the mind. But they do affect the parents' pocket-book.

As a plain fact which any number of businessmen may confirm — the majority of our high school graduates are not able to write one full paragraph of clear and orderly sentences. They cannot spell. They are incapable of solving the most simple problems of arithmetic. They don't know their geography. They know almost nothing about American history. They know so little because they did not care to get any sec-

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ondary education in the first place, and the big school buildings, gadgets and audio-visual aids couldn't do the trick.

Does it make sense to force children into something for which they are not suited, and which they turn into a farce? Is it not hypocrisy to pretend that they are really getting an education? We whoop up commencement exercises, and the kids have their pictures taken with cap and gown, looking quite poised and scholarly for a few minutes, and the tax-paying parents put the pictures of the darlings on the mantelpiece.

When the chips are down and the real study begins, our young folks are not so keen about going ahead. Numerically, then, even the Soviet Union does better. As Dr. Charles Thomas, of the Monsanto Company, recently pointed out: "Russia will graduate 1,200,000 scientists and engineers, and the United States will graduate 900,000, in the decade from 1950 to 1960."

The achievements of our high school students look like a poor return for the lavish investment into which we have been bamboozled by the high-pressure salesmen of the education racket. It is silly to bombard morons and nitwits with a conglomerate mixture of dubious information. An increasing number of subnormals and even delinquents, to the detriment of those young people who do want to learn something (and who can), are frittering away their time — at public expense.

In order to keep the misfits happy, the academic standard has been steadily lowered. The increase in numbers of pupils (and misfits) was accompanied by an increase in play, social functions, brass bands, field trips, athletic contests and variety shows.

By now, we measure results in school by the number of days the pupil has warmed a seat, the number of courses he has been exposed to, and the number of classes he has drowsed through. For such "performance" he is given points of credit, which advance him toward the cap and gown, and the picture on the mantelpiece.

FOR THE taxpayer's edification, let us take an inventory of what all too often goes on in the high school during a normal day. In the morning a large part of the student body arrives thirty or forty minutes prior to the convening of classes, in order to get out of some work at home or get into some trouble at school. Some remain in the home room and heckle the few students who are trying to work; others amuse themselves by running, fighting, and shrieking in the halls.

The girls spend their time in plastering on an additional coating of powder, rouge, and lipstick; by the time classes assemble, they look like circus clowns.

Newly-infatuated couples seek the secluded corners as well as the rear seats in the auditoriums to neck

until the bell sounds. Then the students pass to their classes, laboratories, shops, or home-economic rooms.

In the first class, if the lecture method is used, the students go into a state of reverie or day-dreaming, to be aroused only by the first bell which is the signal to get the books piled and to ask a neighbor what the next class is. After agreeing about the next class, the newly-awakened seat-warmers wonder whether there was an assignment, to which the others reply, "I guess not -- anyway I didn't do anything." Then the second bell rings and, after the new assignment for this class has fallen on deaf ears, the ne'er-do-wells mope to the next room.

Here the teacher may use the question-and-answer method. In a class of thirty-five, after a pupil has answered and his zero has been indelibly tucked away in the record book, he may become oblivious to everything for at least twenty minutes (the only requirement being that he refrain from snoring while asleep).

**T**HOSE enrolled in language courses such as Latin, French, German and Spanish resort to every artifice in order to pass. In a course in Virgil or Cicero, every pupil has a "trot" for each book or oration. Not content to use these trots as an aid to translation, the students either copy verbatim into the text, or remove the necessary sheets from the trot

and read from them if, when, and as called upon. If in the Latin course, there are sentences to be done, usually about six out of a class of twenty-five actually do them and the remainder copy them. Most of the classroom time is spent in putting mustaches on Caesar, Virgil, and Cicero, and pipes, cigarettes, and cigars into the mouths of Juno, Venus, and Minerva.

In practically all high schools, we have history-of-music or music-appreciation courses, in which everyone must do a project, write a term paper, or keep a notebook. The majority of the pupils simply write to a music critic and ask for facts, dates, statistics, personal opinions and biographies concerning famous composers. Virtually everything that pupils want to know could be obtained if they weren't too lazy to spend an hour with an encyclopedia.

But the writing of begging letters to celebrities is not only permitted but is actually encouraged by teachers who give extra credit if the information is signed by the commentator or critic himself. This and similar work in other courses is becoming a national educational racket, as the unfortunate gentlemen who are swamped with illiterate letters will testify.

During laboratory periods in chemistry, home economics or similar courses, the pupils act as if they were busy when the instructor walks by, and the remainder of the time are free to talk over last night's

dates, make plans for the ensuing dance or play with the gadgets and machines. In the science courses, it isn't necessary to accomplish very much because the results can be easily copied from someone else's data book. The home-economics girls resort to any trick to escape duty, because in the end mother makes the dress, slip, or apron at home anyway.

Some of the new teaching schemes and devices such as workbooks, practice sets, projects, contracts, and other pedagogical whims, not only encourage loafing, but make the loafing more enjoyable. If the class is fortunate enough to have workbooks, there is little teaching and less thinking, because all that is required is to fill in the blanks from the material in the text or some other student's workbook. Practice sets in bookkeeping are always fun, because they give an opportunity to enhance the pupil's repertoire of dirty jokes while supposedly consulting various members of the class about accrued interest or some other fictitious difficulty.

There has been a recent trend toward the use of many visual and auditory aids, such as movies, TV and radio programs, in order to pacify these motley groups of "scholars." Inasmuch as the showing of movies requires a dark room, the students usually sleep or engage in amorous antics during the picture because they are seldom held accountable for anything that is shown.

TV and radio programs are often resorted to by teachers who are either too lazy or too dull to hold the interest of the class. About the only outcome of both these programs, either direct, associate or concomitant, is that the pupils' receptive posterior ends have been completely anaesthetized.

During study periods, there are spasmodic epidemics of coughing, humming, and stamping of feet which provide an atmosphere similar to the schizophrenical ward in a mental hospital. If talking is permitted, the students discuss everything from sex to perpetual motion (but not much of it is perpetual motion except the talking). In case talking is prohibited, the girls gaze at their artificial faces in their respective mirrors, comb and push their periodically frizzed wigs, and manure their crimson finger-nails: the boys sit and stare at books or the girls and watch the clock. Various couples who are not permitted to sit together generally go to the library and select, in addition to the funny papers, magazines that have pictures at which they gaze long and dreamily, so as not to finish before the period ends.

**T**HIS educational scourge of indolence which seems to be prevalent throughout the entire system, reaches its culmination during activity period. In most of our high schools, activity periods are loaf periods for the majority of the

students. A few go to the library and serve their time. Some of the boys sign up for scheduled activity and then go to the drugstore, gas station or beer joint where they may smoke unmolested so long as they report back at the required time. Others loiter in the cloak room, shower rooms, gymnasium, auditorium and other corners not frequented by teachers and principals.

THESE gatherings provide an excellent opportunity to exchange sex booklets and lascivious pictures which are the common property of

a vast number; to gather sex knowledge, which is usually misleading and vulgar; and to compare sex experiences and promote sexual promiscuity. The remaining students stay in the home room, halfheartedly passing the time away by drawing caricatures of their teachers.

At the close of the day the pupils go to the drugstore, or to the pool room, or even home, with the feeling that they have succeeded in supinely frittering away another day. And the taxpayer reaches deeper into his purse to pay for this three-ring circus for morons.



### *It Never Tasted the Same Afterwards*

» Years ago we lived in a small town and got most of our produce from nearby farmers. In those days “creamery butter” was considered (and probably was) hardly fit to eat. “Good country butter” was the thing and one stuck with the farmer’s wife who consistently supplied it. Our butter lady, Miz Reilly, not only made a delicious product but took special pride in its decoration. It was traditional to make a leaf design or some such pattern on the top of the butter loaf. Most farmers’ wives were content with a hit or miss design made with the edge of the butter paddle, but Miz Reilly’s decorations were intricate engravings — a joy to behold. We had often wondered how she achieved her artistic effects so one Saturday my mother asked her how she did it. “Oh, but it’s easy as anything,” she said, “I make me designs with me hair comb.”

BILL ARTER

# The Voice of IRELAND

By RUTH LOUISE JOHNSON

AT a party one evening a soprano was asked to sing some Irish songs. Among those she sang was "'Tis the Last Rose of Summer," but one listener objected. "That song," he said, "was composed by Flotow, a German, for his opera *Martha*."

"Oh, no," smiled the singer. "Those words were written by Thomas Moore, and the tune is an old Irish folk tune. Attributing it to Flotow is a mistake frequently made because of its inclusion in the opera."

Never a St. Patrick's Day rolls around that singers on stage, radio and television don't give at least one Irish song on their programs. And the chances are that the words of most of these songs will have been written by Thomas Moore. This Irish poet might be called the "Voice of Ireland," for without him many beautiful old Irish airs might never have been heard throughout the world. In poetry, Scotland had Burns and England had Byron, but Ireland had Thomas Moore.

Born in Dublin in 1779, he began to write verses as a boy. He first saw his lines in print when a sonnet to his schoolmaster was published in a Dublin magazine. But the ungrateful schoolmaster pronounced him "an incorrigible dunce." Some years later he published his early poems under the title of *The Poems of the Late Thomas Little*.

Moore's parents wanted him to be a lawyer. They sent him to Trinity College, and from there he went on to Middle Temple in London. Here he began a free translation into English verse of the Odes of Anacreon. It was published not long afterward and was a great success.

His own poems, however, were criticized severely, and in the *Edinburgh Review* he was denounced as a "corrupter of morals." He challenged the editor to a duel. The

combatants met but the duel was prevented by the magistrate. On examining the weapons it was found they were loaded with powder only, which so amused Lord Byron that he wrote a poetic satire on the duel. This led to a close friendship between the two poets, and helped to publicize Moore's works.

In 1807 a publisher asked him to write words for some ancient Irish folk melodies collected by Edward Bunting. Moore wrote the words for these songs at intervals during the next 25 years, and Sir John Stevenson, musical composer, adapted the Irish airs to Moore's words. These *Irish Melodies* include "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms," "The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls," and "The Minstrel Boy," which became popular in America in the early 19th century. One of them, "My Gentle Harp," was set to the tune "Londonderry Air," which has been called "the most beautiful tune in the world."

In 1817 Moore published the longest and most complete of his poetic works, *Lalla Rookh*. It was tremendously popular and brought the author \$15,000. He also wrote a biography of Lord Byron which brought nearly \$25,000. In his later years he attempted to write *The History of Ireland* but it was a dull and weary work, unfitted to the talents of its author.

It was his *Irish Melodies* that won Thomas Moore immortality, but he disclaimed any such credit for himself, saying, in a farewell to the sleeping harp of his country:

"I was but as the wind passing heedlessly  
over,  
And all the wild sweetness I wak'd was  
its own."