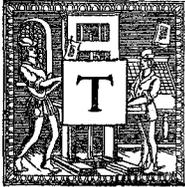


# EDUCATION

## THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE HIGH SCHOOLS



THE problem before the high school is to give to the boys and girls from fourteen on who most deserve education beyond a common school course such a training as will make them contribute most to the true happiness of the world. The high school should consider the natures of these boys and girls, what they are, what they can do, and what their share of the world's work is to be; it should consider the demands which the world will make upon them, the particular needs which the high school pupil is to supply; and in the light of the human nature it has to work with and the human wants it has to supply should choose its course of study, devise its methods and plan its scheme of administration. No high school is successful which does not use an intelligent sympathy with, and a sympathetic insight into, the life of boys and girls. The high school was made for them, not they for the high school. No high school is successful which does not have in mind definitely the work in life its students will have to perform, and try to fit them for it.

The present situation with respect to high school education may be briefly described as follows: The high schools offer to pupils from about fifteen to about nineteen, who have made satisfactory progress in school up to then, the opportunity to study Latin and one or more other languages, algebra and geometry, the English language and literature, English composition, the history of America and of Europe, and the elementary parts of the several sciences. Many of them offer also courses in bookkeeping, business arithmetic, and the like, in so-called commercial courses. A few of them offer courses in manual training and the technical arts, including domestic art and science for the girls and scientific agriculture. But these business and technical courses are usually considered not so

respectable as the course comprising languages and mathematics, and are often used as a refuge for pupils who do not seem able to do the latter. The high school accepts also the task of preparing students for the tests required for entrance to college.

We so take it for granted that the customary and respectable thing is thoroughly good, in fact nearly the best possible, that our natural attitude toward the high school, unless it becomes aggressively annoying, which it rarely does, is one of peaceful, careless satisfaction. It is, we say, the "People's College," where all can go and receive the education proper to their ages and needs. But if we re-read the programme outlined above, thinking meanwhile of the boys or girls in the late teens that we know intimately, thinking also of the three-fourths of high school pupils who drop out before they finish its course, we shall be ready to consider the possibility that in many and important ways the high school has not mastered its problems or even fully appreciated it. It can, and should be, better fitted to boys and girls; it can and should fit them better for what they have to do.

It makes little difference what features of youth are taken; nearly all will furnish illustrations of the chance for progress.

For instance, we can do more to fit the high schools to the poor. If a gifted boy lives in a town where there is no high school, that town should pay the expense he incurs in going to the nearest. If a gifted boy must earn money to help the family, the best thing a school system can do is to get him a job out of school hours. It is a far more important work for schools to keep the best boys and girls in school than to weed out the dull. An employment bureau is more needed than promotion-examinations. If the boy can't be helped to earn enough outside of school hours, the school hours should be shortened in his case. It is far more important to have him in school

two hours a day or two days a week than to save some one a little trouble in assigning lessons.

By the present arrangements of high schools, there is no choice between all school and no school. The boy or girl in whose case a high school education will be an investment, bringing a return to the State of a hundred per cent. or more, may be debarred from it by the brute fact that his father is dead or that there are eight children in the family to be supported.

In the second place, we can do more to fit the high school to that class of boys and girls, the majority, by the way, who are not primarily interested in or efficient at dealing with *ideas*, but whose talent is for the manipulation of *things*, for using tools and machines rather than books, for cooking for a party rather than writing compositions about it, for performing experiments and making collections rather than learning rules.

Of the boys and girls who ought to enter the high schools of the country next fall, three times as many are fit to study agriculture or household sanitation as are fit to study Latin and algebra.

It is a foolish arrangement by which systematic school training from fourteen to eighteen is restricted so largely to the class who can and will do well as scholars, who are idea—rather than thing—thinkers. Systematic education is as necessary and as profitable for the future dentist, engineer, architect, builder, plumber, electrician, or housekeeper, as for the future teacher, lawyer or writer. The time has passed when the rule of thumb was enough for the building trades; when science was a luxury to the farmer, when old wives' lore passed on from mother to daughter was the best available education for housewifery and motherhood. The time is in fact at hand when the technical and the industrial occupations and the work of the housekeeper will be actually more dependent for success upon expert knowledge than the work of the clergyman or literary man. The progress of science in the nineteenth century, continuing at an increasing rate, has put the "hewer of wood" in possession of a solid course of study in forestry, equal in

dignity to that of priest or lawyer and make it possible for the "drawer of water" (*alias* the engineer in hydraulics and irrigation) who really knows his work to study a lifetime.

The present arrangement is the result not of a rational adaptation of the high school to the interests of society, but of a more or less fortuitous historical development. Modern high school education is a growth from the training of priests and of "gentlemen" in the sense of a hundred years ago. The linguistic training and superficial knowledge of the "humanities" in which it abounds was quite appropriate in the case of the generation of future ministers and "gentlemen" who needed to talk agreeably about things in general and not appear at a loss in the company of others trained in the same manner. But the training that was efficient in enabling one to make a good impression among the educated class of a hundred years ago is about the last thing one would rationally choose for the 600,000 children in our high schools to-day. Heaven forbid that we should try to turn out a quarter of a million agreeable talkers as the product of the high school. Let the most ardent advocate of the traditional curriculum choose at random fifty names from the entering class of his local high school; let him find out what each of them has done, what they like to do and can do well, what their older brothers and sisters are doing; and if he has the germs of open-mindedness he will admit that not one in three of them should give, as nearly all now do, a fifth of their time to the study of the traditional algebra and geometry, and that not one in five should study Latin. If, instead of taking the fifty who do enter, he could with omniscience choose the fifty or five hundred who ought to be the ones to continue with systematic education,—the future leaders in trades, business, industries and professions,—he would find a still larger majority of those whose own development and social usefulness demand a training in connection with the real world of nature and the constructive arts.

At this point some reader who has been brought up to a superstitious reverence for that potent word "culture" and

to an association of "utilitarianism" with idiocy, the devil and the plague, will need enlightenment. If culture means knowledge of and participation in the best that has been taught and felt and done, studying chemistry, physics and physiology, or practising forestry, sanitation and nursing, are as truly cultural as reading poems or learning the events of history, and much more so than reading forty lines daily of Cæsar's *Gallic War* or contemplating the mysteries of mood and tense. If culture means a knowledge of the sort of thing they say Matthew Arnold knew to perfection, its pursuit is itself a trade, the trade of literary man and moralist, a trade that, like any other, may be pursued nobly or ignobly, from true zeal for excellence or from sordid selfishness, a trade which has an *éclat* and gives its adept a fame which science, invention and the industrial arts lack, but which intrinsically is no more honourable than its less showy rivals.

The use of the word utilitarian as a term of reproach and despite is due to a pardonable but none the less unfortunate lack of knowledge. Since the nobler souls have been willing to seek truth and beauty and honour, regardless of whether or not there happened to result any increase to their own individual happiness thereby, it is argued that we ought diligently to search for and use in schools those particular subjects of instruction and means of training which would give little or no increase to the happiness of the world at large. As if one could make anybody unselfish by making him useless, or a disinterested lover of truth and beauty by teaching him things of no practical interest to anybody! As if being good for nothing was the most exalted variety of goodness! The most pitiable feature of this fallacy is the frequency with which opponents of utilitarianism make their own greedy profit out of preaching against it.

To illustrate the improvement which we may hope to make in high schools by making them fit their pupils for life, let us consider three of the commonest duties and privileges of life: (1) The franchise, (2) self-support, and (3) maternity.

The exercise of the franchise is no

longer chiefly a matter of honesty and good-will and wisdom in choosing between two clear lines of party policy or between two sets of officials. It is a matter of more or less expert knowledge.

A future voter ought to know that for a city to give to a traction company the use of its streets is identical with giving a neighbour the use of part of your house, wise or unwise, according to who the neighbour is and what he pays you; he ought to know that laws can do more against consumption than medicine can; he ought to believe that one man's gain need not be others' loss, as surely as he believes that two and two are not five; he ought to understand as clearly as he understands addition that a man's contribution to the world is to be measured by the number and worth of the wants he satisfies, and that a man's cost to the world is to be measured by the deprivations he causes. Is it not silly to let the youth of the land spend twelve years in school and at its close be unable, even though he wishes, to protect common property as well as his own, ignorant of the simplest rudiments of public hygiene, possessed by the fallacy that what others have has been taken from him, and burdened with the superstition that a man gives to the world what he spends in it and takes from it the wealth he acquires. Is it not a calamity that although eight out of ten of our high school graduates will live in cities or city suburbs, there is apparently in no high school a course on municipal problems?

The absorption of facts concerning the wars of nations or the development of a governmental system is a thoroughly worthy pursuit for many high school pupils, but it is a poor substitute for actual insight into the facts upon which the efficient conduct of the public affairs to-day must rest. The moral value of a view of human nature broadened by acquaintance with the great view of antiquity is indubitable, but the high school must do more for the moral success of the leaders of the next fifty years than to provide inspiring but remote examples; it must answer the moral problems which an industrial and urban civilisation has made pre-eminent. "The art proper to human reason is life," and the demands

of modern life on reason must not be shirked by the high school.

Responsibility for supplying the wants of one's self and others is the chief feature of adult life, of women as well as of men, for the management of a household is as efficient to this end as is the provision of supplies. In the more primitive life of farm and village industry, this responsibility was shared even by the young. New England boys and girls fifty years ago probably earned more than their own living from fifteen on, and had a full quota of tasks with which they had been entrusted and for which they expected to be held to account. In the modern scheme of life among the urban populations the home too rarely supplies any adequate training in leadership, executive ability or responsibility for tasks assigned. The high school demands five hours a day of lesson-getting within its walls, and from two to five outside; there is not much in connection with a city home that a boy at least can do; it is often easier to get on without his aid than to find work that he can do. In what would be called the home with the best educational opportunities, a boy does little but get lessons even till he is twenty-seven years old, that is, till he is through a professional school.

It is in many cases as unwise thus to debar the child of parents of a sufficient income from partial self-support because he is in school as it is to debar the child of poor parents from school because he must support himself. Luckily, original nature, due to heredity, counts more in the fundamentals of intellect and character than does the training we give, so that the habits of reliance upon others for twenty years need not prevent the boy from assuming cheerfully and bearing successfully the burdens of productive labour. But the fact that nature works well in spite of our mistakes is no reason why we should continue to make them. It is unfair to the boy to exclude from the formative years those ideals and habits of service, responsibility and initiative which will be demanded of him daily from the moment his schooling is done. The high school should be in part a workshop and an em-

ployment bureau; it should co-operate with manufacturers, business houses, professional men and the parents of its pupils to contrive that mixture of productive labour, apprenticeship and academic training which is the safe, healthy and moral life for boys and girls. If the decision between ceasing to help the mother, the cares of a household, and dropping a part of the school work is left to the school, it should in three cases out of four decide for the latter. If a mechanically gifted boy can spend three hours a day in a steel works in place of studying *Ivanhoe* as if it were the Bible, or writing essays on the characters in *The House of Seven Gables*, he had better do so in four cases out of five. The world of industry and business is not Mammon, and the high school curriculum God.

The most perverse failure of high school education to fit gifted youth to their proper task, the improvement of life—is the omission of any specific training for bearing or rearing children. No one disputes the supreme value of intelligent motherhood. The only objections which can intelligently be made to the provision by the schools of training therefor are: (1) That training of sufficient value cannot be given, that consequently maternity had better be altogether an art directed by natural instincts; (2) that the disadvantages of nourishing an undesirable curiosity outweigh the advantages of knowledge; (3) that the intelligent direction of the sex and maternal instincts is impossible at so early an age as that of the high school pupil, and before the interest in their problems is aroused by marriage, and finally (4) that although the training should be given and at this age, it should be given by the home or the church or some agency other than the school.

These objections are all to some extent sound, and deserve most respectful examination. And in the present condition of popular sentiment, the study of reproduction, heredity, the hygiene of childhood, the psychology of instinct and habit, household economics and the like, by pupils in the last two years of high school, would be very likely to fail of securing the desired end. But the

advantages possibly far outweigh the disadvantages; and the high schools ought to lead more often than follow popular sentiments. It would take too long to analyse these objections into their true and their imaginary features, and to show that the latter need not prevent the success in high schools of a solid scientific course in the sciences relating to the creation, maintenance and education of the family. I may only ask attention to a few specially relevant facts.

First, there is knowledge enough which needs only organisation and adaptation to the high school pupil. Second, we cannot leave the matter to natural instincts; our neglect of it in formal education means that we entrust it to verbal traditions of the ignorant, to the chatter of servants, and the woman's column of the newspapers. Third, the experience of medical education, the professional training of nurses, and the teaching of biology in high schools and colleges shows that teaching the facts of science concerning embryos goes on in much the same way as teaching the facts about bacteria or the liver, and warrants the expectation that the small fraction of such a course devoted to a matter-of-fact scientific acquaintance with the development of the human embryo would reduce rather than stimulate undesirable curiosity. Fourth, it is true that girls from sixteen to nineteen are more interested in romance, coquetry, and other activities preliminary to family life than they are in family life itself, and no one should expect such a course to have great popularity; but the course will be supported by those general intellectual interests which support a course in chemistry, biology or hand work. Finally, parents do not know enough to give the training and the churches or other philanthropic agencies would spoil it by inefficient teaching and futile moralising.

It is high time to turn back from these illustrations to the text itself, fitting the school to boys and girls and fitting them for life.

It may be claimed that the traditional training in the languages and mathematics, and the teaching in other subjects patterned on that training, does precisely

fit for life by affording a general discipline for the intellectual powers, and that the work of lesson getting in the traditional curricula is the most economical preparative for future efficient work and unselfish recreation of whatever sort. But it is very hard to find any basis in facts for this claim, and it is easy to find abundant evidence against it. The claim itself appears in educational theory usually as an excuse, as a defensive argument. Only when Latin lost its high place as a utility in commerce and the professions, and began to lose its eminence as the key to the world's knowledge and supposedly best literature, was its disciplinary value discovered. Only when problems about four men working fourteen days at a fourth of a stone wall ceased to apply to every-day practices on the farm did they begin to give universal accuracy and logic. Wherever education is put to a competitive test to produce efficiency in life, for instance in professional schools, it is forced to rely on special training in the special things that are to be done efficiently. We do not give our lawyers more Latin or our physicians more mathematics to make them logical and accurate. But apart from these suspicious facts, definite experiments have shown the high degree of specialisation of the intellect and the inability of training in one study to mysteriously transform the whole intellectual outfit. Moreover, the time has utterly passed when the languages and mathematics could boast any superiority in respect to the power, small for any school study, to improve the mind as a whole. Right methods of thinking can be inculcated as well in forestry, electrical engineering, nursing or the sciences concerned with agriculture, and the chances of transfer of these methods to the general activities of life is greatest where the subject is most like, not most abstracted from, the general activities of life. The high school should give mental discipline and give as much of it as possible, and just for that reason it should, to discipline best for life, discipline in those problems which are most like those of life.

*Edward L. Thorndike.*

## REVIEWS

### A NEW BOOK ON THE WRITING OF LATIN.\*

*Nam castram profecitur* was the attempt of a graduate of one of our fitting schools, desirous of entering a great American university, to turn into Latin the sentence "he sets out for the camp," encountered in an examination paper. While it would unquestionably be an exaggeration to say that this effort represents the general level of attainment, the fact remains that the work in the writing of Latin is the worst which is offered in that subject by candidates for college, and the annual crop of papers submitted to any institution would furnish a choice collection of what our English cousins call "howlers."

This is surely not due to want of attention to the subject in the schools or to the lack of good text-books. The number of the latter is very large, both of those which follow the old-fashioned method of giving an orderly presentation of the forms and syntax in the sequence in which they are discussed by the grammars, and of those which are based in one way or another on a limited portion of the texts of some one of the prose writers required for admission to college. The advocates of these two methods are inclined to regard each as the only correct one, and the champions of the former in particular attribute the poor work in the subject to the introduction of the latter. But in reality the difficulty is not one of method, but is due to the lack of interest of students in the subject and to their conviction that the study is a useless one. This belief is, of course, true in a sense, since the necessity for using Latin in that way no longer exists, but on the other hand nothing gives so exact and thorough a knowledge of the grammar as the writing of Latin, and when the grammatical principles are acquired in this way there is the less excuse for using Caesar, Cicero and Vergil exclusively for that purpose. An additional factor in the case is the circumstance that in many schools the last year is devoted to Vergil, and the writing of Latin is either wholly suspended or made an intermittent and perfunctory exercise.

The books of Mr. Barss—it is to his credit that he does not assume the title of Professor instead of the equally honourable and more appropriate one of Latin Master—are evidently made with unusual care and with a careful study of the conditions of the problem. They ought to prove very effective in the hands of a competent teacher. The entire work is designed to cover the last three years of the preparatory course, but the second part may be used independently of the first. The plan is in a way a combination of the two methods mentioned above. The forms and syntax are in general given in accordance with the former,

\*Writing Latin. Book One—Second Year Work. Book Two—Third and Fourth Year Work. By John Edmund Barss, Latin Master in the Hotchkiss School. The Gildersleeve-Lodge Latin Series. University Publishing Co., New York, Boston, New Orleans, 1906.

but with some important modifications. Such constructions, for example, as the Possessive Dative and the Possessive Genitive, which would be separated if the orders of the grammars were strictly followed, are brought together and contrasted in the same lesson, and the Indicative is carefully studied before the Subjunctive is introduced at all. A number of valuable "hints" on the differences between English and Latin idiom are given in connection with each exercise. The essential feature of the second method is introduced in the form of supplementary exercises based on Caesar's Gallic War, i. 1-13 and ii. 1-11. A novel feature is the introduction of so-called "constructive sentences," that is, the student is asked to form sentences containing certain words, of which the English alone is given, and certain constructions. In addition to the general vocabulary there are special word lists, containing the most important new words of each lesson, which the pupil is expected to memorise, and review lessons, summarising the vocabularies and constructions of several exercises, are introduced at frequent intervals.

All of these features seem to the reviewer excellent and calculated both to interest the pupil and to render instruction effective. The only criticism which he has to offer may perhaps seem an unreasonable one. It is that the "hints," good as they are, are not numerous enough. There are many things for which the student must look to his grammar which might profitably be explained in the same full and enlightening way as, for example, the uses of conditional sentences and of casual conjunctions. With reference to the needs of the average student and the average teacher it is hardly possible to go too far in this respect.

John C. Rolfe.

### A NEW SERIES OF TRANSLATIONS OF THE CLASSIC WRITERS\*

The use of translations has already been discussed in these pages in connection with reviews of various versions of the classic writers. That the subject is one that is exciting general interest is shown by a recent editorial in the *New York Evening Post*, apropos of an edict of Eton College excluding such works from circulation in its general library. In the opinion of the reviewer it is better for students not to use translations at all during the first six years, at least, of their Latin course, and the same thing applies *mutatis mutandis* to the Greek course. Not that all this time should be given to so-called "gerund grinding," or to the minute analysis

\*Euripides' *Alcestris*, translated by H. Kynaston, D.D., Canon Residentiary of Durham, Professor of Greek and Classical Literature in Durham University. With Introduction and Notes by J. Churton Collins, Litt. D., Professor of English Literature in the University of Birmingham. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1906.

Matthew Arnold's *Merope*, to which is appended the *Electra* of Sophocles, translated by Robert White-law. Edited by J. Churton Collins. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1906.