

graduates minds capable of understanding or reaching standards that are high. Granted that most of the teaching is bad, granted that some intelligent undergraduates are indolent, the fact still remains that most of the undergraduates were denied at birth the mental strength ever to attain intellectual superiority.

What! did the hand then of the Potter shake? Yes — badly.

## OYSTERS AND XENOPHON

By Keith Preston

“DO me a skit on teaching Greek”, suggested our friend the editor, and we agreed. But looking back on our Greek teaching after two years out of the harness, we do not find it such a skittish subject. It is something to remember pleasantly, seriously, and a little wistfully, to use a much abused word.

The most wistfully remembered class in our college experience is Greek A.B., the sophomore class in Xenophon’s “Anabasis”. Every year for ten years we marched the A.B.’s up through Mesopotamia. It was always uphill work and sometimes a forlorn hope. The hoplites or heavy arm of our force consisted of “bibs”, or theological students, who, as Greek was essential to their meagre daily bread, may be counted as mercenaries. The light arm or auxiliary was made up of a few coeds who volunteered for the duration of the course. It may be said that the ladies’ auxiliary was often a great comfort to the instructor.

With such forces, dwindling under a grueling fire of conjugations and declensions, we marched uphill to the mid-semesters and downhill to the finals. Sad casualties occurred on the

way. There was poor Jones. Like most bibs Jones had a wife, three children, and a country congregation to visit over the weekend. But after one quiz he turned up missing. The Greek aorist had done for him. The ladies’ auxiliary always behaved well under fire, making up by mental agility for their lack of bone and sinew.

The annual course in Xenophon remains in our mind as a series of day’s marches of which some stand out more vividly than others. There were dull days when we only marched from some place in Mesopotamia so many parasangs to some place else. There was the ticklish day when we had to slur over Cyrus’s affair with the Cilician woman so detrimental to camp morale. Our hoplites thought no evil but we were uneasy about the auxiliaries. There were days of fighting when we had to draw plans and diagrams on the blackboard, and days of feasting when discussions of Greek beverages and cookery were in order. Lastly there was the great day when, as Xenophon tells it, the men in front began to run and the baggage animals to trot, and a shout passed down the line. So Xenophon, clapping spurs to his horse, galloped to the front of the column to see what might be the matter. And there, upon a hill, he found the men pointing, and crying, “Thalassa! The sea!” and embracing one another. That is the high spot in Xenophon and we always thought the course should have ended there, so that the class might share more fully in the ecstasy and jubilation. But they did share it in a way, and we dismissed the day’s recitation at that point anyhow.

Teaching Greek is a matter of plodding and pounding, with thrills that are worth the effort if the plodders can be brought so far. Of course it can be made a killing grind. The invita-



*"Denied at birth the mental strength"*

tion to classics reminds one somewhat of that of the Walrus and the Carpenter,

"O Oysters come and walk with us!"  
The Walrus did beseech.  
"A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,  
Along the briny beach:  
We cannot do with more than four,  
To give a hand to each."

A class of four is ideal for syntactic drill. But if the "dead" languages ever really die, it will be of too intensive drill in syntax and advanced decomposition.

One must keep faith with the oysters. Conducting a class in Xenophon seems to us quite as pleasant and useful as conducting a newspaper column, and it can be made very nearly as modern. As a teacher of Greek we always labored not to be gored on either horn of G. Bernard Shaw's wicked thrust: "Few of them know Greek and none of them knows anything else."

## TEACHING THE YOUNG IDEA TO SHOOT

By Leonard L. Hess

**F**ROM a first year examination paper in one of our largest city high schools: "Write a composition on the following theme — 'The heroism of peace is greater than the heroism of war'."

The writer does not recall what arguments the pupils marshaled to prove the above assertion — handed down by superiors at face value as are practically all assertions entering into the educational fabric — but the statement may be ventured that one and all of them supported the doctrine because they realized it was current coinage into the good graces of the examiners. The same statement, issued

noble mindedly to youth in this year 1924, would have been anything but good coinage in the year 1917 or 1918; would, in fact, not have been made by anybody anxious to keep a job under a Board ridden by war psychology, frenziedly eager to expose the slacker and to prove itself a hundred percenter.

But agreed that the heroism of peace is greater than the heroism of war, and taking the words as they fall like jewels from the lips of one of our educators, let us see what our schools do to ingrain such sentiment in the minds of the young. It is hardly necessary to go further than the English literature in the curriculum to gather proof that the virtues extolled are the fighting virtues, the so called "red blood" virtues — in a word, the virtues of our exalted military caste.

I narrow this inquiry to the course of one high school for the sake of convenience, though much of it will be applicable to others. And further, the work of only the first year is considered.

In the first year we find taught Lewis's "Introduction to Literature" — a book with which for itself one does not take issue. But what are the poems and bits of prose chosen for the course? Among others, "Hervé Riel", "The Ballad of the Revenge", "Incident of the French Camp". With these again one does not take issue. They are lively, colorful, adventurous tales. Were they read for story or literary value, well and good. But here steps in that *bête noire* of our cultural system — the moralist. One must adorn the tale. Each lesson must be sharpened to a moral idea. And what are the highlights chosen in the readings, to be hammered into young skulls? That the heroism of war as exemplified by Hervé, by Grenville, by the drummer boy, is exceeding fine, and if possible — this is the implica-