

## THE ASSAULT ON HUMANISM. II

BY PAUL SHOREY

### I

SOME humanistic readers may be disappointed by the space given to these dialectics of controversy. But it is no longer worth while to play this game according to the conventional rules. What is expected in a plea for classical studies is gentle deprecation of the utilitarian and commercial spirit of the age, and wistful emotional appeals to an idealism that soars beyond all practical reference to actual educational conditions and all narrow scrutiny of the adversary's logic. There is thus no meeting of minds. The rhetoric of idealism makes no impression on advocates who have prejudged the case which they refuse to study. And the general reader, even if pleasantly and irresponsibly titillated for the moment, turns away in the mood of Tennyson's Northern Farmer after the sermon, —

'An' I thowt a said whot a owt to a said, an I  
coom'd awaay.'

I do not know whether Mr. Leacock intended seriously his skit on 'Homer and Humbug,' and the stone which he wished to hurl into the academic garden wrapped in the rune, 'Homer and the Classics are just primitive literature.' But to the Spencers and the Le Bons who take it seriously, we could only reply, —

Deafar . . . blinder unto holy things,  
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,  
Being too blind to have desire to see.

If we are to count opinions, Profes-

sor Leacock's opinion that the art of Homer belongs 'in the same class as primitive music and . . . primitive medicine' will count as one. And so will the opinion of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch that 'Homer stands first, if not unmatched, among poets in the technical triumph over the capital disability of annihilating flat passages.' And Professor Leacock's emotion of conviction is more than matched by that of this successful writer of twentieth-century novels and Professor of English Literature at Cambridge, who declares that if the university should limit him to three texts on which to preach English Literature, he would choose the Bible, Shakespeare, and Homer — and Homer first. There is ample choice in opinions.

The fact that, after twenty years or so of high-school teaching, a gentleman who has presented no public evidence of specialized and scientific competency beyond administrative ability and the mastery of a ready journalistic pen, experiences a distaste for Milton and Burke and opines that Latin and algebra are not significant studies, is in itself of no more significance than the fact that an elderly teacher of Greek is of the contrary opinion. What makes it a timely topic of discussion is the consideration that the reformer is widely believed to speak as an expert or for experts in a supposed science of education.

'Abraham Flexner is another new name that appeals to us,' writes the *San Francisco Chronicle* of August 19, 1916.

He . . . says "mental discipline is not a genuine or valid purpose — it's a make-believe." Our plain speech is a part of the price that Mr. Flexner must pay for this continental fame.

There can be no question of personality so long as the appeal is solely to the unmisrepresented printed word. And no skepticism that we may express about the validity of his science can offend his sense of propriety more than the language of his disciples about the Classics of England, Greece, and Rome shocks those to whom the Classics are a personal religion.

One of the tests for vocational fitness approved by the experts to whose scientific evaluations we are asked to submit the destiny of humanistic studies is to cross out a given word or letter in an assigned text. Testing myself by this method on the text of Mr. Flexner's article, I drew my pencil through 81 occurrences of 'discipline' and 'disciplinary.' Doubtless, if my perceptions had not been blunted by thirty years' teaching of Greek and Latin, I might have observed more. But even from these inadequate statistics my unscientific mind inferred an obsession. And, in truth, through twenty columns of the *Atlantic* Mr. Flexner tilts at windmills of his own hallucination and belabors men of straw. Whatever some foolish advocates of the Classics may have sometimes said, the systematic exaggeration of the value of merely disciplinary or gymnastic study is no essential element in our unwillingness to have American education regulated out of hand by experts who hate *Lycidas* and think *Comus* a bore.

The systematic antithesis between a supposed disciplinary theory of education and a content system is fallacious in logic and has no basis in fact. There is no such sharply antithetic absolute 'entweder-oder' as the argument postulates. The alleged incompatibility be-

tween the culture argument and the disciplinary theory rests upon the unwarranted assumption that each is to be taken exclusively. But it is apparent to common sense that the reasons for the place in the curriculum assigned to any given study may be and usually are cumulative — the sum of our estimates of its disciplinary, cultural, utilitarian, vocational, æsthetic, social, or other values. The matter cannot be disposed of by this high *a priori* road. It is not true that the schools of to-day are dominated by the ideal of formal discipline. It is not true, unless the modernists belong to the class from which Emerson prayed to be delivered — of those who think themselves persecuted when they are contradicted. It is not true, unless Mr. Flexner, like a recent anonymous satirist of faculty meetings, regards any survival of an idea that he desires to extirpate as equivalent to its superstitious worship.

As an expert in secondary education, Mr. Flexner must be aware that the actual curricula of the schools and the statistics of election are grossly at variance with his exaggerations. It is perhaps an uneasy suspicion of this that constrains him to buttress his main thesis with two subsidiary arguments. The infection of the hateful disciplines, Latin and algebra, communicates itself to all other studies and causes them to be taught in a dull, mechanical, lifeless, formal fashion. The sole support of this generalization is that comprehensive indictment of human fallibility and inefficiency which has always gained the reformer his hearing. Independently of all preconceived purposes and systems, languid, mechanical, and in that sense 'formal' teaching is easier for the teacher than the exhausting outpour of inspiration, life, and originality. Half-vitalized teaching will remain with us until the modernist Utopia provides and pays for a quarter

of a million of the 'original or heroic school-teachers' missed by Mr. H. G. Wells — teachers exempt from frailty and love of ease, and intensely vital, alert, and intelligent throughout the long and weary day. Every new and 'practical' or 'inspirational' reform has lapsed into mechanism, formalism, and verbalism in the goose-step-drilled masses of its teachers. Even the agricultural colleges out West, I am told, find it easier and pleasanter to lecture on agricultural pedagogy than to teach real farming in the sweat of the brow.

The other indirect argument is that the influence of the preparatory school technically so-called, and the presence of college requirements, impose the disciplinary ideal upon all secondary schools. There is nothing to confirm this assertion except its *Zwecknotwendigkeit* for the purposes of Mr. Flexner's argument. It suggests, however, a problem which Mr. Flexner does not here discuss and at which I can only glance. It is not true that in large American high schools the organization of college preparatory classes is prohibitive in cost, or presents difficulties of administration that a little goodwill could not easily overcome. But the goodwill is often lacking, and principals who hate the Classics or are irrationally jealous of the colleges avail themselves of these pretexts to suppress Greek altogether, while waiting for the day of reckoning with Latin. Some time it will be needful to argue this question to a conclusion, and to appeal to thoughtful secondary teachers to repudiate the demagogues who do not blush to tell them that the very term college requirements is an offense, because 'it is the student who has requirements, not the college.'

Equally brief must be my examination of Mr. Flexner's main contention that psychological and educational

science does not recognize any such thing as mental discipline. The general tendency to the spread of power and facility to connected functions and processes, and the technical testimony of science in respect of this irradiation of acquired faculty in the more elementary processes of the mind, are still under debate, with a strong presumption that there exists such a tendency. To the practical purpose of estimating the disciplinary value of high-school and collegiate studies, this kind of science has nothing to contribute. The essential consideration is obviously the number of elements which the compared processes have in common — the elements, that is to say, which the entire educational process involved in the linguistic analyses of Latin grammar, the mastery of Latin vocabulary, the critical translation and appreciation of Latin writers has in common with other desirable kinds of knowledge or forms of mental activity and faculty.

In other words, science leaves this question where it was — to the adjudication of common sense, observation, and relevant argument on the specific facts by those who know the facts well enough to discuss them intelligently. This is familiar ground. It is perfectly well known to competent psychologists. And the abuse of the appeal to 'science' in this connection has been discreditable to the professors of pedagogy and an imposition on the public as well.

I have said this before, and heard in reply that, as an amateur, I had misunderstood the statements of the pedagogical psychologists. They were aware that science had not pronounced a definitive verdict. But the question is, not what individual controversialists may know, but what the majority of them seek to make the public believe. Pedagogical psychology cannot

escape this collective responsibility by hedging in this manner. Mr. Flexner himself may never have so hedged or evaded. I dare say he has always charged headlong whenever he fancied that he saw the red rag of mental discipline. But if he is acquainted with the literature of the question, he ought not to tell the public that science recognizes no such thing.

The dead set against 'mental discipline' is polemics, not science. It is forgotten as soon as it has served to discredit Latin and algebra. There are authentic anecdotes of the allegation of mental discipline in justification of high-school courses in typewriting. Professor O'Shea argues that 'hewing to the line in manual training will make the student realize the necessity of hewing to the moral line in all his conduct,' and that 'the experience thus gained with natural things insensibly affects all one's relationships.'

Similarly, Mr. Flexner's digression and diatribe on the so-called faculty psychology is merely a red herring across the trail. For the purposes of secondary and collegiate education it does not matter two straws whether the so-called faculties of the mind do or do not 'exist in separate form.' The reduction of all questions to their ultimate metaphysical terms is a favorite fallacy of the sciolist. The protest against the 'faculty psychology' has become one of the most intolerable of twentieth-century commonplaces. Everybody suspects everybody else of overlooking the ultimate unity and interdependence of the so-called parts or functions of the mind. From Matthew Arnold's sonnet on Butler's sermons back to Plato's *Republic*, a long series of poets and metaphysicians illustrates this antinomy. We are no nearer a final metaphysical solution than in Plato's day. And common sense will continue to discuss education

in terms of mental faculties as the eminent psychologist Lloyd-Morgan does, without commitment to any absolute metaphysical hypothesis about the one and the many in mind and their relation to matter.

## II

It is comparatively easy to parry these or any other particular thrusts of the experts in the new pedagogical science. But how shall we meet the vague predisposition in the twentieth-century mind to admit that there is, there must be, there is soon destined to be, a true science of education taking its principles from a scientific and definitive psychology. For it is to this popular faith that the chief and final fallacy of the militant modernists, the insinuation of pseudo-science under cover of real science, makes its appeal.

This indeterminate claim can be met only by an equally broad challenge to produce the evidence, to exhibit some tangible results fairly proportionate to the expenditure of money, time, labor, and investigation on these subjects in the past fifty years. Pseudo-science is not an invidious question-begging epithet. It is merely a convenient watchword for that policy of carrying the war into Africa to which the humanist is driven, and in which he is justified by the present conduct of the debate.

The conflict of science and Classics is a dead issue. Science has won an overwhelming victory. And its real competitor in education to-day is, not classical humanism, but pseudo-science. There is ample time for both science and Latin in a rationally constructed curriculum. There is not time for both and for the *dementia præcox* of premature preoccupation with pseudo-science.

But real science is hard work — almost as hard as Latin; while the science

of the talking delegates of science is a soft snap. And the representatives of real science will some time awaken to this fact and cease to waste their energies in blockading the last starveling remnants of the Greeks, and hindering high-school students from getting enough linguistic analysis to teach them to think and talk straight, and enough Latin vocabulary to render first aid to their spelling and qualify them to consult an English dictionary with some glimmer of intelligence.

The seemingly invidious term 'pseudo-science,' then, is intended only as a fair characterization of the monstrous disproportion between the pretensions of pedagogical psychology, or the science of education, and its verifiable achievements. It would be ungenerous and illiberal to press this point, if the adepts of this science frankly admitted that they are pioneers on the frontiers of physiology and psychology, tentatively working in graduate laboratories and seminars toward a possible science of the future. But they fall back to that bombproof only when hard pressed in the open. They make very different claims when they appear before legislatures, parents' meetings, and teachers' associations, or in the compilation of the textbooks which they compel all teachers to study.

An Ohio colleague, Professor Lord, writes that 'any graduate of an Ohio college who wishes to teach Latin can present as a professional qualification for such a position courses in the Hegelian logic, abnormal psychology, and the birthrate of immigrants. He cannot present as part of his professional equipment courses in Latin literature or Roman history.'

The exploiters of such tests as these will themselves be tried by tests which they cannot endure — not of course in this inadequate paper, but in the debates of the coming decade. As experts

they would perhaps deny the competency of the amateur critic. But our contention is precisely that, in range of classroom experience, observation, reflection, and pertinent reading, they are no more experts than we are. As the Autocrat says, the layman has sometimes actually heard more sermons than the professional preacher and theologian. I can see no evidence that they have ever studied or understood, either the literature that we wish to teach, or the literature that we ourselves produce for purposes of 'promotion,' in either sense of the word. But I for one have read, not a dozen, or a score, but many more of their authorities and their productions. I read many of these treatises with a pencil and a purpose to note anything worth noting. I found less that was new, true, significant, and relevant to the purpose than in any other literature of like extent that I ever sampled. A clever man and ready writer can doubtless compile readable jumble-books full of unrelated facts and anecdotes, drawn from heterogeneous fields of knowledge, placed in incongruous juxtaposition, and unified only by the schematism of artificial and arbitrary system. But the definite contributions of this literature to the understanding of the present human mind and to the rational conduct of education are in ludicrous disproportion to its extent and its pretensions. My present object is not to prove this, but to induce a few readers to test it for themselves. It is not so hard as it looks. It is a little harder for most people than for a teacher of Greek, because he does not have to look up the etymologies of the mostly superfluous technical terms which are the chief stock in trade.

This literature is like Hesiod's hill of virtue — it may be a little rough and steep at the beginning, but grows easier as we mount; or, rather, *facilis descen-*



*sus* is the apter classical allusion here. The first book you read may seem hard or may impose upon you by its variety of irrelevant information. But read on, and you will find that they all say about the same kind of thing and that they all say amazingly little — practically nothing to edify a reader who is able in any reasonable measure to draw upon the world's inherited stores of experience and common sense. There is plenty of truism, paradox, tabulation of statistics, questionnaires, that lead to nothing, and descriptions of the technic of experiments that prove nothing to the purpose. But the challenge to produce definite results evokes only assertion and prophecy.

The programme that postulates the application of rigid scientific methods to the mind and history of man was not first formulated by Spencer, Comte, Vico, Spinoza, or Descartes. But recent progress in physical science has immensely strengthened the plausibility of prophecy that the extension and refinement of its methods must soon subdue and annex the adjacent domains of 'superorganic' evolution.

No one would desire to dash these generous aspirations. But living in the future is, as Mr. Chesterton says, a soft job. And one of the most imperative tasks of present-day criticism is to keep the highways of common sense and rational thought clear of the rubbish shot down upon them from pseudo-scientific towers of Babel. The naïveté which admits without verification the authentic mission of any writer who comes prophesying in the name of science, is natural and pardonable in eminent professors of physical science, intoxicated by the progress which, as they sometimes put it, has recently transpired in their own domain. But in the more sophisticated representatives of the inchoate sciences, the resort to prophecy is a part of the recognized tactics of de-

bate. It is with this that they meet the challenge to exhibit *their* results, which grows more and more embarrassing as the decades lengthen out since the foundation of their laboratories and the establishment of their predominance in education.

Anybody can verify this provisionally by reading the papers in the fifth volume of the St. Louis Congress of Arts and Sciences, and then going on to the study of Professor Titchener's *Experimental Psychology of the Thought Processes*, and a select half-dozen of recent textbooks on educational psychology. I am not speaking of possible contributions to physiology, brain-anatomy, pathology, school-administration, the elaboration of laboratory technic, and the like. These I neither affirm nor deny. I am speaking of results fairly describable as new and significant, and applicable to the understanding of the normal human mind and the rational guidance of high-school and college education. What for these purposes have all the Ebbinghauses to tell us of memory, association, judgment, and the relation of language to thought, that was not known to Mill, Taine, Schopenhauer, and Emerson, or for that matter to Quintilian, Cicero, and Plato? The attentive reader will find that at the critical moment they evade this test with denunciations of the insufficiency of Mill's association psychology, appeals to the blessed equivocation 'apperception,' and prophecies of greater things to come.

Space fails for exhaustive citation, and it is difficult to single out individual names, not because fair quotation is offensive personality, but because there is no agreement about the scientific standing of many of these writers. When I say that Professor Münsterberg's page about the contribution of experimental psychology to the philology of the epic, or his account of the

experiments on the æsthetic appreciation of the vowel-music of Keats and Byron, is pure, definite, and highly finished nonsense, I am sometimes told that Professor Münsterberg was not authorized to speak for psychological science. And there are doubtless iconoclasts who would oppose the same demurrer to a citation of typical utterances of President Stanley Hall or Mr. Flexner himself.

Let us turn then to the widely commended and compulsorily studied huge volume of Professor Thorndike on educational psychology. He begins by laying down in such a solemn way a long list of propositions such as these: 'When any conductive unit is in readiness to conduct, for it to do so is satisfying; when any conductive unit is not in readiness to conduct, for it to conduct is annoying.' — 'A man's intellect and will is the sum of his tendencies to respond to situations and elements of situations.'

The secondarily automatic reiteration of this sort of thing appeals to the eternal instinct for scholasticism in the human mind. In the words of James Russell Lowell, it 'cheaply gratifies that universal desire of the human mind to have everything accounted for.' It was this remark of Lowell's, perhaps, that led an adept of the new science of criticism to animadvert more in sorrow than in anger on Lowell's unaccountable weakness for 'stopping short of the ultimate.' When Professor Thorndike has posited his absolute and ultimate principles of education and descends to particulars, what has he to tell us? Well, he tells us among other things that educational theorists 'violate these principles when they explain learning in terms of general faculties such as attention, interest, memory, or judgment, instead of,' and so forth.

It would require a chapter to expose

the fallacies of that sentence. We have already seen that the eternal metaphysical antinomy of the one and the many, as transferred from ontology to psychology, is totally irrelevant to any profitable or practicable present-day discussion of the process of learning. One of the best modern psychologies for teachers, the little volume of the eminent English psychologist Lloyd-Morgan, dismisses in a brief paragraph the central nervous system, 'the multitude of connections' and all their afferents and efferents, and goes on to speak of the faculties of attention, memory, and so forth, as unaffectedly as you or I would do. Like Lowell, he has enough common sense to stop short of purely hypothetical ultimates.

Particularizing still further, Professor Thorndike continues: 'School practice neglects them [these principles] . . . when it gives elaborate drills in *bonus-a-um* and in conjugating *amo*.' As soon as he says anything specific, he betrays himself. The statement is neither scientific nor true. There is no psychological principle that determines unconditionally the proportion of systematic formal memorizing of paradigms that is most helpful in the acquisition of an inflected language. It probably varies with the idiosyncrasy of different minds. Mere memorizing *en bloc* will not avail unless reinforced by exercises in the recognition and the use of the separate forms in phrases and sentences. And there is no salvation in educational psychology for a teacher too stupid to perceive or too lazy to practice this. But the majority of those who have really learned Latin have always memorized the forms. The majority of experienced teachers, from Quintilian down, have always believed that this is in the main the best way. Professor Thorndike's confident assertion, then, is not science: it is like Mr. Flexner's heavy satire on

he procedure of the Latin classroom, and his assumption that nothing said or done there is made intelligible to the student — a mere ebullition of partisan rancor against the study of Latin.

But I cannot summarize the entire literature of this new scholasticism. It contains much else, of course: some sensible unsystematic observations of experienced teachers; some contributions, it may be, to physiological psychology; incongruous odds and ends of what I know to be *misinformation* drawn from the history of philosophy, and of what in my ignorance I will charitably assume to be information taken from textbooks of biology and anatomy; tabulations of answers to questionnaires; the curves of progress in learning to telegraph or typewrite; the statistics of epilepsy, measurements of the force of the knee-jerk, and exercises in self-control — of the muscles that move the ears.

An adult who has reference standards of real knowledge in his specialty, and is ballasted by the accumulated common sense of years of reading and experience, may dabble in this literature with no greater injury than loss of his time. Its disintegrating and deliquating effect on the logical functions of young minds compelled to attack it without the protection of a gas-mask is a thing imagination boggles at. It will surely strain 'apperception' to the limit to assimilate the statements within a few pages that 'Socrates discovered concepts,' that 'the formula of cholestrin is  $C_{26}H_{44}OH_2O_4$ ,' and that 'Key declares that intense mental activity among the upper classes of Sweden has resulted in a marked increase in the tendency to nose-bleed.'

### III

The latest response to these challenges is a disclaimer of all pretensions

to finality. What the pedagogical psychologists profess for themselves and commend to us is the scientific and experimental attitude toward education as toward all large social and human interests. They are merely collecting statistics and trying experiments, to prove which of two competing methods of teaching is preferable. This position is in the abstract unassailable. But the inferences which the public is expected to draw from its application in practice are matters of grave concern.

'There is danger,' says the Platonic Socrates, 'that you may be trying an experiment, not on the *vile corpus* of a Carian slave, but on your own sons or the sons of your friends, and, as the proverb says, breaking the large vessel in learning to make pots.'

America is very large. It is that mart or world's fair of institutions and types which Plato says a great democracy must be. We could cordially welcome the human experience which Mr. Flexner proposes to contribute to the exhibits, were it not for the misapprehensions to which his designation of it as an experiment will give rise. This is not a verbal cavil. The modernist school will not be an experiment but an experience, standing in the same relation to all possible future sciences of character and education as that occupied by what Mill calls 'the general remarks afforded by common experience respecting human nature in our own age and by history respecting times gone by.' It will be one more increment of fact or group of facts. To call it an experiment in any scientific sense of the word is to mislead public opinion and prejudge the entire question.

This popular exploitation of the false analogy between experiments in the laboratory and experiments on man and society is not a new thing. There is a clarifying literature of the



subject which the modernists characteristically disregard. One source of this literature is the discussion by Brunetière, Faguet, Doumic, and other thoughtful French critics, of Zola's naïve notion of the experimental novel. The more technical examination of the idea derives from John Stuart Mill's chapters on the logic of the moral sciences. In the physical sciences the experimental method isolates and discovers the true cause by systematic elimination. The plurality of causes and the intermixture of effects preclude this procedure in the infinitely complex social sciences of ethnology and education. 'The instances requisite for the prosecution of a directly experimental inquiry into the formation of character would be a number of human beings to bring up and educate from infancy to mature age. . . . It is not only impossible to do this completely, but even to do so much of it as should constitute a tolerable approximation. An apparently trivial circumstance which eluded our vigilance might let in a train of impressions and associations sufficient to vitiate the experiment. . . . No one who has sufficiently reflected on education is ignorant of this truth.'

Mr. Flexner's disciples owed it to themselves and to the public to point out what they deemed the errors and limitations of Mill's doctrines here. Instead, they are content to applaud in general terms the advent of the experimental ideal in education.

Professor Dewey welcomes the 'endeavor to incarnate an experimental attitude in the conduct of a school, because it will substitute specific inquiries for temperamental conviction and small facts for opinions.' Here, as in the introductory essay of *Creative Intelligence*, his deprecation of vagueness is couched in language singularly abstract and vague. There is no ref-

erence to any specific argument or fact, experiment, or formulation of the experimental method on which issue might be joined. The *New Republic* itself is equally confident that 'no one who knows the temper of men like Mr. Flexner will for an instant question the utter disinterestedness, the exact and catholic spirit with which they will make the experiment.'

Mr. Flexner, in advance of his experiment, holds conviction about the psychology of mental discipline and the teachers who 'treat with convincing gravity . . . things called voices, moods, and gerunds,' which are nothing if not temperamental. And the intellectual disinterestedness of an experimenter who proposes to test Latin by suppressing it altogether, inspires as little confidence as his logic. The fallacy of one cause dominates his thinking. He conceives experiment as the direct transfer of the method of Pasteur to society and education. Latin is a microbe by whose presence or absence in a crucial instance the cause of disease or health may be ascertained.

Life and education are infinitely complex. Those of us who most deplore Mr. Flexner's theories may also cordially welcome the new school as a concrete entity. Any school that secures wholesome physical and moral conditions for the early years of a select group of children may accomplish for *them* a good that outweighs the probable consequences of the intellectual errors of its founders. We wish the new school all success, and we believe in the entire sincerity of Mr. Flexner's enthusiasm for the betterment of American education. But it would be the height of naïveté to join in the congratulations on the presumable scientific disinterestedness with which he will conduct the experiment. To do that is to overlook elementary human motive and the very nature of

the problem. A school founded in large part to verify the assumption that Latin is neither a necessary nor a significant ingredient in a well-mixed course of study is not likely to disappoint expectation. And in the plurality of causes there is no scientific method by which the advocates of Latin will be able to disprove this foregone conclusion. This we foresee because, in spite of their perfunctory protests and caveats, the writings of the modernists plainly manifest an unreasoning and violent antipathy, not merely to the study of Latin, but to the Classics and all that the Classics represent.

## IV

I have left myself only a few words to sum up and define the main issue raised by the so-called modernist reform of education. It is not the place of physical science in our civilization and in our universities: that is secure. It is not the opportunity of industrial or vocational training for the masses: we all welcome that. It is not the conversion of the American high school into the old Latin-verse-writing English public school: nobody ever proposed that. It is not the prescription of a universal requirement of Greek or the maintenance of a disproportionate predominance of Latin in our high schools and colleges: there is not the slightest danger of that. It is the survival or the total suppression, in the comparatively small class of educated leaders who graduate from high schools and colleges, of the very conception of linguistic, literary, and critical discipline; of culture, taste, and standards; of the historic sense itself; of some trained faculty of appreciation and enjoyment of our rich heritage from the civilized past; of some counterbalancing familiarity with the actual evolution of the human man, to soften the

rigidities of physical science, and to check and control by the touchstones of humor and common sense the *a priori* deductions of pseudo-science from conjectural reconstructions of the evolution of the physical and animal man.

It is in vain that they rejoin that they too care for these things, and merely repudiate our exclusive definitions of them. That is, in the main, only oratorical precaution and the tactics of debate, as, if space permitted, I could show by hundreds of citations from their books. The things which, for lack of better names, we try to suggest by culture, discipline, taste, standards, criticism, and the historic sense, they hate. Or, if you prefer, they are completely insensitive to them and wish to impose their own insensibility upon the coming generation. They are genuinely skeptical of intellectual discriminations which they do not perceive, and æsthetic values which they do not feel. They are fiercely resentful of what they deem the supercilious arrogance of those who possess or strive for some far-off touch or faint tincture of the culture and discipline which they denounce as shibboleths, taboos, and the arbitrary conventions of pedants.

From their own point of view it is natural that they should deprecate with sullen jealousy the inoculation of the adolescent mind with standards and tastes that would render it immune to what one of them has commended in print as the 'science' of Elsie Clews Parsons. The purpose, or, at any rate, the tendency of their policies is to stamp out and eradicate these things and inculcate exclusively their own tastes and ideals by controlling American education with the political efficiency of Prussian autocracy and in the fanatical intolerance of the French anticlericalists. Greek and Latin have become mere symbols

and pretexts. They are as contemptuous of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Racine, Burke, John Stuart Mill, Tennyson, Alexander Hamilton, or Lowell, as of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, or Horace. They will wipe the slate clean of everything that antedates Darwin's *Descent of Man*, Mr. Wells's *Research Magnificent*, and the familiar pathos of James Whitcomb Riley's vernacular verse.

These are the policies that mask as compassion for the child bored by literature which, they say, it cannot be expected to appreciate and understand, or behind the postulate that we should develop æsthetic and literary sensibilities only by means of the literature that expresses the spirit of modern science, not that which preserves in amber the husks of the dead past.

'Purpose' is, after 'situation,' the favorite catchword of this propaganda. Truly — they will 'answer to the purpose easy things to understand.' Easy things to understand, — the things of immediate appeal to the relaxed self and the natural taste for bathos, — these only would they stamp upon the plastic memory of childhood. They do not wish the child's mind, even in the strenuous morning hours of school, to be tuned to the pitch, to be keyed up to the appreciation of the things that are more excellent — the things that even in imperfect apprehension may abide in the memory as possessions, touchstones, standards, ideals for life.

Much lost I; something stayed behind.  
A snatch maybe of classic song,  
Some breathing of a deathless mind,  
Some love of truth, some hate of wrong.

'The literature that embodies the scientific and progressive thought of the present age.' On this only would they form the collegian's taste and judgment, and his sense of historical, social, and human values. They do not wish the undergraduate's automatic

response to the stimulus and the all-absorbing fashion of the contemporary environment to be confused by comparisons with fashions of thought that have passed away. They instinctively distrust that spirit of critical humanism which, from Plato to Pater and Arnold and Lowell and Anatole France, has always refused to take quite seriously the systems and the system-builders of the hour. These half-conscious motives are clothed with the glow of conscious sincerity by their genuine incapacity to conceive that writers who never heard of submarines and Zeppelins can contribute anything to the spiritual and intellectual life of a civilization that culminates in the War of 1914.

Homer was a primitive tribal bard. Æschylus represents the obsolete sociology of the city state. The cosmic philosophy of Herbert Spencer has only contempt for the petty personal theme of the imperialistic and militaristic Virgil — 'Arms and the man.' What message can he, the singer of imperial Rome, have for the modern spirit?—

Now his Forum roars no longer, fallen every  
purple Cæsar's dome.

The theology of Dante and Milton lacks the breadth of the Lincoln social settlement and the congress of religions — and their cosmogony is incompatible with the planetesimal theory.

Shakespeare is feudal; Pope, Queen-Anneish; Burke, eighteenth-century; Tennyson and Mill, Victorian. Neither irony, nor rhetoric, nor argument will make any dent in the carapace of minds case-hardened in the formulas of an *a priori* evolutionary philosophy of progress against all direct, immediate, and peremptory perception of absolute beauties and finer shades of truth. The certainties of their fixed and fanatical assurance are unclouded by any such self-questioning as that

which gives pause to the great liberal, radical, and modernist poet Carducci, in his wonderful sonnet to Dante.

Dante, how is it that *my* vows I bear,<sup>1</sup>  
Submitted at thy shrine to bend and pray,  
To Night alone relinquishing thy lay,  
And with returning sun returning there?  
Never for me hath Lucy breathed a prayer,  
Matilde with lustral fount washed sin away,  
Or Beatrice on celestial way  
Led up her mortal love by starry stair.  
Thy Holy Empire I abhor, the head  
Of thy great Frederick, in Olona's vale  
Most joyfully had cloven, crown and brains.  
Empire and Church in crumbling ruin fail:

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Richard Garnett.

Above, thy ringing song from heaven is sped:  
The Gods depart, the poet's hymn remains.

'Our little systems have their day,' said another obsolete nineteenth-century poet and thinker. Our little systems have their day; but the human spirit that creates and dissolves all systems, abides. And the study of the human spirit is not planetary or biological evolution, or the anthropology of the pre-human man. It is neither the psychology of the laboratory nor the metaphysics of the schools: it is neither science nor pseudo-science — it is humanism.

## THE EIDOLON

BY LISA YSAYE TARLEAU

*Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle,  
Assise auprès du feu, devidant et filant,  
Direz, chantant mes vers, en vous esmerveillant:  
'Ronsard me célébroit du temps que j'étois belle.'*  
PIERRE RONSARD.

DUSK quietly entered the room and spread her gray and filmy shadows ever deeper and deeper over all the old, dear, and familiar things; even the figure of the Gentleman in Gray melted slowly into the darkness that hovered around him, and he soon seemed little more than a shadow himself, only somewhat deeper and darker than those in the other corners, ere the Lady in Blue returned from her visit and at once flooded the room with the light of electric lamps. She had been gone quite a long time, — longer than she expected when she asked her friend to wait for her return, — and now her face wore an expression in which

amusement and disappointment were strangely mingled. The Gentleman in Gray, as he helped her out of her furs, said with a quizzical smile, 'Did you enjoy your visit? Have you seen her?'

'Yes, I have seen her; but enjoy — well, I shall tell you all about it. Let us sit here, please, at the fire, and do turn those glaring lights off. Just leave the lamps on the wall burning, — yes, that's right, — and now come here and listen.'

The Gentleman in Gray did as he was bidden, and soon was seated beside the Lady in Blue, who gave him a quick and questioning look before she began her tale.

'You know,' she said, 'I was eager to see her — who would n't have been? The mistress of a poet, and such a poet! His verses possessed, not only my heart and my soul, but my very blood;