

# EDUCATION TOSSES IN ITS SLEEP

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*TEACHING has been defined as the vilest of trades and the noblest of professions. The writer of this paper inherited not only a passion for books and classical learning, but a passion and a gift for sharing his enthusiasms. In commenting upon the changing educational standards, he has in mind a notable series of essays that appeared in the FORUM forty years ago, a series which will be more specifically contrasted in a new symposium to be published in the forthcoming March Anniversary issue.*

**N**O one who read the FORUM educational symposium of 1886 can fail to discern a tremendous difference between the type of education presented in the "thirties" and the system of to-day. The authors of "How I Was Educated" wrote at a time when the United States Bureau had begun to issue significant statistics, at a half-way point in the evolution of our nationwide system, and in a spirit of impatience with the bungling district methods in which many of them had been brought up. As one turns its pages, one notes an almost unanimous chorus of "Teachers do not make the scholar," "the tomfoolery of the Lancastrian system then in vogue," "tumbling about in a library is best," "I did not like school and derived almost everything that is good from my mother's careful teaching." Except for a few institutions like the Hartford Grammar and the Boston Latin Schools, the "system" of the thirties comes off badly. Parental inspiration, an occasional great spirit, boyish debating societies, and the world of nature seem to have been the chief factors in the development of these leaders in college thought. Practically all of them independently and classically trained, they rebelled against a rote system which, in the hands of crude leaders, made them parrots in question and answer: "What is a city? — A city is a large town containing many inhabitants, incorporated with peculiar privileges, and governed by a mayor, aldermen, and other officers."

Unlike the children of to-day, these men were brought up either in small and homogeneous groups where culture was prevalent, or in isolated communities where one had to struggle to get a liberal education. They were automatically above or below the "median." Carter, Hall, Mann, and their successors had not yet reduced the number of Ichabod Cranes by good courses in

teacher-training; psychology had not yet shown that it is possible to be both interesting and strict; the pioneer spirit was in their youth producing great experimenters in a new country and automatically consigning ninety per cent of all children at an early age to the farm, the sea, the western clearing. It was probably better so: better that they should adventure in the face of chilling fact than that they should theorize while the West remained unoccupied, the railroads unbuilt, and the telegraph uninvented. The cream of the colleges and the old academies, with penetration and thoroughness, were turning out leaders and instructing boys in background and fundamentals, but they caught only those who were in a position to make the most of their offerings; the great majority suffered from the extremes of heat and cold, — both physically and mentally.

In the late eighties and early nineties the diffusion of learning had become general, with a distinct change in the atmosphere of the schoolroom. Small boys like myself, whether in public or private institutions, took their education as their elders took the whole system of living, in a manner that was comfortable, static, and perhaps dull. The corporate pace of things was deliberate; the energetic individual had a clear field. Children, who nowadays go at their work with a communal zest, took their group training in a spirit of narcotic consent. Our own schoolroom was happy and full of flowers; a company of boys and girls, mostly from academic and professional families, remained awake during the morning, gorged heavy meals of meat and potatoes, hammered down much as a gardener pats a terrace with his shovel, and returned on the run to drowse from half-past one to three, — when *ennui* vanished under the spell of afternoon entertainment in a semi-country district where skating, bicycle-riding, and impromptu games of all sorts could be organized at a moment's notice. The teacher was refined and had sympathy with the individual trends of the pupils. Monthly essays on William Penn and Benjamin Franklin, copied carefully, tied up in blue ribbon, and deposited with affectionate solicitude in one's mother's mahogany desk, bore witness to elementary accuracy. And, happily, much water had flowed under the bridge of American pedagogy since the youth of the late W. T. Harris who, in the *FORUM* essays of 1886, revealed the weakness of the rote system that called for the ques-

tion and answer above-mentioned: "What is a city? — A city is a large town, and so forth." I think that perhaps the life-work of Dr. Harris may be ascribed to a revolt from this sort of thing, just as Lincoln's national policy dated from his vision of the slave market.

At home the atmosphere more than supplemented the school. Since 1781, from father to son each head of our family had successfully entangled at least one child in the permanent meshes of pedagogy. Neurobiologists have noticed among naval officers a trend called "thalassophilia" or love of the sea: it is found also among Nantucketers who have given many a life to the heavy-plunging foam and written whole trilogies of sorrow on their tomb stones. Even so our forebears have ever manifested a mania for instructing others. Happily, however, it has been comedy rather than tragedy, — *Much Ado* or *Love's Labor's Lost*. Bibliophilia was ours, for better or worse. And if we overdid the abstract, it was done with a will and in high spirits.

Our evenings at home were cumulatively enjoyable. Juvenile stuff read rapidly: the Troy and Rome stories; Tales from Shakespeare, Scott, and Dickens; The Household Book of Poetry (edited by a pupil of my grandfather's and dedicated to his college); and ballads without end, — these all whirled us at a moment's notice into a realm which retained and increased its flavor with the passing years. To this day I cannot hear

*"The king sits in Dunfermline town,  
Drinking the bluid-red wine,"*

without a choke in the throat and the recollection of a rich barytone recitative sounding through a Viking-like moustache, before an open fire. The printed word was thus a sacred thing; I find myself even now indulging the delightful but dangerous habit of translating books into life rather than life into books. Is it, however, so silly, this inverted imagination, this mental cart-before-the-horse, which gives one a real passion for reading and reflection, and makes an evening in an armchair a pleasure rather than a torture? Even old B—— the gardener, a New Bedford whale-boat steerer in the days when sailors wore side-whiskers and brown derbies, impressed us as a walking Cooper novel; he was one of our best sellers, though in pretty dilapidated binding.

It was this home reinforcement of the first six grades, the period of childhood when so much more can be done to-day in waking the spirit of curiosity, that gave us an abiding love for reading, just as mountains or sea or farmland have taken shape for many a child who was more "eye-minded" than ourselves. When a scoffing cousin asked me "what the deuce I cared about all those fellows in Troy who went around sticking each other with spears," I simply asked him why he kept his grandfather's Civil War cavalry sabre over the mantelpiece. We looked on such tales as living things: at the death of the horse in *The Lady of the Lake*, three small boys who did not wish to show their feelings rose with one accord to let Rover in.

Honesty leads me to confess that at my next school the Latin teacher was the joy of life, a drill-master with inspiration also, laying the foundation of love for the whole Roman element, if not the Latin element in our western civilization. If only the reading habit could be imbued in children by the age of twelve, carrying the home method into the schoolroom at a time when the glories of history, literature, and art lie ready for the asking in their "wonder-book" form! And if only, when a youth starts his Latin, he can be brought to see at an early stage what it all means, the report of the American Classical League ten years from now will show an even greater proportion of pupils studying that fundamental language in the schools of America.

During and after a long illness that followed my thirteenth year, an Englishman who came in every morning for two hours bribed me to learn *Lycidas*, Gray's *Elegy*, and huge gobbets of Shakespeare by heart, — a treasure which could not be valued too highly. The next fifteen months were spent abroad roaming through picture galleries and neglecting everything except the Greek and Latin; for the Primitives soon palled, and I worked up Cicero and Xenophon on camp-stools in various *palazzi* while the elders nosed about with their Baedekers. At Oxford for seven months a Balliol tutor who damned Mathematics equally with myself unfolded Homer and Virgil wholesale, took us punting up the Cherwell, and would hurl a ball of twine through the open study window at his pet black cat every time I made a false quantity. This was the golden age of youth, this the garden of Epicurus. Our tutor rowed on his college crew, played half-back on the

Oxford Varsity soccer team, had been to Vienna on a football tour, and would, in his summer holiday, tramp six miles each way to and from the links with his golf clubs over his shoulder. Such was the whole tenor of my Oxford experience. I came into close contact with men who refused to formalize the learning that required so much grinding to master, who kept it an intimate and individual matter, and who spoke of their "reading" as most Englishmen to-day talk of the war, — with reserve. They did not reckon it statistically; they valued it for the by-products which it brought them.

This extra-curricular joy went always with me throughout my scattered schooling. The only things I have really missed in the round of training are such beneficial courses as my friend M—— gives in Mathematics, — so completely thorough and rounded that they are interesting because of their very directness and solidity. Public speaking was also neglected, — a loss which it is hard to make up. Apart from these two, the other things in school life which did not come my way are no loss to me: they are simply the "frills, skills, and thrills" which look so well in the modern educational shop-window. They do not satisfy, because of their light sketchiness,

*"The gleams and glooms that dart  
Across the schoolboy's brain."*

I must confess frankly that I have taken keen joy in this random style of study, in the romance of getting up early in a Swiss *pension* and watching the rose glow spread over the Dent de Jaman while I prepared an exercise in Sidgwick for a Cambridge ex-Don who ran a small school in Montreux. And I recall with an inward chuckle his last words as I left him for England: "Thank Heaven, G——, you're leaving at the Easter holidays. I've sat up till midnight and nearly broken my health correcting your damned exercises. Good luck to you!"

All this program of wandering studies produced a lop-sided early specialist, saved from being a young prig only by a strong constitution, a love for athletics, and a parental training that made the *petits chevaux* in the Kursaal and the wildish life of the Helvetized Britons with whom I came in contact a ridiculous superfluity.

Men from Haverford and Harvard are apt to be grumbly in love with both these institutions. They speak of them as the widow at Huckleberry Finn's first "civilized" meal spoke of the food: "She tucked down her head and grumbled a little over the vittles, though there warn't really nothing the matter with them." They love them as Oxford men love the "city with its dreaming spires." I will not speak of them in detail, except to say that the former furnished growth and the latter a certain critical attitude which carries a graduate through and over many shams and errors. Gone are the cosines and tangents, gone Gresham's *Law of Debased Coinage*, gone the dry routine of preparation for the technique of a Doctor's degree in classics. But never will Haverfordians of two decades ago forget the afternoons in the Elizabethan garden on the campus, stretched on their stomachs under an arbor-vitae tree, murdering Euripides and Plautus in ten-page assignments; nor can a Harvard graduate scholar dismiss from his mind the beneficial weariness of a shying Pegasus who was put at the linguistic fence again and again until somehow or other he jumped it, — to depart with a respect for *Veritas* and a love for outspokenness.

It was by such a course and with such preliminaries that the fifth educator of his family was turned loose upon the unsuspecting youth, unworthy of his forebears but full of hereditary enthusiasm. He had learned that sometimes there is more life in the majestic dead than in the moribund living.

The only excuses for retailing to FORUM readers my joyous and ramshackle education are first, that an editor whose word is law asks me to do so, and second, that a few suggestions may be shared with those upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility of making the private school more of a vital factor in our American life. Here you have heard a story told, by one who was taught to love the quest for knowledge, — however botched in the search, — by one who believes that we need a background of the past if we would effectively train leaders for the present and the future, by one who feels that private foundations are necessary as experimental laboratories, — at times forging ahead of the community, at times holding back a rush into questionable policies. There is no conflict between progressive education, — the policies of Sanderson or Eugene Smith, — and the really scientific



study of Latin or Geometry or Art or Music. The old quarrel between culture and vocationalism only obscured the real issue. One has no complaint to make regarding the half-dozen major experiments, public or private, that are described in our school journals. We merely want to produce in our country more down-right and fundamental men, who, starting with the seeds of such ambition as the men of 1840 reveal in the face of obstacles, can germinate their ideas in greater volume and number *because of* rather than *in spite of* their schooling.

*Nous avons changé tout cela.* Children now “play family” in the first grade and “play city” in the second. Their day is a happy one. They have “projects”; they enact the laboratory system in miniature. Webster’s spelling-book is replaced by phonetic and other methods. Clinics, physical measurements, intelligence tests, proper lighting and sanitation, with rural consolidation in the far-away districts, — all these have brought light out of darkness. In certain public schools, under the “Work-Play-Study” plan the A school goes into class for academic work at eight-thirty, while the B school enters, one-third the auditorium, one-third the playground, and one-third the shops, laboratories, drawing and music rooms. At the end of a period when physical boredom begins to predominate, presto! the B school goes into winter-quarters, so to speak, and the A school shifts into the three-fold system above-mentioned. The growth in proportionate numbers of public-school children who may have these privileges is marvelous.

Even more striking is the increase in numbers of children securing public secondary education. In 1890, 2526 public high schools reported their statistics to the Bureau of Education (60% of all secondary schools); in 1910, 10,213 (85%); in 1922 14,056 (87%). In 1890 there were 9120 teachers, 202,963 pupils, and a total population of 62,622,250. In 1910 the same figures ran 41,667; 915,061; and 91,972,266. In 1922, — 113,680; 2,229,407; and 109,248,393. The percentage of all high school grade pupils in public institutions was in 1890, 68.1%; in 1922 it was 92.3%. There is thus no doubt that, until “work” begins to sing its siren song to the sixteen-year boy (I am limiting myself to the masculine gender, though the statistics cover both), the American tax-supported school is proportionally well attended, is pleasant in its appeal, and balances the point of view of the

community far more comfortably than the barracks of 1840. Consequently the mission of the private school is more clearly indicated than ever before.

"But," as the old Greeks used to say, "what has this to do with Dionysus?" Simply this, — that we are improving the average of instruction but are neglecting our leaders, our future statesmen, scholars, diplomatists, inventors, business pioneers. We have done enough to help the "community centre" educationally, and our equipment is far ahead of our ideas. The situation is like Prohibition: the median of sobriety is higher, though the lurid spots are more conspicuous. It is like politics: bossed gangs of hoodlum proletariat are dwindling; one finds more intelligent voters, but a far smaller number of inspiring leaders who can afford to be themselves. Lastly, it is like the church: much movement, more frankness, few high adventurers whose convictions follow a truth-at-all-costs policy. If I may borrow Dr. Stewart Paton's opinion and apply it to our educational system, it seems to me that the "kleronomic" or reflexive and instinctive channels are well marked and charted, but that the "embiontic" channels which exercise the higher intellectual functions and associations are being neglected.

Professor Dallas Lore Sharp need not feel alarmed at any social snobbery in properly managed non-public schools. They have hardly increased at all, numerically, in the last thirty years. Alongside the statistics already quoted of our secondary tax-supported institutions we may set the following: 1632 private high schools reporting in 1890 to the U. S. Bureau, with 7209 teachers and 94,931 students; 1963 in 1922, with 14,237 teachers and 186,641 students. Nor need the "conscript fathers" in Oregon, whose legislation against private ventures has happily been declared unconstitutional, allow any ungrounded fears for Catholic domination (owing to the increase from 280 parochial institutions in 1895 to the 949 of 1922) to smother the danger of a rubber-stamp, council-dictated, cultureless and leaderless system for their children, trade-marked "Babbitt" and contracted for as Four-in-Hand Fosbrooke used to contract for the book-backs in his study, — by the yard.

We have been complicating our children's education by making it follow the community patchwork too closely. The children of



one hundred years ago, in order to become leaders, had to get far ahead of the community. The children of now are pulled up to a good average but find it hard to go over it. We have forgotten that learning possesses joy in and of itself. It is possible to teach our pupils the subjects which colleges require, and at the same time offer them as a part of the consecutive curriculum a twenty per cent proportion of the hobby or profession which may be theirs in the future, — not split into miscellaneous bits of half-yearly courses. In History, Literature, Drawing, Music, Science, Nature-study, Mechanics, Latin, or Chinese, it is possible that at a boy's eleventh year he may be exposed to all or most of these subjects, and after finding one which calls him as with a trumpet, may continue *crescendo* until graduation. We know boys who are expert ornithologists at sixteen, who can read papers at bird-clubs before entering college: why are they left mostly to themselves in developing this knowledge? And if ornithologists, Latin-lovers, and artists in manual training can be thus developed, why not statesmen and business leaders? A great landscape artist tells me that the self-urge is all that gave him his mastery. Must the school forever confess that it cannot aid and abet this mastery in its curriculum?

One is tempted therefore to hope that all these "shining morning-faces" who racket their daily way towards learning, will be blessed, as the years roll on, with fewer parents who are absorbed in poker, cocktails, bridge, and dancing, and with more who rally them round the fireside to read aloud or talk over their little problems. We find ourselves envying the boys and girls who, when ideas catch up with machinery, and when the value of the past is understood in its true proportions, will live in an age which will make the ages of Pericles, the Medici, or Elizabeth, seem in comparison like Neanderthal. We think of teachers who take Butcher's word for it that teaching is the "vilest of trades and the noblest of professions," and in calling up memories of our own experiences we recall the warmth and vitality of certain ideas and certain persons who came into expectant lives and lingered there, as the old French song hath it,

*"Comme un cristal qui vibre encore  
Longtemps après qu'on l'a touché."*

# MUSIC IN THE UNIVERSITIES

LAURENCE ADLER

*MANY university graduates are unable to distinguish the tune of Yankee Doodle from the Doxology. This is an unnecessary if not inexcusable disability. Musical taste is too often regarded as the exclusive possession of the specially gifted. As a matter of fact there is no reason why any educated layman should not grasp the basic principles of melody, harmony, rhythm. And it should be the province of the universities to offer courses that will quicken latent appreciative faculties and produce "creative listeners".*

**T**HIS is the day of specialization in education. Our colleges and universities, while admittedly recognizing the necessity of cultural "sweetness and light" as a leaven, are nevertheless being rapidly swept into the vortex of commercialism. For we have lost the cloistered monastic conception of the university as a place of learning and meditation,—the rich tradition of the past is giving way to a more modern interpretation of the university as the efficiency power plant of the industrial and professional life of the day. Now it is obvious that any educative system is unworthy of its name which disregards the superlative claims of beauty to become an integral, even though subconscious, influence in the life of every student. The terms "beauty" and "culture", however, are difficult to define, and the practical educator, averse to delving into the subtleties of definition, has a much more immediate problem to consider, that of economic stress and bread and butter. And so he has allowed expertism and the needs of the specialist more and more to become guiding factors in curriculum planning. Is this obvious disregard of the more subtle values purposeful or merely culpable shortsightedness on the part of our directors of education? That it is prevalent in many of our universities, especially in the State institutions, is a matter of common knowledge.

What does the average college or university regard as the essentials of a course in fine arts and music? Above all, does the creating of a general art consciousness rather than the producing of specialists hold first place in the plans of educators? The actual study of music in colleges, as well as the study of fine arts, suffers from being excessively conventionalized. The subject in many cases is arbitrarily divided into too many elements,