

gle for existence, their desire to escape from the oppression and monotony which they see constantly opposed, make them such. They hate the present world because they have so little share in its control and because they are outside the sphere that participates in the manipulation of the forces dominating their lives and activities. Men who have been on strike, who have been clubbed by the police, who have been driven by the militia and who have been persecuted know something about the facts of the class struggle even if they know little about its theories.

An element of importance that is subsidiary to instinctive opposition to the machine and the feeling of class hatred is the intellectual and critical nature of the labor movement. There is a general conviction among thoughtful workers that the present world works badly; that unemployment, poverty, ignorance, social injustice are things which intelligent control and ordinary good human intentions can prevent *if only there were the will and the desire that they be prevented*. This conviction leads to the conclusion that the present system is not only bad, but is kept so by the perfidy and selfishness of the powers who are benefiting by it. It adds to the discontent of the workers a belief in the villainous character of the capitalists as a class—a conviction that adds contempt to hatred.

I cannot leave the general discussion of the psychology of the labor movement without describing the function of organized labor as it affects the centering of the worker's interests upon the problems concerning him most vitally. The psychological maladjustment of the worker makes him an easy prey to all kinds of emotional appeals. Uneducated as he often is, lacking both the time and the training required to make an analysis of the evils and the forces with which he is confronted, the worker is apt to accept any easy and ready rationalization of the world and its implications. This is true in particular if it provides an escape and emotional outlet from his pent up and suppressed activity. The excitement and rationalization of a Billy Sunday meeting, a Holy-Roller exultant dissipation, leaves the worker both exhausted and momentarily relieved from the gnawing of the forces about him. In a minor degree this service is performed by dime novels, drink, base-ball scores, moving pictures and political excitement. Any rationalization, any explanation, any drawing out of interest, of emotion, of the sense of play and creative activity mitigates the feeling of oppression produced upon the workers by their monotonous existence. Political movements achieve the same end. They mostly serve in taking the worker's attention from his immediate problems and center-

ing them either as a rationalization or as a means of emotional dissipation in things that are not of pertinence in his daily life. It is here that the labor movement per se becomes most significant.

The labor movement provides an emotional outlet. It provides room for creative activity. It gives play to all of the instincts and passions that are characteristic of human nature. But it does all these things in terms of the values, functions and problems with which the worker is always called upon to deal. It keeps the workers' minds always centered upon the core of their difficulties. It prevents distraction, loss of emotion and energy. It makes significant to the worker the things with which he deals as a member of the community and through which he acquires social significance—his work. It thus provides the means of escape from suppression and this emotional outlet becomes in itself contributory to the final solution of the problem which is the chief cause of the workers' evils—industrial autocracy.

FRANK TANNENBAUM.

The Spirit of My Night School

A SERIES of shocks best describes the first evening I spent in the night high school where I came with much enthusiasm to teach and remained with more humility to learn. There I laid aside many ideas, stereotyped and honored by ages, and endeavored to adapt myself to an environment as new to pedagogy as to our American nation. In the stories I had read about night schools, the students tumbled headlong into the buildings and panted before the fountain of learning, the faculty. What really confronted me was a bizarre parade of weary people or of alert stenographers and clerks. The former stood hesitant in the great doorways or hung around the buildings. The old teachers, wise in the game, approached the more timid and led them literally by the hand to their desks for registration. The sight of the petite Spanish instructor guiding a huge American, red with embarrassment, to the altar of learning filled me with awe and amazement. The athletic directors and coaches rushed forth noisily to greet old students, beat them on the back, and with many slaps and thumps welcomed them like lost brothers back into the fold. The expert in English for foreigners, whose fame had spread abroad, stood in the center of the melting pot of many picturesque and bewildered aliens and shook hands violently with all. He threw out a remark in one tongue to a toothless old woman, in another tongue to a Montenegrin giant, and gesticulated

in the sign language common to all, until by slow degrees he reached his desk with the entire mob in pursuit. One glimpse at the response he evoked left no doubt concerning his skill.

My first five minutes convinced me that this school was one of the Heaven-directed institutions where the stiff and precise school ma'am was consigned to the scrap heap, and that what I had learned in a large city high school would aid me little in my present problems. With one crash, my cherished theories of modern psychology applied to English composition fell in a chaotic mass, and I became a humble and wondering student of this new environment. Perhaps I looked as helpless as I felt, for straight to me came an old, wrinkled Russian peasant woman in full holiday regalia and pressed a carnation into my hand, saying, "For you, my dear," and then she mumbled something in her native tongue. For months afterward the spicy fragrance of that flower lingered gratefully in my memory when other odors, more tenacious, were pungently present.

Gradually my roll of pupils began to fill, and I took my place in the little drama. Much to my surprise, the general demand was for "straight grammar and spelling." No one wanted literature, and I soon perceived that my prized reading lists and my carefully prepared outlines were doomed to mould and dust. As the men and women appeared before my desk, they usually whispered their reasons for coming. "I don't speak English correctly," said one weary middle-aged woman, "and I am a bookkeeper and I want promotion." A radiant, smartly dressed young girl with a complexion that had every appearance of camouflage and that proved to be a gift of the gods, stood before me with assurance and said, "I'm stenographer. Busy woman. Going to be private secretary soon. Got to have more speed. If you read a story, I'll leave the class. No time for stories. Got to get ahead. The last teacher here read stories, classics. I left. Busy woman." Right there all my preconceived notions of literary service were dealt their death blow. I remembered the impressive words of our superintendent, "The evening school pupils must have what they want or they will leave, and the income from the state will diminish proportionately. The attendance must be kept up." Before I could ponder on lost illusions, a fat, beaming, motherly soul approached me and said, "Nobody knows I am coming to night school, but would you let me in your classes? Do you think I am too old to learn? I have two boys in high and sometimes I am kinder ashamed before them, not but what they are good boys, nice to their mother. I never did go to school much

and I'm just crazy to learn. I want to keep up with my youngsters." In the weeks that followed that cry she grew pitifully and yet courageously familiar.

Soon there came three dapper young men whose clothes were the last word in movie fashions. They were solicitors in a well known dye house. "We want to learn to express ourselves without putting our foot into it. We are going to take the civil service examinations," they explained. I pledged them my best efforts. Then a pink faced giant rolled up before me and shouted with a voice that would have gone before the gale. "I am a sailor, a cook, on an ocean liner now in the harbor for repairs. I'm coming to your spelling class the nights I don't go to dances. Dances first, you bet. Every time. Got to have some fun." As he swung off, I pondered how I could make spelling compete with dances and thus keep up my attendance. A well dressed mother and daughter living in a fashionable apartment house desired to learn how to "speak nicely." They came across the city in order that none of their friends should meet them or know of their registration at night school.

At the first evening's recitation I appeared with a note-book in which was a well planned lesson and with much enthusiasm in my disposition exactly after the manner of an efficient little teacher in a modern story. A Hindu prayer book would have proved as useful. When the class began to trail in during the first period, I found it increasingly difficult to begin any systematic class work. The interruptions became more frequent and my explanations more piece-meal. One woman arrived breathless saying, "I'll have to be this late every night, teacher. I've three men in my family, and they all come home at different times so I have three dinners to get every night. Preserving time, too." For the sixth time I began the lesson when a clatter down the hall announced the arrival of a large Negro woman in flamboyant raiment, accompanied by three lively picaninnies. "I came to night school last year and I know all about transitive nouns. I have to bring the children because my husband is a night watchman. I can't leave them at home for fear the house might burn up or down," she explained. I made her welcome, provided the offsprings with picture books, and secretly wondered what I could offer to an expert in transitive nouns.

More mothers and babies arrived until thirty minutes of futilely attempting to teach showed me that toys were more necessary than the card index of an English professor. I realized that the children must be made happy or the mothers would not come, and that infants must preserve a fair

degree of quiet to permit work. Immediately I was confronted with my most serious problem, the adaptation of work to pupils whose ages ranged from sixteen to sixty-four, whose preparation was as varied as the lands of their births, and whose occupations included millinery, stenography, and stoking. I thought with envy of an evening high school in the center of the city whose registration had reached the 5,000 mark, whose English classes were carefully graded, and whose equipment included nursery, kindergarten rooms, and playground directors. Remembering I was the only English teacher for English speaking students in this small new school, I girded myself with the comforting thought that there must be two or three principles of grammar and composition of which all were ignorant. The diffidence of my pupils presented another difficulty. They hesitated to answer questions for fear of making mistakes. Two older women who remained with me months and who were most faithful in their attendance and work, never allowed me to see a word they had written because, as one said, "You know I make so many funny mistakes. I left school when I was twelve, but I am just crazy to learn. Do you think I am too old?"

So my first evening proceeded, and I closed with a spelling lesson which seemed welcome to all. Afterwards I learned that spelling is always a common meeting ground because it is a recognized necessity and because it requires no creative effort. When the students left, they bade me good-night as if they had been guests in my home. Alone at my desk I decided that if I was to hold my pupils, I should have to be a royal combination of a nursery governess, a father confessor, a legal advisor, a vaudeville entertainer, a psycho-analyst, a humorist, and, first and last, an encouraging friend.

In spite of the warnings of the pretty stenographer, I tried the experiment of reading Bret Harte's thrilling Outcasts of Poker Flat one hot evening when the class, composed mostly of weary women, looked so worn that it seemed cruel to ask any mental effort. Glibly I began to read, and not a flicker of interest appeared. Perhaps I had not made myself heard against the snores of a child sleeping on one of the desks. At the description of the snow storm, I descended to banal questions. A youth of nineteen replied that he had never hiked in the mountains nearby, that he intended to sometime, but that he was always so tired on Sundays. After two paragraphs more, it occurred to me that few even knew what I was reading. The next sentence was interrupted by the blood-curdling shrieks of a baby who in its sleep had rolled off a desk and

bumped its head on the hard seat. Several moments were spent in quieting and soothing it; the various mothers compared merits of home remedies for bruises. Meanwhile my story grew cold as ice, but I continued. Surely, "Five Spot," the gambler's horse, would break the spell. I reverted to archaic methods and asked why he was called "Five Spot." No answer. Only a wheeze from a sleeping child. A colored girl had a gleam in her eye; over her shiny countenance spread the illumination of a new idea. Then she burst forth, "They called him that because he had five spots on him." Every face was solemn; the explanation was logical and satisfactory. I plodded on to the end of that wonderful story. I might as well have been reading a want ad or an obituary notice so far as any response was visible. "Do you like it?" I asked with a final hope. Those awake and those asleep nodded.

"You bet," said an Italian woman of the grand opera type, banging a powerful fist on her desk; up to this time she had had the appearance of being present only in the flesh. "I always said there is some good in the worst of us." One motherly and rotund woman, jammed and crammed into a front seat, spoke up, "I done six washings this week, and I just ached so I didn't know as I could come to-night but I am kinder rested now. You know I always feel rested and cheered up after night school."

After this lesson I learned others. For instance, I discovered that because of the irregular attendance, one plan for one evening's work might prove useless before the class that presented itself. The class might be composed of college preparatory students who demanded serious advanced work; or it might be made up of keen and eager stenographers, or of tired and worn laundry workers and house-wives. Each recitation brought illuminating surprises, for I frequently stumbled on undirected talent or on ambitions thwarted by lack of preparation or by years of discouragement. Again a successful artisan or craftsman would prove appalled before the task of expression in words. It was indeed difficult to adapt the rudimentary problems to the adult minds without boring or disheartening the pupils.

Night after night I discovered strange ambitions in strange houses. A carpenter over sixty had secretly written poetry for years. He wished help in versification. A scenario writer of thirty-five was preparing for college. A dear grandmother had all her life "wanted to know if them things were periods, but hated to ask, and thank you, my dear." A war-bride of seventeen was going to have an education anyway so her husband would not be ashamed of her when he came back. A young wo-

man whose husband was "just too tired to slick up and come now that he was working over-time in the ship-yards" took notes laboriously so she could be the teacher at home. A fat convivial reporter, criticized for grammatical errors, wished to "learn the whole thing from the ground up; verbs, nouns, pronouns, and pro-verbs, and to get it quick." Several young couples, healthy and prosperous, came for—well, for the fun and the walk together. Four bank clerks, seeking promotion, were not sure their letters were o. k. and knew their spelling was n. g. A movie producer, the owner of three high-powered cars, wanted some names and pointers on "classy classic" novels.

So night after night the little drama unfolded, and the problem of satisfying the various longings and the vague unrests presented itself poignantly. At first the disparity in age and environment seemed to make my task hopeless, but I felt no one could help making some acceptable offering in the face of such opportunity. No man or woman who had labored long and hard during the day makes the added effort to attend night school without wanting something with a serious purpose. Yet even the most expert teacher can not make a recitation wholly an entertainment, for the student must make some exertion; that exertion on the part of an adult, weary in body and frequently unaccustomed to mental effort, is nothing less than splendidly heroic. Only a slacker of a teacher could be found wanting. Evening after evening strains of strange blood fought for expression; dwarfed imaginations flickered with light; dumb longings and early ambitions, dulled by time and repression, sought realization. Many found increased self-respect and pleasure in their work; some were appalled before creative effort; some were impatient that they could not acquire skill and power without practice. Each evening my admiration for my pupils grew. Their sincerity and kindness made my share in the task light. Never have I met men whose creed was more honest or whose courage was finer than that of some of my students. I am proud that some became my friends, and I shall always regard with affection some of the older women who attacked their lessons so valiantly. Our meetings became social and informal discussions until there was no relation to the old time school recitation. In no other country could such a democratic and conglomerate assembly be possible. No instructor with any red blood could watch the struggle of youth and adult for every opportunity for advancement without thrilling with renewed confidence in human nature and in the future of our great American republic.

A TEACHER.

"Of Making Many Books—"

IT was a rainy afternoon with a rising temperature. At five o'clock the pile of letters still on my desk became insupportable. I looked at them as the schoolboy on a day of spring may look at the school house a block away. And like the boy I fled.

But the manner of my flight and my destination betrayed my middle-aged decadence. Unobtrusively, with the dignified deliberation of conscious guilt, I departed from the administration building and sought the library. I marched brazenly past the loan desk into the stacks. Any one who saw me would construe my errand as scholarly—whereas my purpose was merely to pick out a certain tale by R. L. S. and lose myself for half an hour in the pages I knew by heart. Then I could go home to dinner—and omit the mention of this trifling excursion to my wife.

But the volume was missing from its place, and I straightened up balked, feeling as the truant schoolboy might if, having incurred the penalty of "absent," he should be unable to lay his hand on his fishing rod. Without the mental energy to make another selection, even from the enchanting array of R. L. S., I stared down the narrow glass-floored aisle between the stacks, hideously illuminated by unshaded hanging incandescents.

So many books! Shelves and shelves, stack upon stack. Half a million volumes, according to the university catalogue, in these narrow rooms—narrow as coffins. Fiction, history, philosophy, science, bound volumes of magazines, and "reports"—"reports" without number. And the labor in each one. The months, years, decades of human life. What insanity for creatures with a healthy biological origin thus to entomb their few bright days upon earth.

My feet, without receiving any orders from headquarters, had presumed to carry me into an adjoining aisle—History,—and my eyes rested on a set of three antique volumes handsomely bound in full calf. Their tops were black with undisturbed dust. Surely the animal that furnished that now priceless binding died in vain, and the linen rags consumed to make its pages had better been given to the poor for coverings.

With the bookworm's automatism I reached for the first volume, though I felt no slightest interest. I blew the dust from the top—that horrible habit of the haunter of stacks—and opened to the yellow title-page.

A History of the Roman Republic. I will not give the author's name. His memory is at peace—let me not disturb it; "curst be he that moves