

Some Effects of the War on Education

(ALUMI PRIZE ESSAY BY MR. CHAS. P. TRAINOR)

WHILE hundreds of thousands of our youth as well as the youth from the lands of our allies are breaking asunder the ties which bind to home and dear ones and are pouring forth their life blood in generous volume in the heroic endeavor to turn back the tide of militarism which imminently threatens to inundate the world; in a word, while the civilization of Europe and of those countries which have felt its benign influence is shrouded in darkness by the deathful shadow of the militant monster, it still behooves us not to be so absorbed in the anxious present that we become dangerously oblivious of due consideration for the future. Rather, it is truly salutary that we strive to pierce the dark, thick mists which cloud the vista into the time to come and provide for ourselves and our posterity who must deal, if successfully, then intelligently, with the stupendous problems inevitably bequeathed to the post-bellum era by this portentous period.

It is inconceivable that the world emerge from the throes of present agony, the world it was in 1914. Great political and social and other changes, as well domestic as international, are bound to come,—in fact, have already come, be it for better or for worse. How frequently of late, have staid and conservative students and oftener still, effervescent enthusiasts, heralded the news of some real or apparent awakening in this or that porton of the world or department of life. Changes, momentous changes, indeed, are happening and in order that we be able to cope efficiently with the conditions of this new world of ours and that thus there may

result a better world, it is necessary seriously and intelligently to seek whither the peoples are tending.

Of all the branches of human activity, none save religion is of more vital and fundamental importance than education. Consciously or otherwise, our habits of thought, our philosophy of life, in fine, our characters are in great measure moulded and modified by the educational forms of our day. Futhermore, there is an ever constant inter-action of education on ourselves and of ourselves on education. In normal periods, the process is generally slow and by the run of men, practically unheeded. When crises ensue and the order of things is abruptly changed by the force of circumstances, our attention is compelled towards what we have usually passed by without notice. In such a critical period are we living, with such momentous transitions from the old to a new dispensation of things have we to deal. It is given to us to-day to consider briefly some of the effects of the war on Education.

It would be well in this discussion to retrace our journey up the tide of time until we return again in mind to the period before the war and observe whither the trend of educational policy was carrying the world. This is required, at least as background to give perspective to our present inquiry.

For fifty years, broadly speaking, there has been strong, and almost overwhelming tendency to materialize education both in state and in many private institutions of learning. In some countries or sections, this pernicious doctrine has been realized, although not without some strong opposition. Not only was the veteran classical training called to the bar of popular judgment and forced to render the reason of its continued sway but also and more serious still was religion found wanting as an educational necessity after

the most superficial examination by the wise, forsooth, of the age and banished from the school-room. The cosmopolitan character of the school population is but a specious excuse for this latter cancerous as well as pit-eous deformity in the educational body. But the age was an inventive one, one of development of natural resources and the young it was urged, must be trained to meet the new requirements of this busy, busy world of ours. There was no time it appears for any other training than that which prepares for the attainment of the most material of material happiness, the acquisition of wealth and its concomitants. There was another factor in the educational world of the pre-war days,—the education of women in branches hitherto opened but to men. This was the product of the feminine movement of the latter part of the 19th century and which progressed with greatly increasing acceleration during this vaunted 20th century. Women, too, would have a share with man in the manifold activities of the day, even though it meant the abandonment of the home and cost her the forfeiture of the precious and invaluable privileges and prerogatives with which woman's position in the home is enriched.

Man was getting along marvellously well in running this mundane sphere and his pet theories and doctrines were fructifying splendidly. At least so he was persuading himself. Then, from clear summer skies of '14, there came without warning to the populace the rumblings of the thunder of war and its lightnings. Perhaps, men thought the disturbance like other summer storms which break so suddenly, would as suddenly die away and leave the world to resume its enjoyment of smiling sunshine and peace in the contentment which follows after plenty. How greatly the event has deceived the expectation. Four years of

cruel war have almost run their course and what has come to pass therein has given pause to man and he has been persuaded to consider anew, among many other things, the aims for which he educates and the means he should use to that end. What, then, will result from this reconsideration? In other words, is the tendency of education to be altered or is it to maintain with greater or less intensity the direction it held before the war.

Let us keep well in mind that there are two diametrically opposed doctrines in regard to the principal end of education and the kind of education that should be given to attain to that purpose. Of course, we speak now of what we might call fundamental education, that which is to be imparted to the child, the youth, the college student. Briefly stated, the one upholds the theory that man must above all be trained to cope with the natural resources of the earth, to be a physicist, a chemist, a civil engineer, a man of the world of business ; its vision is bounded by the horizon, its exponents "gaze not down the golden vistas into heaven." The other, with more reason, saw in man more than an automaton ; they believed and quite wisely, that it was a good thing to be master of the material world outside us but a still better thing, indeed, an incomparably better thing to know ourselves and cultivate the inner, the intellectual man. This school recognized the value and the necessity of the physical sciences and willingly accorded them a dignified place in the curriculum. Their sole fault in the eyes of the opposite party was their stern opposition to the granting of the predominance to those sciences.

We have seen whither the wind of doctrine blew prior to the great war. How, we inquire, has the war affected the case? The war, all agree is teaching the

world certain lessons, though we know that all do not learn alike. For a true axiom it is, that what is received is received after the manner of the recipient. Our prejudices, our capacities react on the teachings and certainly we draw different conclusions.

Each country, of course, has problems peculiar in many respects to itself. Yet I think that in matters of education, England may well be taken as an example to show how opinion in these affairs is being formulated under the pressure of war. Let us compare the judgments of some of her leading scholars, founded on observations since 1914, and expressed but recently. It is but logical to suppose that the dicta of such distinguished scholars as Sir William Crookes and Viscount Bryce will be not negligible factors in determining the trend of opinion in matters educational, at least in English speaking countries.

Sir William, in company with such eminent men as Sir William Ramsay, Sir Edwin Ray Lankester, Lord Raleigh, subscribed his name to a memorandum which set forth complaint against the "Neglect of Science." These men based their contentions in a larger degree, on the great handicap suffered by England in the war because she had not fostered scientific education as, they argued, she should have done. They deplored the scarcity of scientific men in public office as well as lamented that the government of the two great universities, Cambridge and Oxford, was constituted almost entirely of classical scholars. Furthermore they decried the fact that science was but an optional subject in matriculation and civil service examinations and even only optional in the curricula of such institutions as Woolwich and Sandhurst, the latter the principal college for military officers. All these facts led them into a national conference

wherein was emphasized the necessity of scientific training. From their statement, evidently the above mentioned pre-war trend of education had not affected England's schools and colleges in the same degree as America's. As they themselves state: "For more than fifty years, efforts have been made by those who are convinced of the value of experimental science, to obtain its introduction into the schools and colleges of the country as an essential part of the education given therein. At first it seemed as though the effort had been successful but it is clear that the old methods and old vested interests had retained their dominance" The result of the agitation by these men, has been a bill fathered by the Minister of Education, contemplating drastic reforms.

The war, of course has given point to their arguments. The peculiar conditions of the time, the utility of scientific appliances, and the value of scientific men have, at least for the time being, brought the science into the foreground and clothed them with a value, perhaps, somewhat exaggerated. This latter opinion that of Viscount Bryce and those associated with him in the publication of a statement in May, 1916. It would be well if time allowed, to quote their statement in full.

"Under the shock and stress of the war," they state, "the aims and methods of education have to be considered anew. This reconsideration in the special conditions of the time, brings with it a risk that we may ignore elements in education vital in the formation and maintenance of national character. A great war in which material means and technical skill are the most obvious factors in deciding the issue, inclines a nation to prize these to the exclusion of forces finally even more impotent; and if in our reforms we fix our

eyes only on material ends we may foster ourselves that very spirit against which we are fighting today." This warfare of which they speak, is what Dean West of Princeton calls the war of "soul with sense," "and that on a greater scale than ever before in history." They go on to say, "It is of the utmost importance that our higher education should not become materialistic through too narrow regard for practical efficiency. Technical knowledge is essential to our industrial prosperity and national safety but education should be nothing less than a preparation for the whole of life." It is difficult to refrain from a more detailed quotation of their statement, for it is an exquisite epitome of all the arguments against radical as well as false reform in education. Yet their plea seems to be in vain; the advocates of scientific education seem to have won the ear of government and a radical change in the educational system of England may result. Nor will such a change be without effect in the other English speaking countries.

In the United States where the movement of the last fifty years or so in favor of the substitution of sciences in great degree in the place of classics, has, perhaps, been more successful than in England, we find that in June, 1917, amidst the noises of war and preparations for war, a congress of eminent educators and scholars from every profession and business assembled to consider and discuss the educational situation. Their opinions and arguments were unanimous in recognizing the superior value of the classical over the scientific element in collegiate education and they regretted the movement which was dislodging the classical training from its traditional and merited position. Whether or not the Princeton Conference

will have a determining influence on general education in the States is too difficult to say.

Thus far we have endeavored to obtain a glimpse into the effect of the war on education in general or on the system of education. Let us now consider very briefly how it has affected the attraction which particular branches of study have for students. In other words, how the value of certain studies has been influenced by the vicissitudes of war. Our remarks must necessarily be few. To use a somewhat trite expression, "We are not yet out of the woods," and it is very difficult from our view point to discern clearly just what effects this or that study has suffered from the world conflict. Certain it is they have or will be affected; the question difficult to answer is, in what way.

After his graduation from College or University, the graduate if not already decided, casts about him in search of some profession or business of life, in which he may exercise his developed talents, not openly and merely to his own personal advantage, but also, if he be the product of education we have the right to expect, that he may do the greatest possible good to the community. Will the war have any effect on the decision of the graduate of today or of tomorrow?

There is a sudden awakening into vigorous activity of movements which, before the war, struggled almost in vain for wide spread recognition. Such is the strife between labor and capital, between the trust of monopoly and the consumer, such are political and social as financial and commercial movements,—all of which call upon the student's attention and request his contribution towards their settlement. To correct an evil, one must first understand it and thus the study of Economics and of Sociology and of other kindred subjects will

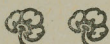
receive renewed attention after the war and more numerous devotees than at any previous time.

Philosophy, too, which underlies each and every one of the actions proceeding from our rational nature, will have its facets changed and will shed a different and we confidently hope a truer light to warn men away from the rocks of false theory and worse practice. May we not be so bold as to predict that the pernicious German philosophy, the parent of the abnormal "super-man," and the petted child of most secular universities of the 19th and 20th centuries, will be swallowed up in the degradation into which it has led the principal of its deluded followers. And should this inestimable event be consummated what more glorious effect could this or any war bring to pass.

We must not close even such a cursory discussion as this, without a note on the effect the war has or may have on the education of woman. Prior to the war, woman was successfully invading the domain from time immemorial the province of masculine activity. Since 1914, she has entered still further into the sphere hitherto exclusively masculine and we are assured that it is but an earnest of future conquests. Should the exodus of woman out of the home into the seething marts and highways of the world's work, continue, yea be intensified, we must expect an inevitable and incalculable upheaval in feminine education. We have grown accustomed to the lady doctor; we are no longer moved by the presence of woman at the bar; in these days, we have even seen the introduction of woman into the highest legislature of the great republic of the United States. Who knows but civil engineering and like scientific professions may capitulate to the seemingly irresistible movement. The situation today seems to tend that way. And who then will measure

the effect on woman's education and subsequent condition or estimate the result of that woman's reaction on the civilization of her time? For the welfare of true education and for the dignity of the human race, we pray that that day may never come.

We have but touched the fringe of the question in our inquiry. We have hesitated to delve too deeply into the turbulent sea of events to ascertain the direction of under and hidden currents. Yet what has been said will, perchance, afford us some idea of the momentous possibilities with which the education of the morrow must contend. Caution must be exercised and let us bear in mind that the effect of the war on general education, about which we are most concerned since it supplies the foundation of the superstructure, has the tendency to unduly exalt therein the scientific training, the symbol and sign of the practical and utilitarian, the exponent of the test, "what it is good for," which as Emerson says, "would abolish the rose and exalt in triumph the cabbage;" in a word, would rob us of all the beauty and all the joy in life. Against this, the principal tendency of the war's influence on education, let us beware.



We need not be so wise in thought
And ever proud of our mind's power.
The wisest man that ever lived
Could learn a lesson from a flower.

—F. K. Doyle (Extension)

Every thought which genius and piety throw into the world, alters the world.—Emerson.