

MODERN EDUCATION AND ITS PURPOSE

When the word education is mentioned, the average member of society immediately views in his mental mirror an image of study, resulting in an increase in knowledge. He perceives, therein, a youth poring over innumerable volumes, attempting to solve intricate problems in some subject of his own curriculum. When this unknown student has completed his course successfully, he has received an adequate education. Such is the picture many of our fellow beings see when they attempt to visualize modern education. Is this concept of training erroneous, or has it foundation for its formation? The answer to this question, together with the reason, is the substance of essay.

Let us turn back the pages of history for a brief glance at education in different periods. Grecian education had as its primary purpose the making of soldiers. To be a good soldier in Greece was to be a good citizen. True, we find that some of our most eminent philosophers were of Grecian lineage, but we are discussing the education of the average social being, and the Greek boy was educated in a military school. The scene shifts to Rome, and the time to approximately 100 Anno Domini, when Roman supremacy had reached its greatest heights. What was the school in which these youths were educated? From earliest childhood Romans were brought up by the state and for the state. Thus they, too, donned the garb of a soldier, and went forth well-educated in the eyes of their fellow-men. The third scene finds us in Prussia, with Frederick the Great dominating. In this country the motto of the children was "Grow strong for King Frederick." Why were they living? For the state, in order that they might do their share to make the administration a success.

The purpose of the above historic sketch is merely to show that education has been, through the years, a training, the aim of which was the formation of the qualities of good citizenship in the youths. This aim has not altered in our present-day scheme of things. The great goal of Modern education is to turn out young men and women who will be qualified to take their positions in the social world, and to do their share for the furthering of society. Remember, when a child has completed his secondary school course, he goes forth, usually without further preparation, to wage his battle on the gridiron of life. Too often these young lads are insufficiently equipped, and become but mere tackling dummies in the rough hands of their competitors. What, then, is the result? A bread line, unemployment, starving children, and all the accompanying misery.

With whom lies the blame for this regrettable state of affairs? The answer is all too evident. The adults, those who have in their hands the power to reform educational systems, are responsible for any failure in this field. And then the critic asks what they have done to improve conditions. Of late years at least two provinces of Canada have appointed research committees, and on their subsequent recommendation have adopted a new system of primary schooling. Thus we see that, at least, the world realizes that education is pertinent to the success of a nation.

Let us investigate a few of the facts recognized by most modern educationalists. The basic unit of our society, as we all know, is the family. As a result education has its beginning in the home. In this protected atmosphere the child develops the proper attitudes, forms the right habits, and climbs the first rungs of the ladder of knowledge. At an early age, he is placed in the care of a teacher, who holds in her hands the power to make this youth a success or a failure. She is his guide; from her he takes

his cue in everything, just as, before, he had faithfully followed his mother at home. And this teacher, wrapped in her work, often forgets the child's individuality, and treats this sensitive lad as an impersonal object. Knowledge, and only knowledge, is all that the tutor attempts to infuse, and, consequently, the child becomes introverted, may lack initiative or any number of qualities which should be developed in school.

Now teachers, as a result of research, are being adequately prepared to handle the lives of their charges, and parents are being educated to the realization that home and school co-operation is the only solution to the problem of our school children. The children themselves are now being trained, not only in the acquisition of knowledge, but in team play, independence, use of hands as well as brains, and other such things. Vocational schools, unknown institutions twenty years ago, are today a vital link between the cradle and the working man. Here the youth has opportunity to turn his hands to the work he loves. Art, mechanics, electricity, home economics, carpentry are examples of what a modern school may offer.

Let us visualize a product of the new system. This lad enters the battle of life with a suit of armour and a sword. He knows what he has to face, and how to deal with it, because of his schooling. This is his armour. His sword is his character, embodying all the qualities of a desirable member of society, together with a means of earning his living. He will not be a detriment to the people who financed his preparation. Rather, by his sharing of the labor, he will amply repay his benefactors. Thus one realizes that modern education has made a step in the proper direction, because, at last, the school serves the purpose for which it was intended. Education is now truly an apprenticeship to citizenship.