

# EDUCATIONAL TENDENCIES

Lecture of Supt. Earl M. Cline at Eighth Grade Graduating Exercises in Alliance

A lecture that will long be remembered by the many people who heard it was delivered at the Alliance and Box Butte county eighth grade graduating exercises, in Pheasant opera house, May 25, by Prof. Earl M. Cline, superintendent of Geneva city schools and principal of Alliance Junior Normal. The Herald has a class of readers who are interested in the great cause of education and for this reason we are delighted to give those who did not have the privilege of hearing it the opportunity of reading it. Mr. Cline is a pleasing and forceful speaker and of course it was more entertaining to hear him deliver the lecture than to read it, but those who will take the time to peruse the following will find it both interesting and instructive.

**Supt. Cline's Lecture**  
I consider it very much a privilege to participate in these graduation festivities today but the condition in which this audience finds itself reminds me of the inquisitive and ubiquitous vagrant who chanced to be wandering near the insane asylum and was pursued by an escaped lunatic. Vainly he fled, only to be followed and at last from sheer weariness he sank by the roadside, momentarily expecting that his last hour had come and fervently breathing a prayer to him who holds the winds of the heaven in the hollow of his hand, when lo, the escaped maniac merely touched him upon the shoulder and said, "Tag, you're it." And so, ladies and gentlemen, I fear that you have been tagged today and that you are it and that you will be forced to endure any sort of a rambling discourse which I may relieve myself of upon this occasion.

In speaking to such an audience as this, composed largely or in part of people in all activities of life, I feel rather as did the grocer's wife who, tending store during her husband's enforced absence, gave to a gentleman who asked for a bushel of potatoes only two pecks, and when told that it takes four pecks to make a bushel, she apologized by saying, "Well, you must excuse me for I am new at this business, since before I was married I always taught school." And so, ladies and gentlemen, having always taught school, I am not sure that I can say anything which will vitally interest and affect you.

I have chosen to speak to you today upon the subject of Educational Tendencies, a subject as big and as broad and as great as this magnificent country of ours and I am glad, that there is such a vital proposition facing us as the tendencies of modern education, because this means that education is in some way or manner under going the process of change and transformation. And it should. Education should advance with the times, it should not rust with the ages. It is a matter of congratulation that we are not thoroughly and entirely satisfied with our educational attainments but that there is a tendency to change, a tendency to seek better things, a tendency to grow and to advance. It is a matter of congratulation that educationally we are not contented like the ragged and tattered negro who when asked if he wanted to earn a quarter, in a self satisfied and an ignorant air replied, "No, sah, thank you, sah, but I done has a quartah."

There is no more vital proposition before our country than the one of educating its citizens, because the present and the future depend upon them. General Grant while president of the United States once said, "If we have another contest in the future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's but will be the line between patriotism and intelligence on one hand and superstition and ignorance on the other." Therefore, I hold that it is pertinent and applicable to enter into a discussion as to the drift and tendencies of modern education. I would wish to warn you at the outset that, while I am not self satisfied enough to think that everything is as it should be, yet this will not be a pessimistic or doom like discourse foretelling impending destruction because I am somewhat of an optimist. I am not a real optimist because a real optimist is a man who can have both of his feet cut off by a railroad train and then be glad that they are gone because they were cold anyhow, but I am somewhat of an optimist; enough of an optimist to believe that the world is getting better and not going to the dogs, enough of an optimist to believe in the adaptability and the ultimate excellence of modern education, and while I believe we

are going to witness many changes in our educational system, yet I wish to be understood as believing in the efficacy and the efficiency of the educational system of today.

I have small patience with that type of a street corner philosopher who sits around on a dry goods box, whittles wood, chews tobacco, pucks up the corners of his mouth into a vinegar barrel expression and says that the world is full of grafters, that the world is going to the devil and wishes between spits of nicotine for the good old times. Why, ladies and gentlemen, do you know that it is a historical fact that the translation of the hieroglyphics on the oldest pyramid of ancient Egypt has revealed that the most ancient writing known to man, the most ancient message from the dead and the forgotten ages of the past, written five thousand years ago is a wish by an Egyptian pessimist for the good old times. Perhaps, ladies and gentlemen, those were good old times, but what about the grand old times of today and the magnificent possibilities of tomorrow. I believe that the world is getting better and growing more efficient. When I stop and consider that the average loss to the treasury of the United States during the administration of Martin Van Buren was eleven dollars and seventy-five cents lost and unaccounted for in every one thousand dollars handled, that in Polk's administration it was four dollars and eight cents lost and unaccounted for in every one thousand dollars handled, in Buchanan's administration, three dollars and eighty-one cents were lost and unaccounted for in every one thousand dollars handled, in Lincoln's, seventy-six; Johnson's, fifty-seven; Grant, twenty-four; Hayes', three; Cleveland's, two; and in the administrations of McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson that not one cent has been lost in all the funds handled by the national government, I cannot but think that we are growing more efficient and that we are improving.

When I stop and consider that many years ago the school board of Lancaster, Ohio, refused the use of their school building for a debate on the railroads and the telegraph because they were not mentioned in the Bible and were devices calculated to lead immortal souls down to hell, when I consider this, I think that we are improving intellectually.

It is true that we are improving, that we are advancing, that we are progressing. Why, only recently I was reading that the laundries had discovered a means whereby they can use sawdust instead of soap. I cannot vouch for the veracity of this assertion but I suppose that it is true, as I recall receiving from the laundry last week a collar that looked like it had been washed with a saw and had been ironed in the dust but that as it may, none can gain say the march of events or the progress of humanity.

And the march of events and the progress of humanity have witnessed great changes. Why you know back in the good old times of the ages past, in spite of Biblical declaration that "man is his brother's keeper," individuals and peoples lived a life of seclusion and isolation. The world was not, neither was any nation or country, bound together in one grand neighborhood or community. Instead of great ships to carry the commerce and great cables to bear the messages of one people to another, caravans often stopping long enough to sow and to reap a crop were the only connecting forces of distant peoples, while now it would take five hundred thousand camels to transport the wheat which during the busy season passes over any one of our great east and west railroads in a single day.

Socrates, the eminent Greek philosopher, compared the people of his time, to whom the lands around the Aegean sea were the whole world, to ants and frogs about a marshy pool. But how changed, how different today. All the world today is a neighborhood, one community, bound inseparably together by steam, electricity and a hundred inventions. Ancient tradition tells of a time when the stars sang together. Is not that time today? Cooperation, organization, oneness in every activity of life has been and is the trend of the times. Today financial failures in London are felt in San Francisco, today a case of scarlet fever in a tenement may cause death in a palace.

All admit, none deny, the progress of civilization, but all do not admit, for some deny, the progress of education. They tell us that commerce, invention, warfare and myriad of other activities have advanced but that education has either pulled back on the traces of progress or stood still. And what is the indictment so often read against our educational system of today? It consists mainly in the allegation that it is not practical and that it does not produce results. We should be glad to hear such a criticism. We should be glad to know that the peo-

ple are becoming interested in the practicability of our educational system because that means if it is not practical that the people will demand that it be made so. I was reading only the other day a little playlet emphasizing the contentedness of the American people to allow some public matters to adjust themselves. The scene was laid in the court room of Judge Destiny and the prisoner at the bar was the venerable Uncle Sam. What is the charge against this prisoner," said Judge Destiny, and the clerk read: "General indifference and disorderly conduct." "How old are you," said Judge Destiny. "One hundred and thirty-seven years," replied Uncle Sam. "A mere baby," said the Judge, "but what are the exhibits against the prisoner?" And the clerk read, "Exhibit A—a subsidized press; Exhibit B—an impractical system of education." "Enough," cried Judge Destiny, "say no more. Who are the complainants against the prisoner?" "The people of the United States of America," said the clerk. "And where are they?" asked Judge Destiny. "They have failed to appear," replied the clerk. Judge Destiny leaned back in his chair and reflectively dismissed the case, saying, "I cannot hold you, Uncle Sam, because the principals in this case, the people of the United States of America, are not even willing to take the time and trouble to appear against you."

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, we should be glad for these criticisms in some of its features, it is a matter of congratulation that the people of this country are taking the trouble to appear against it, and if it is impractical in some of its features, there is I believe a very potent reason why. Education today and specially in this country is intended for everyone, for the masses, for the common people, while back in the good old times, it was intended merely for a privileged few. In China a man educated himself not to live but to die as a Chinaman first began to amount to something after he was dead. In Greece only the Eupatrids the aristocratic element received the learning of the times. The same was true of Rome, of early England and France, and in a large degree is true in European countries today.

While in the United States there are now 395,000 students in the colleges and the normals besides the millions in the common schools. Necessarily, the education designed for a privileged few would be a very different kind of education from that designed for the common people, and the education that would be practical for the man of the privileged or leisured class might not be practical for the man who toils by the sweat of his brow. And right here has been our difficulty. Too long have we educated our people in a system of education originally intended for the people with leisure time to live a cultured life. Too long we have modeled our education after the education of the past. Too long have we been preparing our pupils for college rather than for life. Too long has our education been allowed to be formal and disciplinary, rather than practical and helpful. We are glad to note a wonderful change in this regard and especially in the last ten years; but I ask you to reflect, ladies and gentlemen, as to what our aims in high school education have been. We have taken our pupils, girls and boys, dull and bright, bad and good, rich and poor, put them into our educational mill, fed them the same food, treated them with the same medicine, assumed that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, that what was good for one would be good for all, and then we have turned our educational crank and started our educational mill and tried to make all the boys and girls in this great country just alike. We have taken these pupils, girls and boys, dull and bright, bad and good, rich and poor, have administered to them in copious quantities large amounts of trigonometry, geometry, Latin and the like and if they have had strong mental constitutions and strong armed parents and could be made to stand the strain for four years we have turned them out; no, not turned them out, graduated them out, to an expectant but hard hearted and unsympathetic world, prepared for life. Prepared for life, no. Formally educated, yes; culturally educated, yes; prepared for college with disciplined minds, yes; but prepared for life, no.

An education that is merely formal and disciplinary can never fully prepare for life. It develops your brain but the day is coming when we will think that our brains can be developed to a better advantage by practical education than by mere disciplinary education. The time is coming when the boy who is going to tend store or till the soil will not seek to develop merely a finely disciplined brain but will seek to develop a finely disciplined brain and with the same effort store in that brain some useful

and practical knowledge. I know that it is unpardonable heresy to say so, but I fail to see how some of the subjects now taught will help the boy much who intends to be a farmer. O, we are told that such subjects develop his mind and train his judgment and 'tis true they do, but not to the extent that he could tell a sick horse from an able bodied one. And not to the extent that renders his judgment keener in the practical lines of his business.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, in speaking to you in this fashion, I appreciate that I am on dangerous ground, skating so to speak upon very thin ice, and I wish therefore to be thoroughly understood. Bear in mind that I am not declaring that some of the subjects of our present curriculum have no place at all in our educational system for they do have a place. A man who is going to study pharmacy or medicine will have to know some of the subjects now taught because they will be technically applied to his business, and a man who is going to be an engineer will have to delve deep into higher mathematics because they are technically a part of his occupation by my point is this, all the boys and girls in this country are not going to be physicians or electrical engineers or have kindred occupations. Give those who wish to be such, education as they may need, but give to the ordinary fellow in the ordinary walk of life an ordinary education that will be helpful and of some practical value to him. I believe that the time is coming when we will still be teaching the sciences of physics and chemistry but instead mere technical sciences we find them to be applied chemistry and applied physics, applied to us in a particular and a practical manner. I believe that the time is coming when the farmer boy and the average town boy will not spend so much time on cultural subjects for a disciplinary education but will take more work in English because it teaches him to read, write and to talk better his native tongue, will take work in business law, will know how to enter into a contract with his fellow men because this he has to do every year of his life, will take work in agriculture or business because he demands and has the right to more than a disciplined mind, the right to a useful education and the right to a practical start in life. I was reading only the other day that the dishwashers' union in San Francisco at their last meeting found that one hundred of their members were college graduates. We believe, ladies and gentlemen, that the time is coming when no such travesty can be written on a college education because we believe in a college education, we believe in high school education and we believe in common school education, but we are glad that the tendency of the times is to teach the boy a useful trade without having to send him to the reform school to get it, that the tendency of the times is to study more about Box Butte county and less about Afghanistan and the Himalaya mountains.

An old negro was hired to sweep a school house. He did a poor job of it and when they pointed out great streaks of dirt on the floor he declared that it was not dirt. "No, sah, boss, that am not dirt, that am house moss." The time is at hand when we are slowly but surely cleaning our school houses of intellectual house moss. But we should not expect this transformation in a day. It will be the work of years and while we are in the midst of this change, there looms up a tendency gigantic in its every aspect. We shall be reluctant to take out old requirements and yet we shall be constantly introducing new requirements and there will be a tendency to ask so much of our pupils that no knowledge will be thoroughly and accurately acquired.

There will be a tendency to sacrifice definite and dynamic knowledge and our pupils may graduate from school with a jumbled up knowledge of everything in general, nothing in specific, comparable only to the knowledge that the old negro had of the people. This story is so very old that I think that I may be safe in saying that it came out of the ark but yet it is so applicable and so pertinent to the point which I am trying to make here that I think that I shall risk your wrath and fury and tell it to you, even though you have heard it before.

The story is told of an old negro whose life's ambition had been to be ordained a minister of the gospel but all of his efforts had been fruitless and all of his attempts had been in vain. When they asked him why he thought that he should be a minister, he fervently cried: "Why, you knows, de oder day, dat I was lying out in my yard and I sees in de sky the flaming letters, P. C., the flaming letters of fire, P. C., which I knows to mean Preach Christ." After he had been given another examination he was told that the letters no doubt

meant Plow Corn, and that in all probability he had misinterpreted them but still he was not dismayed and once more asked that he be ordained a minister of the gospel. The elders of the church finally told him that if he could answer to their satisfaction one question which they would propound to him about the Bible they might ordain him a minister. His face wreathed itself in smiles and lighted up with a glow. He knew all about the Bible and was confident of his ability to indulge in mental and vocal perambulations, such as they might desire. The question which was asked was, "What place has woman occupied in the Bible?"

The old man waxed eloquent and orated in this fashion: "Now woman has occupied a very important place in de Bible, dere was Eve the mother of all trouble, who was not afraid of snakes and then dere was Ruth the demon harvest hand who went into the wheat fields, followed three binders and shocked eighty acres of beardless wheat in one day, then dere was Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab and de king went up on the walls of the city and called all de peoples around him and sez, 'Now I knows I has a wicked woman, but the next question is, What shall we do wif her?' And the peoples sez, 'Take her upon the walls of the city and frow her down.' And the king sez, 'Dat suits me, go down and git her and bring her up on the walls of de city and frow her down.' And they went down and they got her and they brought her up on the walls of the city and they frowed her down. And agin de king sez, 'Go down and git her agin and bring her up on the walls agin and frow her down seven times.' And they went down and they got her and they brought her up on the walls of the city and they frowed her down seven times. And the king sez, 'Go down and git her agin and bring her up on de walls of the city agin and frow her down seven times seben.' And they went down and got her and brought her up and frowed her down seven times seben. And the

king sez, 'Go down and git her agin and bring her up on the walls of the city agin and frow her down seven times seben.' And they went down and they got her and they brought her up and they frowed her down seven times seben and they picked up the fragments and dere were twelve baskets full, five barley loaves and four fishes."

Now it is clearly seen that the old negro aspirant for the right to eat yellow legged chicken knew something of the Bible. He had heard of Eve and Ruth, of Jezebel and Ahab, of the marching around the walls of Jericho and the feeding of the five thousand but his knowledge was so jumbled together as to be of no practical assistance to him. Unless the schools insist upon a greater degree of thoroughness and accuracy, to a lesser degree, of course, we may expect to find frequent illustrations of a hit and miss educational training.

There is another phase of the educational system of Nebraska which it seems will in a very few years undergo at least a degree of transformation and that phase is with regard to the operation of rural schools. In 1799 when this country began its governmental existence, only one-thirtieth of the people lived in cities and towns while now fifty per cent of our population is urban. There has been a wonderful and unprecedented concentration of population in cities and so tremendous and so continuous has been this growth that a universal cry has been raised of Back to the Land, Back to the Farm. It has been repeatedly urged that if we modify our rural schools so that the rural boy can receive some advanced education at home on the farm he will stay at home on the farm and that the unusual growth of cities will be thereby curtailed.

While we most heartily believe in the establishment in some manner of advanced rural schools, yet I doubt if this will prevent a further populous increase in cities because the growth of our cities has been due to industrial forces and economic causes. Let me illustrate. Suppose that

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