

the matter of education and professional training than they are, but I do not think it fair to the masses that the public schools be turned into a more or less imperfect training class for teachers. The majority of the pupils do not expect to teach school, and certainly all of them could not be teachers even if they did wish it.

The students of the State University are a numerous and influential body. Men have gone out from the State University that have reflected credit on their state and her University. But they also are a class less numerous than the teachers, and if elementary education is to be fitted for their special convenience, I think it is time the rights of the majority be insisted upon.

The elementary and secondary schools should have in mind the interests of the great majority of their pupils who will never be either teachers or students at a higher institution of learning. The instruction they give should reach a fitting conclusion of its own. These schools have their special problems to solve, their special duties to fulfil. They should have an individuality of their own and not be considered a sort of an abridged edition of the State University.

We shall never be able to settle the question of the curriculum fairly unless we go back to the fundamental principles that underlie our system of free public schools. They are for the masses and their duty is to train for good citizenship.

Acting upon these principles, we should take into account, first of all the nature and needs of the child in order that the schools might help him to a normal, healthy development. Good citizenship demands strong, healthy bodies. In selecting the subject matter, we would choose primarily that knowledge of most worth to the masses, and the training would be such that the pupils were better able to control their environment and earn a living than they would have been without it. The school would take into account its duty to the state and train the future citizens in habits of industry and self-reliance.

A school system that takes into consideration the nature and needs of the child will not ignore his environment and will make suitable provision for his industrial training, unless the conditions of his home life make ample provision for it. The conditions of life in a rural community afford ample physical exercise and manual training for the children. In such cases, for the present at least, the main business of the school is to correlate the school-room work with the life outside.

The knowledge of most worth to

an agricultural community is agriculture, but agriculture has an educational worth of its own quite apart from its economic value. It is worth while because of its effect on human character. The care and culture of the soil was one of the first great sources of uplift to the human soul. To plant and rear a tree is an ethical thing and beautifies the character quite as much as the landscape.

I would have the common schools of Nebraska adopt the spirit of Arbor Day as well as observe it. The school buildings are many of them shabby; very few have any architectural beauty. The people are poor and school funds are limited. But Nebraska has plenty of land, and the people might be taught to make a better use of it.

The schools might become centers of growth for a civic conscience. It would be a worthy work for any rural teacher to set the example by beginning to beautify the school grounds. This could be done in many ways, by planting and caring for trees, and these would be for the generations yet to come. The immediate effect might be obtained by planting flowers. There is abundant and unused opportunity for the school garden in Nebraska. The school garden has many possibilities and lends itself to a number of excellent educational exercises. It will teach nature study actively and furnish first hand experimental knowledge. The effect on children is something extremely beautiful.

This is not the dream of an idealist. School gardens are not only a possibility, they are a realization. They have been used successfully as an adjunct to literary work in the school-room. There are a great many school gardens successfully used in the different states at the present time and in Europe there are over eighty thousand school gardens.

I know of this work and I have tried it with a fair measure of success. There are practical difficulties in the way, but results justify the amount of effort called forth, and it helps to destroy that very popular delusion that an education is something you must get sitting down and quite at your ease.

This leads me to some popular conceptions of what an education is and what it should do for the possessor. Our school system is an inheritance and a development. It is a system of education essentially aristocratic in spirit, adopted by a democratic people for their free public schools.

In the early days education was thought to be entirely literary and altogether a matter of books. Modern experimental methods in science have modified this opinion considerably, but the spirit is not greatly changed.

There is still a pretty general belief that an education is something that will enable a person to make a good living without hard work. It is a training that makes for some sort of genteel employment. A young man gets an education that will enable him to get away from the farm, not a training that will help him to control his environment and develop its possibilities. Education as applied to the rural schools is a way of escape and not a training that makes for special adaptation.

The duty of the school to the state, what is it? To train men and women for good citizenship. And will the schools do their duty to the state by giving a purely literary education that fits the pupils for non-productive employment? Will they do it by inculcating ideals of life that are away from agriculture, industrial pursuits and commerce? Does a state need more producers or consumers?

The schools cost money. Somebody pays the bills. Who is it? The producers, primarily, for they create the wealth. Wealth is created. It does not exist and legislation can not produce it, although it may succeed in giving an unfair division. These are truisms? Quite true, but they are truths not always acted upon. When fundamental truths are no longer a determining factor in the conduct of affairs, it is time they be emphasized and brought back into view.

The first duty of the common schools is to give such training to the pupils as will fit them for the fundamental callings of life. They will teach thoroughly the fundamental branches, not attempting to teach all useful information but aiming rather to make the pupil able to acquire such information for himself when he may need to use it.

Trained to habits of industry and self-reliance, the specially gifted boy or girl may seek for a higher calling and larger possibilities. They have a sure foundation on which to build. The great majority have then received an education that fits them for their environment and interests them in it.

All ways of life have their drawbacks and their compensations. The farmer's life is not ideal. It has its limitations and its hardships, but there are many compensations, and there are many possible compensations never utilized. There is room for much improvement in the ideals of life that dominate the public mind and herein the public schools may do a worthy work, for the character of the education determines largely the character of the pupil. There are many things worth the doing that call forth little comment and the real benefactors of the race are often forgotten, but not always.

"Who plants and rears a tree where shade is none,

Who plows a furrow in a soil untamed,
Is fit in song heroic to be named.
Nor scanter praise be his whose force
Gives to an arid land its water course,
Gradual and grateful as the water broke
Truth from the ledge that felt the Prophet's
stroke."

Fort Lewis Indian School, Breen,
Colo.