

father insists that he measure himself by the powers of will and mind and body in this competition rather than by extraneous advantages which he has not earned by his own fibre. The value of the high school as a social force is greater for those who attend it than that of the common school, because it is more conspicuous in the community, because its requirements demand a higher order of ability, and because here the boy of unpromising antecedents is rising more plainly above his past.

A Citizen's Duty.

A potent force, too, in any community, must be the attitude of the well-to-do citizen taxing himself willingly and heavily to provide the means by which his poor neighbor's boy may rise to his own position or a higher one. His attitude is alike admirable whether it arises from native generosity of heart or from the high conviction that the welfare of the state demands an open road for the talents of all.

The existence and spread of the high school idea in spite of determined and able opposition in the past shows that democracy in America aspires and does not grovel. It grasps the ideal and believes that among the masses there are those who can attain it. Such a state of things promises a higher level of popular intelligence in the future—a promise already during the last ten years being fulfilled in a higher grade of popular reading and a warmer, more widely diffused interest in education.

The Danger.

The weakness, or at least the danger, of our high schools arises from their close union with the people. They have the defect of their qualities. It is illogically argued that because the high school is for the good of the people, therefore every man's son should be admitted to it, and that after he is admitted he should be graduated in four years. Thus, pupils who have not earned admission by a grammar school course of sufficient length or merit are thrust into the high school, and many who are indolent and indifferent are allowed to be a drag upon classes in which they have no right to be, and are given diplomas which they have not earned.

Again it is argued that because the school is of the people, therefore its course of study should be determined by the people, and so we have high schools with three year courses giving full diplomas, high schools with a large number of grammar-school subjects, high schools which give only so-called "practical" courses to the exclusion of both culture and mental training. The people want higher education, but they do not know what higher education is, and under unfavorable conditions they go far afield in search of it.

They find it hard to learn that a dem-

ocratic community is one in which every member is free to attain the highest ends of which he is capable and not one in which every man is equal to every other in all respects. The practical acceptance of the latter view destroys merit in the school and in the individual, and by rendering the brightest and best of the community inferior because of the denial of the highest ideals is thoroughly undemocratic. This is at once apparent when the boy trained in such a school comes into competition with one trained in a more wisely democratic community—such competition as he is sure to meet at the portals of every good college or professional school.

Friends of the Common Schools.

All this is corrected when the community learns to trust in men uniting in themselves both broad sympathies and high ideals; men who are in close touch with the people and yet have an experience and an ideal in education far above the people. Such should be the local clergyman, such the local college man, home on his vacation or settled down in his native town to practice medicine or law, such above all the high school teacher, whose business and privilege it is to know the highest truth and to bring it within reach of the lowest boy or girl.

We all know such men, we know many communities in which they are quietly and patiently at work, raising standards of education and inspiring effort toward those standards. The statistics of our public high schools show, in spite of much that is very weak and very crude, that while the number of schools is growing, the course is also lengthening and leading in more cases to higher institutions; also that more substantial subjects like Latin and mathematics are being pursued and for a longer period by each pupil. Thus we may hope that the pretentious, the ephemeral, the gaudy, the demagogical in our higher schools of the people may pass away, and the sound, the lasting, the beautiful, the ideal, may take its place.

THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE OF STUDY.

[By Allen C. Fling, Superintendent of Schools, Nebraska City, Neb.]

A great cry is coming from different parts of the country for elective work in the high school. Some seem to think that progress and improvement demand a constant change in the existing order of things. In education it is well to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. Conservatism has a legitimate place.

A few years ago the elective system was hardly known in our colleges, now it's supporters are crowding it down to the ninth grade. We ask ourselves

"what next?" The pendulum is swinging to the opposite extreme.

Each year I collect certain data from the senior class of the Nebraska City High School; one of the questions asked is: "Why did you take the high school course?" The answers, not very definite in themselves, are usually to the effect that they wanted a better education, wanted to fit themselves for teachers, for life, or it was their parents' wish. Do such pupils know the educational value of different studies? Do they know what is needed to develop their latent faculties? Freedom of election without such power of discrimination and knowledge is mere caprice and unbridled fancy.

The Real Object.

The legitimate aim of our high schools is to train for true American citizenship. Those who advocate the elective system would sift out the few boys who have found their "calling" and let them pursue their special subjects to their heart's content. The true goal of a high school is a *general education*. We should train the pupil to do the right thing at the right time in the right way. We should train him to think, perceive, judge, discriminate and reason.

It is a fact that those studies in our high school curriculum which have the strongest psychological and pedagogical reason for being there are most often called in question. The superficial observer can see no reason for their being there. They do not appeal to his reason for he does not know their content. Great harm has been done the cause of education by the cry "impractical." To many "impractical study" is synonymous with direct exchange into dollars and cents—frequently cents. Are there not studies which from an educational standpoint should be in every course of study? Generally accepted, these are language, history, mathematics and science. A knowledge of the English tongue and literature is essential to every individual. Whether one can have a good knowledge of the English language without an acquaintance with the Latin, I am inclined to doubt. History demands recognition in every curriculum—history, not only of our own country, but of other nations which have influenced our growth and development. For disciplinary reasons, I would hold mathematics in every course. Finally, how can we omit the sciences from our high school courses? They are really the most practical studies of all. Professor Huxley says: "Science is nothing but trained and organized common sense." These four lines are embodied in the three courses in the Nebraska City High School: Classical, Latin-Scientific and German-English. These names signify what these courses contain. The student is allowed *limited electives* in each year of his course in such subjects as Book-keeping, Commercial