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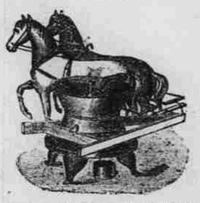
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THE STATE AND EDUCATION

By Hon. E. B. McElroy, A. M., Ph. D., Supt. Public Instruction, Salem Oregon.

All men in this country have a right to be educated. This right is as clear as the right to enjoy liberty of property and life in that country. It is not at all conventional or limited, but has its source in the nature of human constitution in the ends man should aim at in life, and in the duties he has to perform. A child has a right to grow physically, because God has made him so, and because strength of body is necessary for his own well being and for the work he has to do. So a child has a right to grow mentally for the same power has endowed him with that gift, and because he never could be a man in the highest sense without such growth. Is it worse to starve the body or the mind? Rather let both be fed. This doctrine of universal education is applicable to Oregon. This Government and State accord the right of suffrage to its citizens. Should there suddenly be established an educational standard for all who would enjoy this right, there might be more non-voters than we would suspect. Granting the existence of a large class of non-voters, such existence would be inconsistent with the theory of the republic, and, if not, it would certainly be frought with so much danger to democratic institutions that whenever it is found in a republic, all the energy and arts of statesmen and citizens should be exerted to remove it. If all citizens should vote, all citizens should be educated. Where the people are sovereign, the people should exercise the functions of sovereignty, intelligently. In a republic, means of education should be provided for all, as it is a thinking, intelligent people that render a republic secure. In the history of republics, thus far, popular ignorance has been the one cause of their overthrow. On the other hand then, the universal education of the people is more important than all other interests in a republic. This universal education of the people will diminish crime among us; it will add to our wealth, it will increase our power, it will give us influence abroad and promote peace and plenty at home, it will advance us as a nation to a higher plane of civilization than any to which the world has yet attained, and it will yield as its best fruit a race of people who will cherish and uphold forever the blessings of free government.

Education can only be generally diffused among a people by being made free. There are people in every country who set so small a value on education, that they will not voluntarily pay for it. Hence we have a system of school taxation. There are other large classes who have not the means of paying for it. Both these classes enjoy all privileges granted by the State, and the interests of the State as well as those of society demand their education. This end can be approximately reached by making education free, and can be reached in no other way. Private means have never yet made education universal among a people. Again, it requires all the mind-power of a nation to do that nation's thinking The most perfect educational system is a system that would evoke the great amount of this kind of power, and direct it to the best ends. The great purpose of education will not be fully subserved by educating a people up to a certain point, and then ceasing to make any provision for their further progress. It is doubtless more essential to mankind in general, so far, at least, as material interests are concerned, to be acquainted with the common branches of knowledge, than to be versed in the higher branches; and, in providing a system of instruction for a state, this fact should not be lost sight of. But no state can do its whole duty to its people or itself, until it has made provision for generously encouraging liberal learning. A country situated and governed like ours, wants among its people something more than superficial knowledge; it wants an education that imparts solidity, strength, refinement, and presents as its best fruit the highest type of well-balanced, self-balanced men and women. It wants an education that reaches down to the lowest and up to the highest. Every state, then, should encourage the establishment of a sufficient number of Colleges, Universities, and Normal Schools, and not only these, but every city, town, village, and district should have its free school—free alike to rich and poor. And where these cannot be established, there ought to be established Academies and Seminaries, recognized and aided by the State when conforming to the conditions the State might impose. All institutions of learning in a state should be incorporated into a system with mutual relations and interests, and wise supervision. Those which now exist could not in any way be interfered with in respect to their vested rights chartered privileges, or denominational differences and preferences; but the State cannot and should not undertake to free itself wholly from responsibility concerning them. The people of every state need the education furnished by Colleges, Academies, High Schools, and Common Schools, and all these agencies should work in harmony for a common end. It is a narrow view of our public educational systems to hold that they are intended to provide an education for those only who have not the means of educating themselves. The view broadens greatly, when it is held to be the design of such systems to educate all, rich and poor, up to the point which is necessary to enable them to discharge the ordinary duties of citizens and matters of business. But that view can only be called comprehensive which takes in the doctrine, that, while a state may find it compulsory to establish and support Common Schools, it is also its duty to encourage, by suitable legislation and judicious appropriations, higher institutions of learning, that they may be rendered as easy and accessible as possible to all classes of citizens.

In this country every youth has the chance and the right to make himself honorable and useful. This chance is as free as air, and is furnished him on every hand, ready-made to occupy an upright position in the community. Every inducement that a generous government can bestow is held out to him. Public schools and higher institutions of learning are everywhere. The teachers in our Colleges and Universities are doing a grand work for education of the youth of our State. Every enterprising boy who is striving to become an intelligent and useful citizen, may secure a liberal education in these institutions of learning. Beginning in the primary school, the ambitious youth continues his course through the various grades until he reaches the University or Colleges. Here, with the advantage of more mature years and thought, he is prepared to acquire that higher education that imparts strength of character and refinement of manners, rounding up his work, and entering the walks of life as the self-poised and well-balanced man. The way is open, then—there is no established rank, no line of aristocracy, no obstacle worth naming, indeed, in this state, that stands in the way of any boy or girl who is struggling upwards. We have now, in part, a comprehensive system of education—and this system must continue to be advocated, established, and extended, thus making the way ever open and easy to the children of the rich and of the poor. Has our country lost anything by its generous system of public education? Do you regret that the free Public schools and Colleges of Oregon have already furnished the community tens, yea, hundreds of intelligent men and women? Do we regret the policy of leaving the avenues to honor and eminence open to all? Do you regret that grand basis of freedom and intelligence upon which our government rests? Do we regret from that freedom of education that has furnished the opportunity to thousands of poor boys and girls to rise from obscurity to the highest places in the goverment, literature and science? Are we ashamed of Webster, Lincoln, Garfield, Bryant, Whittier, Holmes, Everett, Emerson, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Francis Wayland and Horace Mann?

Again, from another standpoint, every man is a factor in and member of society. In this he has no choice. It is absolute and compulsory. What sort of factor, then, shall he be? His duties to himself are modified by his duties to his neighbors. Forces operate upon him that tend to preserve his own independence and dependence—in other words. these forces render him subject to social, civil, and moral laws. These forces tend, on the one hand, to cause the individual to disregard the claim of society upon him, and, on the other, to cause society to disregard the right of the individual. Is it wrong, then, to magnify man, or debase him as an individual? Is his freedom of thought and speech to be restricted because it is abused? Are free institutions to be condemned because they elevate the masses? By no means; but, on the contrary, the chief glories of a free government, with free institutions and free schools, are that they made men capable of self-government by pressing upon them individual responsibilities. A people who are not free can never be strong. True manhood is the ripened fruit of independence. The foolishness of youth must be tolerated to secure the soberness of age. With this view of a social status, what will insure proper respect for authority more than education? Not a smattering, but a full, strong, liberal education! Some contend that the multiplicity of denominational and other institutions, now on hand, has a disintegrating influence on society. If this be so, then, let it be counter-balanced by the reconstructing influence of a more liberal educational policy on the part of the State. Learning brings with it judgment, weight, discretion. If democratic forms of government give higher position and increased privileges to the individual, they must seek to make him worthy of the trust reposed in him. If government grants the right of suffrage, it ought to insist upon an intelligent exercise of that right. Those who have not been taught to rule themselves cannot wisely rule others. To a monarchy which contains from without, ignorance is not necessarily dangerous. But to a republic which controls from within, education is vital. Rightly educated men see that there must be authority, and they respect it—respect it the more because it emanates from themselves. Our schools, then, must sober the reckless, must curb licentiousness (if I may use the word) of opinion, must teach that conservatism, which while it does not refuse to recognize the glad promise of the future, still holds finally to what is good in the past.

It has been well said by eminent teachers that "intelligence is the keystone of our national structure." This intelligence must be constant and comprehensive, and if it saves the republic it must be broad and universal. Anarchy and nihilism are abroad; outward authority, general and local, begins to lose its hold upon men; the annals of the times begin to show elements of discord and disruption; children set at naught the authority of parents; distrust and suspicion disturb the relations of the employe; the disclosure of plots and plans agitates many communities, hundreds and thousands of idle, disreputable, vicious and robust tramps perambulate the country, jeopardizing the security of homes and peremptorily demanding food and shelter. All this points to disintegration, and, while factors of danger, they must be counterbalanced by universal education and intelligence. The points of disturbance just recited are weighty enough, and, while sufficiently grave to demand the attention of rulers and statesmen, it seems to us that some of their causes are equally as dangerous, significant, and full of concern. And, first, the stupid indifference in regard to our schools and children is the great state, national and educational bane against which we are compelled to wage constant and vigorous war. The reason why we have many poor schools is because the people are entirely willing they shall be poor. The method is—cheap teachers,—cheap schools, and great numbers of children and youths grow up untaught and ungoverned, simply because there is not interest enough felt in their education to have it otherwise. Then, again, there is an educational apathy (if it may be so termed,) not only among the masses, but on the part of individuals. And this individual indifference makes it a matter of greater concern both public and private. It is a matter of greatest regret that the interests of the schools shall come to concern each man only in his corporate capacity as tax-payer, voter, or legislator, and not as parent and patron. Our best teacher once truly said, "whatever threatens to substitute the tax payer for the man and parent to make private persons look upon public questions, as something they do not need to understand—as the business of a school-board, or of a county or state official, and not their business—is much more to be dreaded than almost any conceivable faults of administration, it is the beginning of ossification, of 'fatty degeneration' in the body politic." A complete change in all this will be produced by a complete revolution by public interest in public education. In view of all ills that seem to beset us, the security for the future safety and education of the child is the parent's conviction of its importance—a conviction too deeply seated to suffer the parent to rest so long as his child remains in ignorance. Legislative or congressional compulsion will not be likely to strengthen such a conviction. Will it not then be better for education, teachers, lawyers, doctors, preachers, parents and patrons, and all interested in the improvement of our schools, to labor to produce this conviction upon the minds of the masses, that knowledge is better than gold, and attempt to arouse the public mind to become interested in the work of universal education. Two pictures have been presented—the one showing popular interest in education, and some of its results, the other, popular ignorance.

THE PET LAMB.

A TRUE STORY BY EFRIE.

Many years ago a good man wrote these words, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." They are so kind and tender that many to this day reverently believe they are the language of the Bible. But tenderness is not always an outward token of God's love. The Good Shepherd with diviner pity often teaches us by pain. It was a piteous day in early spring when my father brought home a poor little shivering lambkin. There had been a lovely promise of springtime with blue skies and soft airs: so that the trees had forgotten their calendar and a shimmer of green shone on meadow and wood. Birds sang gaily and golden cowslips nodded among their glossy green leaves by the brook-side.

But now winter seemed come again with pitiless rain and sleet. The chilled buds shrank back affrighted, and the birds flew swiftly away beyond the border of the storm. Horses and cows returned to winter quarters and the rejoicing cakle of hens was hushed while they huddled disconsolately in corners. The sheep still lingered in the field, but with the first lull of the storm, my father sought them and found in a lonely spot a lamb new-born, deserted by its hind. The storm had driven the flock into the shelter of the wood, but this little weakling unable to follow, lay in the pelting rain calling with weak cry for pity and help. But pity and help were near, and the little creature was borne in careful arms to the house. There in the warm kitchen it rested, fed with milk, and caressed by loving children until the storm was over. Then a home was made for it in the wood-shed and it grew as glad and frolicklesome as though skipping in the fields by its wooly mother. The children called their pet Fanny, and when summer came they would sometimes hang flowers around her neck and frolic with her upon the grass until they were tired with play, and then rest with her under the shade of the trees, making a pretty picture for a painter's brush. The children were the only friends that Fanny knew. She would wait patiently at the door for their appearance in the morning and follow them with merry bleat in all their romps, or in their rambles over the farm. One day she heard their well-known voices in their rooms, and when an open door gave her a chance in she dashed with swift and saucy hoof, up the staircase, and straight to their room sure of a welcome from the gay rogues she sought. Hugs and praises rewarded her confidence and even after all arguments of whatever sort were enable to convince her sheep's head that the children's room was not a true lamb's fold. So went the summer, no lamb or child ever knew a gayer or happier one, and the storm which frowned on Fanny at her birth melted into sunshine. But clouds may come again over the fairest sky, and Reason complained of the tenderness which would give even a creature which was the very type of love, all of its own sweet way.

With the waning of the summer the order went forth that Fanny must go to the flock, but no mirror of experience had taught her that she was a sheep, and she fled from them with terror stricken bounds. Patient and repeated trials brought her no wisdom. Then it was thought that the wise house dog who bore presence with philosophic gravity might reconcile her to the society of the stables where he shared the favor of horses and cows alike; but only closed doors kept her there, and ever and anon there came forth a sad plaint which told that Fanny was not happy

The long cold winter with its subduing captivity passed slowly by, but spring-time and summer came again, and Fanny bounded forth so big and bold that memory was almost cheated with doubt that she was the feeble lambkin of one year ago. But there was no change in her memory or in the ardor of her affections, and she was fain to return to her old haunts and playmates. Pitiful and kind though her master was, his reason voiced the mandate, and Fanny was banished to fields from which she could never return, and the children saw her no more. Now they are "old folk" grown and wiser but have never forgotten the lesson of "tenderness," and when a man of books told them the royal rivalry between the words of Sterne and Bible lore, they said the man wrote wisely but the Good Shepherd who carries the lambs in his bosom gave us the better wisdom in the words, "Feed my lambs."