

Just Giving the Boy His Chance

BY LUTHER BURBANK.

"I have never heard of a boy—taught to love nature—who went wrong."

A HUNDRED years ago a trip from New York to the spot where Chicago now is would have involved weeks of travel and endless discomfort. A hundred years ago communication by letter between these points was well-nigh unheard of.

Yet today the trip may be conveniently made over night. A letter mailed in New York this afternoon will be delivered in Chicago tomorrow morning. The telegraph will convey a message with the loss of only an hour of time. And the telephone from any point in New York to any point in Chicago, once the connection is made, gives instantaneous communication.

Truly in transportation and easy communication—those two fundamentals of civilization—we have accomplished in a hundred years what we might reasonably have expected to accomplish in a thousand or ten thousand years.

Advancement.

And so, in medicine, in surgery, in electricity, in scientific management and high efficiency of business conduct—and in almost every industry and every line of endeavor—the present state of advancement could never have been dreamed a hundred years ago—could never have been believed fifty years ago—could not have been foreseen even ten years ago.

In practically every line we have been leaping centuries and centuries ahead within the span of a few brief years—in practically every line excepting the one line of endeavor upon which all other lines of endeavor depend—in practically every line save in the production of the necessities from the soil.

In agriculture and horticulture, alone, have we been content with that slow increase in efficiency which the years might naturally be expected to bring—while in all of our other lines—secondary lines though they be—we have impatiently robbed the future of progress which might have taken centuries for the natural course of events to bring about.

Farming Backward.

Or, to look at it in another way, if we were still traveling in stage coaches, had only dreamed the possibility of a telegraph, knew nothing of what electricity had in store for us, or of the value of modern manufacturing and merchandising methods, then we could sit back and say that farming, indeed, had made wonderful progress.

But in days of instantaneous communication, highly specialized marketing facilities, and the wastes and delays of existence reduced to a minimum, farming appears, indeed, to have stayed in the stage coach period.

It would seem as though, during the past hundred years, and particularly the past two decades, we had been devoting all of our genius and bending all of our energy toward bringing conveniences within the reach of all—toward making luxuries so cheap that none could afford to refuse them.

While all the time the actual necessities of life, the things we eat, the things we wear, and all those other things which depend directly upon the soil for their production, have grown dearer and dearer and dearer.

The Boy's Opportunity.

It is this state of things that gives the boy of today the biggest opportunity that any boy has ever had.

A hundred years ago it was the railroads which opened up opportunity to the young Vanderbilts.

Fifty years ago it was steel—steel needed in other fast-growing lines of industry—which opened up opportunity to the young Carnegies.

Forty years ago it was electricity which opened up its opportunities to the young Edisons and Westinghouses.

Today every 40-acre tract of land that will bear a crop is begging our boys to come and embrace their opportunity.

The kind of opportunities which made fame and fortune for young Vanderbilts, and young Carnegies, and young Edisons and young Westinghouses is not to be found in the highly perfected industries of today; for the greater perfection to which an industry or line of endeavor attains, the better the organization of the men behind that industry—and the better the organization the less the opportunity, undeniably, for the individual.

If we desire to make the boy a lawyer, for example, we must give

him eight years of costly training simply to teach him those fundamentals which all other lawyers know. The law is a highly organized profession. The eight years of time and the thousands of dollars of expense do not assure the boy of success—they merely place him in a position to compete with 50,000 other lawyers who have all had about the same training at the same expense—they are merely preliminary requisites before his individual talent may be given even the barest opportunity to show for itself.

So, too, with medicine, with engineering, with advertising, and with all of the other highly organized professions.

So, too, with railroading, and with virtually every line of business—the advancement which has come has brought with it a state of organization which eliminates the need of the untrained individual—which demands a long, tedious apprenticeship, before the slightest attention can be paid to individual merit—if, indeed, the individual merit is to receive its opportunity at all.

The world already has enough lawyers, enough doctors, enough engineers, enough business executives, enough railroad men to take care of its wants.

Need of Men.

What it needs—urgently and now—is men who can show the farmer how to increase his wheat yield without corresponding increase of expense or effort, so that Chicago and New York may once more have their large 5c loaves of bread as of old.

What the world needs, urgently and now, is men who can increase the forage from our present acreage so that 16c will buy a pound of the choicest shroin, as of old, instead of a pound of rump, as now.

What the world needs is not theory, or agitation, or college lore; there are plenty of these, and at a cost of \$180,000,000 per annum in money—and who knows how much time—they have succeeded in increasing our crop yield only a bare 3 per cent.

What the world needs is men who can do to agriculture and to horticulture what Edison did to electricity, Carnegie to steel, and the Vanderbilts, Hills and Harrimans to transportation—develop its efficiency.

And the boy who tries to give the world this want will find himself facing an opportunity 400 times bigger than the railroad opportunity was a hundred years ago, 800 times bigger than electricity offered at its inception, 1500 times bigger than the steel opportunity which Mr. Carnegie found—because agriculture is just, by these amounts, bigger than those other industries.

No Apprenticeships.

The boy who seeks this opportunity will find himself in no long waiting line of applicants. He will face no eight-year apprenticeship.

Every acre of tillable land is inviting him to come to work; every purchaser of food and clothing is protesting against his delay.

And every plant that grows is anxious to reveal to him the trade secrets and the technique of his new profession.

What an opportunity indeed! To add a single kernel to each ear of corn means a 5,000,000 bushel crop increase in America alone.

A single improvement in the despised potato has meant \$17,000,000 a year, here at home.

The production of a single new fruit, or the adaptation of an existing fruit to new conditions, or the increase in yield or improvement in the flavor of a fruit may mean a colossal fortune in added wealth.

A single intelligent idea applied on an 80-acre farm may mean the difference, to some one, between grinding poverty and comfortable prosperity.

A Thousand-Fold Reward.

What an opportunity, indeed! To the boy who has a genius for the work it offers a thousand-fold more reward than has ever been offered a genius.

To the boy who has merely intelligence and persistence it opens up the way to escape from mediocrity.

Everything we eat, and everything we wear must be produced directly or indirectly from the soil.

Yet even now, when we can easily afford bathtubs, and telephones, and steam heat, and luxurious travel, we are sorely hurt to pay the prices to which the common necessities of food and clothing have arisen.

The world did not want railroads

so badly, because it had no conception of the wonders which railroads could work.

It did not want electricity so badly, because the things which electricity has done were beyond its imagination.

It has never wanted anything so badly as it now wants to put back the price of its necessities—a price of farming to keep up with the times.

What an opportunity, indeed!

The Beginning.

How shall the boy begin? By working with the plants themselves, by learning to understand Nature and to love her responsiveness.

If the boy can have 10 feet in the back yard for his experiments, well and good. If not, perhaps he can have five.

If he can raise a variety of plants it will hasten his training. But surely he can work with one or two.

He can learn for himself that plants continually change themselves to meet the requirements of the men and women who grow them.

That nothing in Nature stands still, that it either goes forward or backward.

That nothing else in all Nature responds to the pleasures and desires of man so readily as her plants.

That the characteristics of the parent plant are reproduced in its offspring, and that parentage can be varied almost at will.

That due to Nature's adaptability it has already been possible to change the scent, size, color, blooming period and charm of flowers; to improve existing fruits and foods to meet the needs of the present day, and to create entirely new fruits and food plants, so that the world may enjoy a better product at a lower price; and to perfect plants which yield entirely new substances for manufacture—new chemical elements which have their definite bearing on lowering the cost of living.

I hope to see the day when a practical manual of plant breeding in words, almost, of one syllable will be placed within the reach of all the young.

But until that day, it is still possible to lead the boy into his opportunity, by teaching a love for plants themselves, and putting him in a position to study a knowledge of their ways.

(From booklet issued by the Luther Burbank Society of Santa Rosa.)

To "Old Steamboat."

"Old Steamboat," the worst outlaw horse in the West, was shot the other day to end his sufferings from blood poisoning, caused by an injury received in a railroad wreck. "Old Steamboat" had thrown the most skilled bronco busters, and no rider had ever conquered him fairly. He was defiant to the last.—Dispatch from Wyoming.

Outlaw they called you, all because They never broke you to their will; Outlaw they called you, and their laws At last have laid you cold and still; Scarred were your sides from rowelled heel,

And scarred your flank from cruel quirt, But, spite of what the flesh might feel, Your dauntless spirit was unurt.

Outlaw they called you—in the dust Has many a braggart rider whirled; Your strength was fed by wrath most just,

Your courage was as flag ne'er furled; You heard the whimper of the cur As 'neath your hoofs the coward purred;

Outlaw they called you—hot thoughts stir At what men term the proud and bold.

Outlaw they called you—did one hand In kindness ever stretch toward thee? Did aught save despot's harsh command

Fall on your ears, black horse now free? The lariat, the branding blaze, The cruelties 'neath which you chafed,

Outlaw these made you all your days, With death the one kind act vouchsafed.—Arthur Chapman, in New York Sun.

Kindly remember, too, that the germs that cause milk to sour are ever present in the barn, in the dairy utensils, and where the milk is kept. Can't be too careful in handling milk.

Buy it now

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