

PRESENT TENDENCIES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION.

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Some comparison of the tendencies of public and private education should be made; or, taking the two more characteristic forms, let us consider the public high school—a day school—on the one hand, and the private boarding school on the other.

Students in the high school are in daily touch with the home life and the general life of the community. In the boarding school, the school life is for the time being the whole of life for the students. The disposition to regard school life as real life may be expected, then, to affect in different ways these two types of institution.

The high school is in some respects more in danger of isolation—of separation from the real life of its students—than schools of the other sort. It is possible for students to have a whole range of interests belonging to the hours not spent in school, and even to think of school interests as relatively unimportant. What more frequently happens is that the outside interests mix in a great variety of ways with those of the school, with a result that is confusing in the extreme.

There is a strongly marked tendency in American communities to permit young people, while yet in the high school, to forestall the social pleasures which a more wholesome taste would reserve for later enjoyment. The aping of college society on the part of high-school students adds to this evil. I need not enlarge upon this topic, for teachers will recall from their

experience many things to fill out the picture that I have suggested. The distractions referred to are for the most part innocent enough in themselves. But they detract from the seriousness of our secondary education, and tend to a certain pettiness of scholastic attainment.

The students in German day schools are almost as completely removed from the outer world in their hours out of school as if they lived within school walls; for the school authorities can do much toward regulating the home life in the interest of studies. Our American disposition is against that sort of regulation; and we must seek an American solution of the difficulty.

We have wished to see more of real life in the school; and here we find real life jostling the school in a way that is very embarrassing. The trouble is, however, that the school may be jostled by life without being in touch with life. The first thing, apparently, to be done by way of counteracting this tendency to distraction is to make the instruction in the school more vital—to bring it, in other words, into closer touch with the rest of life. The remark is very general; but this is not the place to enter into detail. And there are teachers who are translating the general principal into daily actuality, and making the things of the school more alive for their students than those interests that would attract them abroad. First, then, the instruction in the schools