

finds that his parents do not care much whether or not he goes further in school, or that they expect him to get to work or actually need his earnings, the decision is apt to be made quickly. Or, if there is something wrong with the school or with his adjustment to it,—teachers incompetent or uninspiring, studies not practical enough, a school spirit lacking, or the boy himself not promoted—he is ready to quit if he gets a chance.

Retardation in school is undoubtedly one of the chief reasons why pupils drop out. The boy who fails to be promoted and gets behind grade, becomes discouraged and feels humiliated to be grouped with younger children; and he is glad, as soon as the law permits him, to get into work where he can associate with others of his own age and receive weekly evidence of at least some measure of success in form of a pay envelope.

The situation in this respect is more serious than we are apt to think. At the close of the school year 1912-13, the Russell Sage Foundation made a census of the thirteen year old boys in seventy-eight cities of the United States,—the boys, that is, who were approaching the end of the compulsory attendance period. It brought out the fact that there were some thirteen year old boys in every school grade from the kindergarten to the senior year of the high school. Over twenty-two thousand boys of this age were listed. Five per cent. of these were still in the third grade or lower; thirty-two per cent. in the fifth grade or lower; and fifty-seven per cent. in the sixth grade or lower. One wishes that these retarded boys had been looked up again a year later, to discover how many of them had kept on at school, when no longer compelled by law to attend.

The worst of it is, that the boy of fourteen who goes to work is likely to get the wrong kind of job. This is partly because of the hit and miss way in which most boys of this age get placed in jobs; but it is chiefly because most of the jobs open to them are of the "blind alley" type. These jobs lead nowhere. They do not develop skill or resource;

they will never pay much more than the initial wage; and in the course of a few years the boy will find himself too old for that type of work, but without qualifications for a good job. He will become a "job hobo" or an unskilled laborer, one from time to time of the army of the unemployed.

Of 560 jobs held by boys and girls between fourteen and seventeen years of age, investigated by the University of Chicago Settlement, only thirty-five were of the sort that would lead to promotion or promised skill in some recognized trade. The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, in

its report published in 1909, expresses the conviction that this aspect of boy labor in England is perhaps the most serious of the bodies of fact which they encountered in their exhaustive study of unemployment. "The mass of unemployment is continually being recruited by a stream of young men from industries which rely upon unskilled boy labor, and turn it adrift at manhood without any general or special industrial qualification. . . It will never be diminished till this stream is arrested."

What are we going to do about it? No one yet knows the full answer to that question. Our realization of the problem is too recent; our efforts to solve it are still in the stage of experiment. But it seems clear that the solution lies along four main lines of effort:

### EXPECTING VICTORY

There is much wisdom in that ancient teaching in the book of Job, "The thing which I fear cometh upon me." And equally true is it that what one eagerly anticipates is likely to come to him. The person who cherishes the fear of defeat is in danger of being defeated, while he who expects victory is already on the high-road to success.

To expect victory does not mean simply to expect. It means also wise planning and hard work, but it means an optimistic spirit in all one's planning. And while optimism does not hypnotize success, there can be no question that of two men of equal ability, working equally hard, the optimist has far more chances of winning than the pessimist.

The Sunday School teacher should always expect to succeed. He should confidently look forward to a growing attendance. He should not be surprised when the class reveals a larger spirit of generosity. And when they undertake new lines of activity he ought to be able to say, "That is just what I expected."

James Elmer Russell