

### A Rational Education.

Our education reflects not only the living *Zeitgeist*, but also and even more clearly, the dead standards of a long past.

The extent of our failure can be realized when we remember that nearly all educational reforms have been forced upon the schools from without. They originated with men and women who were so fortunate as to escape the pedagogical blight. When we remember that the men of mark in the great world of action and creative thought have either been educated in an irregular fashion, or if they have gone to the colleges and academies, have never taken the courses too seriously; these facts are significant. They mean that education has too often been a thwarting of the spirit, and an attempt to fit a square plug into a round hole, a pressure, a dead weight, rather than an unfolding. They mean that education has seldom, in practice at least, been reduced to a science.

I often stand in our crowded school rooms with the feeling that we have provided an atmosphere rich in the materials of knowledge—possibly over rich—but that we have not seen to the root of the matter in trying to meliorate the life conditions of the child; and particularly that there is lacking the needed sunshine of a joyous, wholesome spirit to assimilate this food, and turn it into healthful growth.—*Principal Henderson, Man. Tr. Sch., Phil., Pa.*

### Common Schools and the Farmers.

Mr. E. P. Powell publishes in the *New England Magazine* a protest against the failure of country schools to fit boys for intelligent farm life. He suggests important changes in the instruction given in these schools. "That part of the boy's education which consisted of skilful handling of scythe and axe and other tools is useless and vacated. So far as the three Rs are concerned, they can mostly be taught at home. What we want of our country schools is to make the farming to-day intelligent, interesting and profitable. The boys and girls should first of all be taught the composition of the rocks and soils with which they have to deal. This should be complemented with a good knowledge of plants and animal life. I suppose that no one could be more ignorant of these things than the average farmer. He is in no case taught in the common schools the structure of the animals he employs or the grains that he eats. Geography gives a knowledge of the surface of the earth in general; it points away from the farm. Geology gives a knowledge of the earth underfoot, the farmer's own immediate property; it makes every grain of sand and every granule of clay interesting;

it opens the eyes to ten thousand things the farmer must daily touch and see. Yet the farm children have geography and not geology. No one surely would condemn geography, no one would shut in or circumscribe the farmer's interests; but I plead for the other. Geology I would follow with biology in its forms of zoology and botany, entomology and ornithology; that is, I insist that our country schools shall undertake to make farmers. The boy on the farm—and the girl quite as much—needs to know the things under his feet and over his head, the soil, the life in and on the soil, and its relation to them. He should understand a cow and a horse in the zoological relations, and to some extent anatomically. I am considering the broadening out of farm life, and the awakening of interest in those things that make a part of the farmer's daily life. As the schools are, whatever is taught points to the store and the city, and not to the farm. A college professor said to me: We can do very little in the way of putting more science into the college curriculum until the high schools are revolutionized, and that requires a preliminary change in the common schools." Before the age of seven or eight, in well-to-do families where kindergartens are impossible, the child should be taught chiefly to observe. He should learn to see well and to use all his senses. After that age books should be used as aids to observation: not to dispense with original observation; but to assist. Every child should become an investigator. When this change is made, and the curriculum is re-adjusted as suggested, I do not say that you cannot drive our boys away from the farms into trade and manufacture; but I do say that, unless a lad is born with a particular bias for something else, he will love the land so that he will not wish to leave. These words are well worthy the consideration of our board of education, and every one interested in the prosperity of this farming province.—*Eastern Chronicle.*

The teacher who would succeed in his profession must study his pupils—not casually and *en masse*, as has been the practice in the past, but individually and scientifically. He must make himself thoroughly acquainted with their several capabilities, physical, mental and moral. Note in the most accurate and objective way, any salient act or remark of a child, and enter it in a register. A sound physical constitution is of the first importance to pupils who wish to do themselves and their teachers credit. If science can point the way to bodily health under the pressure which now prevails, it would confer lasting benefits on mankind.—*Selected.*