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Examination Experiment Which May Bring About Far-Reaching Changes

Students are Allowed To Bring and Use All Books They Wanted.

HARVARD TRIES SOMETHING NEW

Purpose is to Eliminate 24-Hour Memory and Do Useful Work.

Educationists see in an experiment at Harvard University a few days ago a movement which may lead to far-reaching changes in examinations at all colleges and possibly in the public schools as well.

For years all the way from graded schools through colleges and universities and old-time examination methods have been deplored and of late the demands for a change have multiplied. Something more practical than 24-hour memory tests are wanted as badly as changes in the over-crowded curriculum, critics of the public school system declare.

Harvard's latest experiment in education was tried in an examination in English 72, a course on the poets of the 19th Century given by Prof. J. L. Loves, when the startling departure of allowing the students to take as many books as they could carry into the examination room. The bigger men of the course and the athletes thus had an advantage over their less fortunate smaller brethren, who had all they could tote, but all reports indicate that the experiment proved highly successful.

"The purpose of this move," says an explanation appearing in a news item in the Boston Globe, "was to eliminate the idea of a 24-hour memory test which would be sufficient to pass the examination in question and nothing of the course be retained for the student in after years. Instead it aimed to give the members of this course an opportunity to show that they have critical ability and that they know where to look for information and how to apply it."

The Senate

To the Editor of The Daily Gleaner, Sir:—Time was when the central part of New Brunswick, including Fredericton, the capital of the province, was represented in the Senate of Canada. In the present generation we have had a resident Senator, and, at times, a Premier, an Attorney-General and so on. But, that time seems past. Whether it be, forever, remains to be seen. But the thoughtful student of public affairs the question of the cause of the great change "will not down." Is it because we have not the men now in this section—practically the whole valley of the St. John—or, is the cause further to seek and of a more ulterior nature?

We have had four Senators resident here, to wit: Senators O'Dell, Wark, Temple and Thompson. Senator Wark died at the very ripe old age of 101. He and Senator Thompson were contemporaries. At Senator Thompson's death there were several aspirants from York-Sunbury—all of them of more or less political merit. Were none of them of sufficient calibre to be made a Senator? Surely some of them would compare favorably with either of the two men mentioned. But the appointment went over to the "North Shore," where Great Men now reside!

Now there is another vacancy from this province in the Senate; and the word is, this vacancy will be filled from Westmorland. But that county already has three, viz: Black, McDonald and Fortier. Do Westmorland interests need a fourth, when the whole central part of New Brunswick, as Victoria, Carleton, York and Sunbury—practically the valley of the St. John—the English-speaking part of the province, has not a single representative?

This state of affairs should not be the representation in the Senate from this province should be "general," not "bunched." It should be fairly well spread over the province in order that all sections should have a fair representation in the Upper House. That it is not, must be due to one of two reasons. First, this large central part of the province, now unrepresented, must lack the men; or if they have the men, there must be some ulterior force at work to give one section double or triple its share of representation, and another section none at all.

Yours, N. B.

Woodstock, Feb. 16, 1924.

INDUSTRIAL UNREST IN N. S. REPORTED ON

Ottawa, Feb. 18.—The report of the Royal Commission appointed to investigate industrial unrest in Nova Scotia finds that the hours worked by steel workers have been excessive for long in some departments of the B. E. Steel Co. plant under the two shift system of operation, and recommends in the interest of employees "early and earnest consideration be given to (1) elimination of the 24 hour change over period and the abolition of seven day week. (2) Adoption of the three shift plan (8 hours per shift) in the departments of continuous processes and a maximum of a 10 hour day for other workmen.

Sharp tongues are apt to be more dangerous than useful.

The Examination Question

[The Boston Globe, Editorial.] "And you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be abundant and will generally know nothing; they will be tireless company, having the show of wisdom without the reality."

—Plato: Phaedrus. The average school and college examination is a relic of barbarism which only survives amongst us because we are still looking for an adequate substitute. Meanwhile, Prof. Loves, of Harvard, has grasped one dilemma-born of this angry bull of pedagogy. One of this course is on the 19th century, and students taking it were allowed to bring as many books as they pleased or could carry into the examination room with them.

How would this constitute an examination?

These romantic poets are significant as exponents of the thought of their time. In order to discuss them intelligently one would need to know the surrounding cultural, historical, and social conditions which went to form their minds. Now if the examination questions merely asked you to parrot back a futile array of dates, quotations, and biographical details, of course to take books into the examination rooms would defeat its object. But if the examination asked you to discuss the intellectual currents and cross-currents which swirled through the minds of these men and through the life of their time, then, of course, your books would be merely convenient reference works from which to draw illustrations for your thesis, and savers of time and energy from the acquisitive side of learning to be applied more profitably on the creative side.

Creative, yes. But how creative? The authorized description of this new form of college examination says: "The purpose . . . was to eliminate the '24-hour memory' that can pass an examination but retain nothing of the course in after years. Instead it aimed to show that they have critical ability, and that they know where to look for information and how to apply it."

This is of course a valiant and praiseworthy endeavor to escape from the factory-system standardized quantity production of college education thrust upon our rural universities by the enormous growth of their enrollments. And first-rate college teachers know that under such conditions the form of college education is merely, to use Dr. W. A. Neilson's phrase, "dictating-text-books." And the first time Professor Bliss Perry found himself giving a lecture room of 600 boys his opening words were:

"Gentlemen, this is a calamity!" But even supposing Professor Loves' plan does provide some escape from the land of bondage for our large universities, we shall still be wandering in the wilderness unless the pilgrimage of education admits of a fair and equitable scholarship to being one of creative activity.

Critical or Creative. The words "critical ability" occur in the quotations above cited. They are significant. The dominant tone of Harvard College—of most colleges—is critical rather than creative. Of public school life is some extent necessarily the case. Boys of from 17 to 25 years are usually too inexperienced to embark on any very ambitious creative work, no matter how gifted. At its best, would tend to be a teaching of skill with tools combined with a careful fostering of whatever creative faculty could be found in the student. But to do this two-fold task requires men of exceptional caliber and personality. Prof. Baker, who teaches the writing of plays; Prof. Copeland, who teaches English composition; and Prof. Davidson, who leads the glee club, are distinguished examples of this power. But they are few, and indeed any where, in contrast to the prevailing tone of critical scholarship. That this should be so is nothing strange. These creative personalities are as rare as they are precious (the late Prof. William James was one) and they do not domesticate or institutionalize any too easily. An institution which catches one (let alone a whole faculty of them) may count itself lucky. Aside from a certain group at Oxford, and from the recently disbanded one at Andover; and aside from the dominant influence now existing at Reed and at Antioch Colleges, it would be hard for the present writer to name any institutions where the creative spirit predominates over the critical. It is institutions where the creative spirit is entirely sterile. There is, of course, creative criticism. But it is secondary.

The predominance of the critical over the creative has usually prevailed in academic institutions. They are places where the great creative work of the past is told about; but seldom where the great creative work of the present is done. Pioneer spirits are few and far between. The shun institutionalization. The function of glorifying the creative triumphs of the past to the youth of the present is a vastly useful one, but the stimulating of creative activity in youth is a function much more vital. Many of the world's greatest creators passed through the universities of the time, but how many did the supreme work in or through institutions of learning?

Now and again a vigorous creative personality finds its way into a college faculty, a secondary school or a public school, and life abundant for all who come into contact with it is the consequence. Ask any school-boy or schoolgirl to tell you about their various teachers, and see how quickly you get a description of one of these creative minds if the young

ster has been lucky enough to have one for instructor.

The final examination question is whether to have examinations of any kind. And the final answer to this examination question is that if the instruction is given by a sufficiently creative mind, the test of the student's ability becomes not how much he has acquired, but with how much excellent he can create.

SEEK TO ENJOIN CHURCH MERGER

Formal Notice Sent Ottawa Government of Presbyterian Body's Action.

The Montreal Star has the following from its Ottawa correspondent: "The Presbyterian Church Association has sent formal notice to the Government of its legal action to restrain by injunction, proponents of church union, from speaking for the whole Presbyterian Church. The inference from the communication is that Parliamentary procedure is sought to be arrested until the courts decide. Other communications affirm objections to the union."

"On the other hand, advocates of union have conformed to all rules and are going ahead with the private bill which would legalize union. Their Parliamentary agents take the position that the General Assembly, the governing body of the Church, having raised the union proposals, Parliament ought not to interfere with the domestic concerns of the denomination."

TO CHANGE TERM OF PRESIDENT OF U. S.

Movement to Have Inauguration in January Instead of March Takes Form.

Washington, Feb. 18.—Plans to amend the Constitution in order to bring about quicker changes in administration after the voters have spoken have been seriously undertaken in the House. The resolution introduced by Representative White of Kansas, Democrat, proposing such an amendment to the Constitution has been favorably reported by the Committee on the Election of President and Vice President.

The resolution provides that the President and Vice President shall begin their terms at noon Jan. 24, while the terms of Senators and Representatives shall begin Jan. 4.

CALVIN IS ARRESTED ON GAMBLING CHARGE

The Houlton Bootlegger Who "Squealed" on Sheriff is In Trouble Again.

Houlton, Me., Feb. 18.—Charles E. Calvin was arrested on last Friday on an old indictment charging him with maintaining a gambling nuisance. Calvin was indicted last April but was never tried on the indictment. Sureties were given for his appearance at the April, 1924, term of the Supreme Judicial Court.

The government does not intend at present to release the general post office. The postal and telegraph work today is still carried on throughout the city in inadequate sub-offices, and the chief telegraph office is far away from the centre of business life.

CONCRETE SIDEWALK PAYMENTS.

A number of people have not paid their share of the concrete sidewalks laid throughout the past summer. I have been instructed to take legal action for the collection of the same.

G. R. PERKINS,

City Treasurer.

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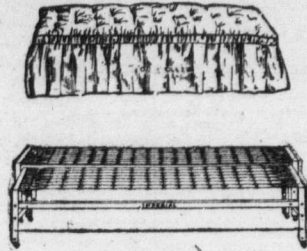
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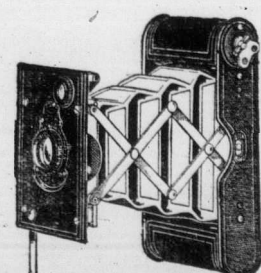
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