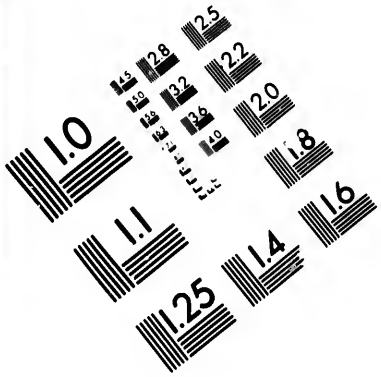

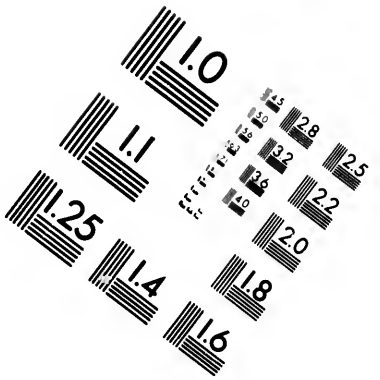

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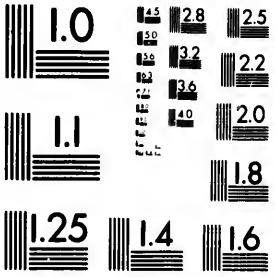

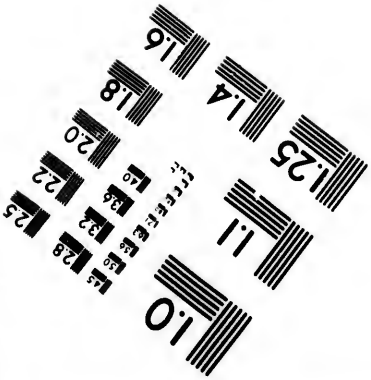

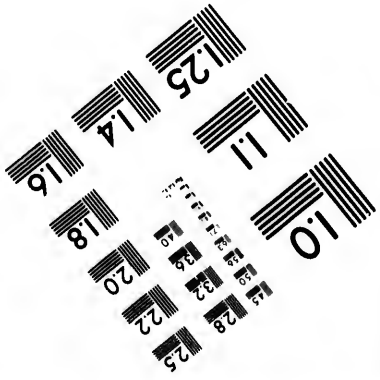

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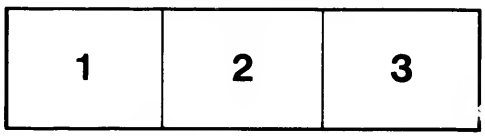

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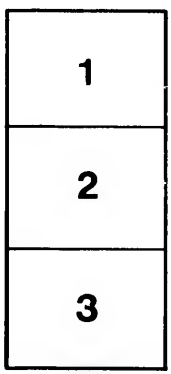

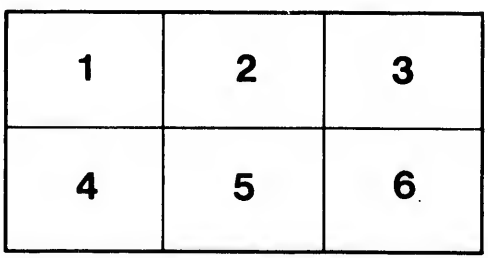

THE DUTY OF THE STATE

REGARDING

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION.

We frequently hear very positive opinions on the above difficult question expressed by persons who have given it no adequate study. It is asserted that we are over-educating the masses, and they iterate and reiterate their assertions so continually and so dogmatically as sometimes to lead honest people who have not had time to study the matter to think they are right. In order to correct this evil tendency, several extracts are published below. They are from distinguished educationists and responsible men who know what they are talking about—men who are under no necessity to pander to any ignorant prejudices. Their opinions are therefore commended to your careful, thoughtful and unbiassed consideration.

(From Report on Public Schools of Michigan, by Herschell R. Gass, Superintendent of Public Instruction.)

"The public school system has gained such popularity that but few persons are now to be found who can be considered its enemies. Occasional criticisms, however, are made upon the work done in the public schools, and defects—sometimes real, sometimes imaginary—are pointed out in our plan of popular education.

No business affecting the whole people should be screened from public inspection This is true of the schools. They should be planned upon such a basis and conducted in such a manner as to withstand and profit by just and intelligent criticism." By a number of statistical tables, he proves that "the high schools are educating children from every rank of society; and that, were they not free, many who now attend them would be excluded from securing that higher education which they impart."

That more intelligence and education are not found among the working classes, is to be deprecated, and it should be the purpose of every true educator not only to spread knowledge among these people, but to direct those who come under his instruction into productive occupations. In this way the ranks of the workers may be filled by a class of people that will make labor respectable.

If some classes of employment are unpopular, it is to be charged to the false customs of society and *not to the higher training in the public schools.* The respectability of any kind of labour depends upon the character and intelligence of the individual performing it. Any occupation becomes honourable when its duties are performed by intelligent persons. These principles should be instilled into the mind of every pupil in the public schools until they become a part of his own being. When this is done, and society ceases to frown upon those who soil their hands with manual labour, then we may expect to see a higher degree of intelligence among the working classes and *to hear no more the complaint that high school education unfits the pupil for common employments.*

That higher education fosters indolence, I am not ready to admit. *True and thorough culture never made a man shiftless. Virtue and industry are the offspring of cultivated intelligence.* Sloth and poverty are the children of ignorance. It may be safely asserted that four-fifths of the paupers in the poor houses never received a common school education.

The beggar who asks alms on the street-corner and the impecunious tramp who gets his bread from door to door, are not from among those who graduate from the high school or even enter it. *Culture begets a respect that will tolerate no such support.* A good education renders a man too proud to depend upon private or public charity for what he eats and drinks, and too industrious and ambitious to waste his time and strength in an idle, aimless life.

Another class of critics would cut off the high school from the educational system and confine teaching in the public school to instruction in the elementary branches.

The high school is an established thing in this country. It has come to stay and from its popularity I have no fear that the people will be influenced by those complaints that are brought against its support at public expense. Many reasons might be given for the maintenance of the high school as a part of the public school system. A few of these reasons will be briefly considered:

First. *It has a reflex action upon the lower grades.* Education works from the top downwards. Those countries have the best primary and grammar-schools that provide most liberally for secondary education. Francis Adams, for a long time secretary of the National Educational League of England, says: "*Experience has proven that elementary education flourishes most where the*

provisions for higher education are most ample." The work done in the primary and grammar department of the graded schools is much superior to the same work by the same grades in the rural schools. One reason for the superiority of these schools is the existence of the high schools. Every pupil enters the lower grades with this goal constantly before him. He attends more regularly and studies more earnestly that he may finally obtain the honours attached to his admission into this higher department.

SECOND. A large proportion of the teachers in the primary schools are the product of the high school. *Were the public high schools abolished but few of the poorer girls and boys could afford the higher training which they provide, and since nearly all our teachers come from this poorer class it is evident that without the high school the lower grades of schools could not readily be supplied with well qualified teachers.*

THIRD. The high school is an important link in our public educational system. A great English naturalist, says upon this point: "No system of public education is worthy the name unless it creates a great educational ladder, with one end in the gutter and the other in the university." Take from our system the high school and one important round in this ladder is wanting. The abolition of this institution would decapitate the graded schools, and at the same time it would do away with those preparatory schools which now enable so many young men and women of moderate means to fit themselves for acquiring a higher culture in the State University.

FOURTH. *Economy is another question to be considered in connection with higher education.* In the public schools it costs less to impart instruction in the branches taught than it does for the same class of work in the private academy. The average cost per week for educating each pupil in the high schools of this State is less than fifty cents. The cost per week for instructing pupils in private schools of the same grade is over one dollar. In conversation recently with a gentleman whose daughter was attending a ladies' private school, he stated that it cost him $400 to send his daughter to this school for forty weeks. One-half this amount was expense for room and board, the other half, or $5 per week, was for tuition. Such schools may be patronized and supported by those who are able and willing to pay for the exclusion which a high tuition fee affords, but they are beyond the reach of a large portion of the pupils in the public high school.

FIFTH. The high schools should be free and the same educational privileges extended to all classes.

In a government like ours, whose chief corner stone is that all are created free and equal, it is impolitic to have society divided into different strata of social caste by unjust discrimination. Make the high school a pay school and the tendency of higher education will be to such an end. Let the State demand a fee for the higher knowledge which it imparts and it places *the seal of ignorance* upon many who are now striving for a liberal education. By such an act it spreads a banquet for the rich from which the hungry poor are excluded.

Justice, as well as the interests of society and free government, demands that the poor boy and girl shall have an equal chance with the rich in the search for knowledge. The boy without money must have the opportunity of making himself the intellectual peer of the young man of leisure. Such opportunities are furnished by our free high schools and educational institutions.

The free high school is the poor man's college. From it will go forth the fatherless boy, equally equipped with the rich man's son, for the duties of a useful life, and side by side they will vie with each other for the rewards of honest labour in profession or employment."

J. M. B. Sill, Superintendent of Schools, reports that:

"In Detroit a select committee was appointed by the School Board, to investigate as follows:

(a.) Whether, in view of the established character of the high schools as an existing institution, there are sufficient grounds for its discontinuance?

(b.) If not, whether, a certain fee or charge ought to be made to those seeking its privileges?

(c.) Whether foreign languages ought to be eliminated from the regular course of study?"

After a complete and exhaustive examination of all the points submitted, the committee, after two years, reported, giving an "elaborate and powerful defence of the policy of maintaining the free high schools as an essential part of their educational system." That committee, consisting of educated and able men, took two years to investigate in a profound and scientific manner, getting information from every possible source to throw light on the subject entrusted to them. Committees could have been formed who would have been able to report in five minutes; but true knowledge ever makes men modest. "The decision of the committee is summed up in the following words: 'In the best judgment of the committee, impressed with the grave responsibility that rests upon them, and enlightened by every source of information accessible, and, carefully weighing all suggestions in opposition to their present conclusion, conceding to all who may differ from them sincerity in their convictions, the High School ought to be maintained with substantially its present course of study.' (That course is much the same as that of the Halifax Academy.) "The High School, as heretofore, is doing excellent work, and its affairs have been quietly but very efficiently administered, It is a most favourable indication of its prosperity and usefulness that the number of its students who seek higher education is very rapidly increasing. This is one of the very best tests of the real value of a high school. A good one fills its pupils with a noble ambition for higher attainments, and a weak one fills

them with a childish conceit and thorough satisfaction with present meagre attainments."

John D. Philbrick LL. D., became the Superintendent of the Boston schools in 1857, having previously been a teacher in those schools, Principal of the Connecticut State Normal School, and Superintendent of Public Instruction for that State. It is acknowledged the world over that to him is largely and specially due the excellence of the Boston schools. *A thorough man of affairs*, accurate and broad in his scholarship, he not only watched and guided the Boston schools that grew under his hands for twenty years, but, by travels and studies in different parts of this country, and during two visits to Europe, he had the rarest opportunities for extensive personal observation elsewhere in school matters and for philosophical deduction therefrom. Hear what he says concerning high school education: "The rapid growth of public sentiment in favor of the high school has not been confined to any one section of the country; it has been universal, east, west, north and south. There is no topic on which recent reports speak with more earnestness and decision than on the importance and success of the high schools. The assaults which have been made upon them in recent years by the opponents of liberal provision for public instruction, appear to have been ineffectual. Everywhere they have maintained their ground; indeed, there has been no perceptible check in their growth and development. It is becoming more and more evident that the free public high schools are as highly prized by the people as are the elementary schools. * * * * Nothing is more common than to see pupils representing the extremes in the social scale, sitting side by side in the high school classes. I have seen the son of a cultured and wealthy merchant and the son of a very poor immigrant going together from the same class in the grammar school to the same class in the high school, the former expending his pocket money to buy the requisite outfit of clothes and books for the latter. I have seen young ladies coming from families of the first rank, not only in respect to culture and wealth, but also in respect to ancestral pretensions, passing the three-year course in the girls' high school side by side with the daughter of the labourer and washerwoman. In a suburban town I have seen the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer procuring by subscription the funds to enable a classmate, the worthy son of a poor farmer, to obtain the clothing needful to make it practicable for him to perform the part assigned him on graduating day. At this same school, on graduating day, I have heard the salutatory address by the daughter of an English immigrant laborer who can neither read nor write, and the valedictory by the daughter of the wealthiest capitalist in town, while the most meritorious performance on the occasion was by a sister of the young man just referred to. This young man, it may be added, who has been, during the five or six years since his graduation, *most industrious at work on his father's little farm*, is an ardent friend of the high school, and he regards the '*idea that education unfits a man for manual labor as simply nonsensical.*' The next neighbour to this young man's father is a man of the same nationality and in similar circumstances, who lately showed me with no little pride two silver medals which a son and daughter, now working together in the same shoe factory, obtained at the high school. 'But,' said I, 'I have just been reading the writing of a man of learning and influence condemning the free high school and arguing that it should be abolished.' '*That man*,' he replied, '*I consider an enemy to his country.*' Such examples not only afford an illustration of the tendency of the high school to obliterate social institutions, but they go to prove that it is a veritably national institution. More especially is the urban population of this country effectually indoctrinated in the creed that an adequate system of public schools must be a ladder with one end in the gutter and the other in the university." * * * *It appears from an examination of statistics that in the smaller cities the provision for high school instruction is relatively more ample than in the largest and most wealthy cities and that a greater percentage of the population is receiving higher education in the public school.*" Dr. Philbrook then goes on to show that in Vienna, Berlin, and Paris there is very much more high school education than even in the United States. He says, "While the high school, which has been so rapidly and so liberally supported by the voluntary taxation of the people, *is the flower of the system*, it is not without its faults."

The superintendent of schools for New York city says:—"In many places much opposition has been made to the establishment of public high schools, as transcending the scope of state education, which, it has been contended should be confined strictly to primary instruction. In support of this position, the small proportion of pupils attending these schools, as compared with the school population, has been urged to demonstrate the injustice as alleged, of taxing the entire community for the higher education, and, therefore, the particular benefit of so small a portion of it. On the other hand, it is urged that although only a few directly enjoy the the advantages afforded by these schools the whole community is greatly benefited by their influence, independently of their elevating and stimulating effect upon the elementary schools. 'I will thank any person,' says Everett, 'to show why it is expedient and beneficial in a community to make public provision for teaching the elements of learning and not expedient nor beneficial to make similar provision to aid the learner's progress towards the mastery of the most difficult branches of science and the choicest refinement of literature.' The specific grounds on which higher education at the public expense is advocated and defended are the following:—(1) High schools serve to give increased efficiency to the elementary schools below them. (2) The high school is a preventative of social caste; inasmuch as it affords the means for all, of whatever social grade, to enjoy the benefit of all the education which they have the capacity to receive. (3) High-school education is the means of

discovering and developing genius and talent, by the cultivation of which the political, social and industrial interests of the community are greatly advanced. (4) The vital forces in every community centre in its leaders, political, social and religious, and, hence, it is of the greatest imoprtance that those gifted minds and those energetic characters that, with or without culture, always make themselves felt in a free community, should have, regardless of wealth or social grade, full opportunity of receiving such an education as will render the power they must inevitably wield, beneficent to society at large. * * * If the elementary schools of Germany are the best in the world it is owing, in a great measure, to the fact that the higher schools are accessible to all classes."

For want of time and space these extracts must be brought to a close for the present. It may not be amiss, however, to reproduce an excellent letter bearing on the subject, which appeared in last evening's *Recorder*, and which was signed 'A. B. C.' :—

SIR,—Mr. Alderman Worrall's correspondent, quoted in your issue of Friday evening, has some strong views on the subject of public education. This correspondent objects to the cost of our public schools, ($70,000), which he avers is far to heavy for Halifax. He objects also to the teaching in our public schools of anything beyond the three R's, which he maintains are quite sufficient for common people. Public schools he asserts are intended for bare-footed and ragged children and for no others.

His plan of reform is this : "eliminate children whose parents can pay out of the schools by compelling the bare-footed and ragged children to attend." The compelling of bare-footed and ragged children to attend the schools would, he evidently thinks, have the effect of "eliminating" all who were not ragged and bare-footed.

There has been an impression hitherto that our public schools are a great boon—one of the greatest of boons—to the poor. There is also a general impression abroad that our public schools are maintained chiefly by taxes levied on the rich, or at least, upon those who have some property and stake in the community : that the property of the State is in short taxed in the case of public schools for the benefit of the whole, rich and poor alike, and that as the poor are the largest class everywhere, the poor must necessarily be the greatest gainers by this arrangement. It has been held further, by thinking persons, here and elsewhere, that a broad and generous system of public education lies at the very root of personal and national prosperity.

Evidently believing such a system to be absurd and pernicious, Alderman W's. friend would abolish it, root and branch, by abolishing the conditions upon which alone it can exist. This enthusiastic reformer would in the first place deprive poor children of the opportunity of receiving a liberal education, an opportunity which under the present system they enjoy almost without cost. It matters not that many children of the poor are bright and intelligent, capable of making a good show in the world provided they have a fair chance ; it matters not that many children of the poor also are sickly, delicate, not adapted for rough and hard work ; no matter, the three R's are quite enough for such poor trash under any circumstances.

If the children of the well-to-do in the world are to be eliminated from the public schools, it follows as a matter of course that the said well-to-do are to be exempt from taxation in the matter of public schools, for it would scarcely do for the legislature to tax persons for the support of public schools and at the same time make it illegal for the persons so taxed to send their children to such schools. The elimination of children whose parents are able to pay would consequently be synonymous with the elimination of said parents from the assessor's books in the matter of public schools, and as a still further consequence the support and maintenance of our public schools would devolve by right and justice upon the parents of those for whom, according to your correspondent, they were intended, upon the parents of those in short who cannot afford for their children a coat to their backs or a pair of shoes to their feet. Your correspondent deserves the merit, not perhaps of originality, but certainly of boldness.

Halifax, Novembey 17th, 1885.

Y. B. Allen D.C.L.
283 Brunswick St.
Halifax