

**REPORT ON CERTAIN
EDUCATIONAL
CHARACTERISTICS IN
ENGLAND AND FRANCE**

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Report on Certain Educational Characteristics in England and France by James H. Canfield

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FACULTY OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE

REPORT

ON

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in England and France

SUBMITTED FEBRUARY 1st, 1908

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TO THE DEAN AND FACULTY OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

GENTLEMEN:

Early in last October President Butler honored me with a special commission to represent Columbia College in a personal examination of the methods of teaching and of discipline (intellectual and other) which are in use in upper classes or forms of typical English Public Schools, of English Grammar Schools, and of French Lycées; and in the first and possibly the second year of residence in colleges and Universities of both England and France.

I left New York October 17th, reaching England on the 24th of the same month. Thirty-five days were spent in England, and eleven days in France. My entire time on shore was given to the details of my commission. Information was secured through many and prolonged conferences with prominent professors; lecturers, head masters, and other officers of instruction and administration; through inspection of class work, talks with pupils and students, careful study of curricula, and through very helpful interviews with graduates of the institutions under consideration. I was peculiarly favored also with proof sheets or advance copies of reports and monographs which discussed, pertinently and exactly, the questions of most interest in connection with my mission.

This report is made with some hesitation, because thus far I have given comparatively little attention to either the curriculum of Columbia College or its methods of instruction and discipline. Though favored with a seat in its Faculty for the last eight years, I have had neither voice nor vote in its deliberations and determinations, and hence no direct responsibility, until the reorganization of the Faculty for the present year. Moreover, I have found the demands of my own department quite equal to my time and strength. It is possible, then, that this report may cover ground already familiar to my colleagues; and that it may suggest lines of action already adopted and pursued.

Unless express statement to the contrary is made, it will be understood that this report presents the educational thought

of England and France as I read it, thought which is not always realized in practice as yet, not even universally recognized and received as yet, but which seems sure to be the dominant thought of the near future. It is more than probable that this thought is often expressed in the very words of those with whom I had conference.

The following seem to be fundamental axioms:

(1) All modern educational ideals center in a movement which seeks more complete and efficient employment of all human gifts and powers, all natural forces and all material resources, in behalf of national advancement and well-being: by which, of course, is meant the advancement and well-being of every person within the nation. It is an educational ideal which makes for peace, prosperity, and true renown; which believes that the greatness of a state can always be more accurately measured by the greatness of its teachers than by the number of its regiments, by its scholars rather than by its squadrons. Education which does not recognize this movement and has not this end in view, which does not distinctly accept this as its supreme motive, is neither public nor large nor sound nor enduring. Every educational undertaking, from kindergarten to most advanced research, will be tried under this law, and will be approved only as it meets this standard. The world seems to have finally determined that it has little or no time or strength to spend on mere abstractions; it demands that very definite and helpful relations shall be discovered and maintained in all forms of human life and endeavor.

Prince Metternich wisely said, "All reforms begin at the top." The University, then, must be the leader in this great undertaking. Leadership is its right and its duty, its privilege and its opportunity. To forfeit this for any reason whatever is simply to fall from grace, to substitute weakness for strength, to cease to give an adequate reason for existence. The moment the University is no longer an efficient organization of those who are both learned and possess teaching power, in close and sympathetic and helpful contact with all forms of education which may be called preliminary and preparatory, it is time for

incisive inquiry and immediate reform. Its rightful and strong position is that of leadership won and held by constant activity in advancing knowledge and imparting it, with a very just balance maintained between the two ; because the two are so intimately connected that either becomes tangential and irresponsible, without true fruition, unless it has the counterweight of the other. Theory needs the constant test of practice, and the real strength and value of thought clearly presented and expounded is quite exactly measured by its acceptance by open and intelligent minds. The mind which the University must manifest in its officers and develop in its students is the mind which is public and large, because that is the mind which is most needed in the world to-day : there is nothing but weakness and decadence in seclusion and aloofness.

(2) Every University must set itself the task of satisfying three classes of demands and aspirations : those of the nation, the people at large ; those of the students who attach themselves to the institution, and in a certain sense those of all who hope to have the advantages of higher education ; and those of its officers. These are given in what is believed to be their order of importance, though it is not easy to create this distinction. But the general welfare certainly stands first, though so indissolubly linked with individual welfare that the two can scarcely be considered apart. The students are given precedence of the officers, because it is mainly for the purpose of their education that colleges are maintained, their time is short, they have but one chance for preparation for active life, and they are the coming generation ; while the officers as a body either hold the center of the stage or have already begun to retire slowly toward the exits.

The true University is not merely a place where a lad may get an education, but is a seat of wisdom and learning. To this wisdom and learning, willing to serve (which is the first condition of all leadership), the nation turns with a demand for leadership. In spite of much which has been written to the contrary, in the face of very clear and desirable recognition of the place and value of individuality, the fact remains that the people not only accept leadership, but desire it. But leadership must show both character and intelligence to be safe and

abiding. Easily deceived the nation may be, the prey of many a charlatan and quack ; but in the long run it tries by fire and gives its allegiance and confidence in safe keeping. And leadership must be intelligible, also, or it cannot hope for acceptance and success. The University which is understood and approved of all men because of its large and generous ministrations to the common life of all will never lack either students or support.

The students need, and very generally desire, effective instruction and stimulating companionship, and reasonable preparation for life. They cannot receive the first unless their instructors of every grade possess remarkable strength of character, unusual mental equipment, careful and thorough preparation, unceasing industry, unflagging zeal, alert and compelling consciences, large unselfishness and active sympathy. Whole men and wholesome men, men who are sane and strong, men who are broadly informed as well as possessing advanced special training, men who are carrying some share of the public burden, men who are making themselves and their work felt in the world about them ; these are the true Masters of Arts no matter what other degrees they may carry. No University is wisely administered which does not seek for such men, any University is unfortunate which for any reason cannot hold such men when found, and every University is unworthy and weak which does not relieve itself of the burden of men who fall seriously below this standard. As for the college as a fitting-school for the life of the outside world, it seems scarcely necessary to add a word to that which has so often been written. English temper is very well expressed in a single paragraph of the report of the Oxford Commission of 1851: the Commission regretted to find the Arts course "so swollen in importance" as to have lost all direct connection with the professions: "it is a serious loss to Oxford that studies which prepare men to enter upon professional life have been neglected."

The needs and demands of worthy officers constitute the third form of drain upon the resources and strength of the University corporation. What these men ask is opportunity to discover truth and opportunity to impart it. The first means equipment of every kind: books, apparatus, laboratories, assistants—and a fair amount of time for the proper and

effective use of these. The second means a well-arranged curriculum, within which a student can move with considerable freedom of choice, thus bringing together the largest possible number of both teachers and taught: with the further provision that by that form of organization which will throw the least possible burden of administration upon officers of instruction, idle, ignorant, unworthy students may be either quickly reformed or as quickly withdrawn from troublesome and impeding contact with the true life of the University.

The *London Times*, in an editorial last April, said, "The two ancient Universities are once again on trial, and cannot escape the obligation of putting their house in order. They will be given reasonable time for self-examination, and self-reform. Failing in this, there will be an exhaustive inquiry and drastic compulsion from without." Thirty years given to a careful study of American education, and close and constant contact with the thought and desire and purpose of the intelligent American public, warrant me in the assertion that, with such changes of form as are obvious, that warning comes directly home to every college and University in this country.

The results of my conferences and inspections seem to shape themselves around special inquiry as to

- (1) Selection of teachers; qualities and characteristics.
- (2) Traditions, habits and temperament of the pupil, and the methods of his discipline (intellectual and other).
- (3) Teaching the Mother-tongue.
- (4) Teaching History.
- (5) Teaching Civics, and the inculcation of patriotism.
- (6) Teaching the Classics.
- (7) Form and purpose of the Examination.

It must be remembered that this report is considering teacher and taught in the top forms of public and grammar schools and lycées, and in the first year of residence at the colleges and Universities.

It seems to be taken for granted that an applicant for an educational position will have sufficient and sufficiently

accurate scholarship to meet the obvious requirements of the place which he is seeking. This is supposed to be shown by his college or University, by his degree, by

The his general student record, and by his record
Teacher as teacher, if he has been one. But careful inquiry is quite generally made as to his teaching power, his ability to interest and win and control his pupils, his sympathy with them, and his personal hold upon them. Except in comparatively few institutions, no question is asked as to his ecclesiastical affiliations: but insistence is very generally laid upon his having some quite definite form of religious belief, some concrete and tangible and clearly-expressed spirituality. A man who is still largely in doubt, who has settled little or nothing, whose creed as far as he has one is a simple negation, is not thought to be the right sort of man to be chosen as a leader of boys at the impressionable age. It is argued that he cannot lead them since he does not know his own way—is not going anywhere himself. In other words, intellectual preëminence is not enough. Certain very definite and important relations, other than those of curriculum instruction, are provided for, are to be maintained and fostered: and these relations the master must be able in a very literal sense to fulfil. If he is a novice, he is taken with the quite distinct understanding that on these lines he is to be judged, and that if he fails he goes out, no matter how brilliant his scholarship may be. If he has written something really worth while, it will not hurt him, it may even serve to attract attention to him: but it will have little or no weight in determining either his selection or appointment or promotion. These depend largely upon his personal power in what may be called character-forming relations.

And all this is quite as true of the tutor who has general oversight of the student during his first year of residence. There are tutors and tutors, just as there are masters and masters: and the infirmity of human nature shows itself in both positions. One weak spot in the college is the fact that there is really no organization within which and by which the tutor is tried out. But the principle of choice and of work is the same in both cases, the theory is well-