

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

Vol. 2. No. 19.

Lincoln, Nebraska, May 30, 1902.

Whole No. 71.

## THE VALUE OF AN EDUCATION.

With the annual return of the commencement season comes the recurring question, Does higher education fit its possessor for a more successful life? In 1836 a prominent divine endeavored to explain the opposition to the gold standard on the theory that farmers' sons were being educated too much, and thus made "dissatisfied with the position God intended them to fill." The remark called forth a great deal of criticism, because it betrayed an indifference to the welfare of the people as well as ignorance in regard to the money question. About a year ago Mr. Schwab, president of the steel trust, made a speech before a New York school in which he declared that very few of the prominent business men had received a collegiate education, and he insisted that a boy who left school at sixteen or seventeen and went to work would get such a start that the boy who went to college until he was twenty or twenty-one could never overtake him. Reference is made to the views expressed by these two men, one conspicuous in the ministry and the other known as the highest salaried business man in the United States, because they present the two arguments usually made against a collegiate training, first, that it makes a person dissatisfied with his condition, and, second, that it is a waste of time.

Neither argument is sound. Contentment with one's lot is only a virtue when the person has done all within his power to improve his condition. To say that contentment regardless of one's situation is to be commended is to bring an indictment against all progress. All development of body, of mind and of heart comes from the fact that one is dissatisfied with his present development. Contentment, as it is preached by some, would have left the farmer ploughing with a crooked stick, if, in fact, it would not have stopped him before he began to plough at all. The desire for more knowledge is the beginning of progress.

One defect in the doctrine of those who condemn higher education—and it is a fatal one—is that they never apply it to themselves or to those immediately related to them. The man who would curtail the educational opportunities of people generally would, as a rule, make an exception in regard to his own children and those in whom he feels an especial interest. But no one is able to act as a censor in such a matter; no one is wise enough to decide in advance which child ought to be educated. The great men of one generation sometimes, yes, usually, come up from the ranks, not from the leaders of the former generation. And the nation must educate all of its people in order that it may have the largest possible number to draw from.

If a person regards his education as a piece of jewelry to be worn as an ornament, or as a thing to be used for his personal pleasure, it will be of limited service to him; if, however, he regards it as a means of making him more useful and finds his pleasure in the utilization of his education for the welfare of his fellows he cannot possibly have too much of mental discipline and instruction.

A successful life might well be described as a mountain spring that continually gives forth that

which refreshes and invigorates. A spring cannot be too large, neither can its waters be too pure. And a life that continually overflows with helpfulness is refined and purified by the influence of higher education.

The second objection rests upon a fallacy that ought to be detected by any practical man. The time spent in school is economically spent. A workman does not lose the time spent in sharpening his tools, for his increased efficiency far more than compensates for the time spent in preparation. As well might one object to eating, on the ground that it takes time from work; without eating he would soon be unable to work. As well might one criticize the time spent in sleeping, on the ground that it lessens the working hours; without the rest and recuperation which sleep gives it would be impossible to work at all. And so the student without discipline would work clumsily and ineffectively. He is short-sighted who envies the man who accumulates a few dollars during the years that ought to be spent in school; he who stores his mind with useful knowledge and fits himself to grasp and deal with the problems of life has a capital far more valuable and far more secure than any that can be measured by lands, or houses, or bank account.

But even if an education did not fit one for money-making it ought to fit him to measure life by a higher standard than that applied by the miser and the monopolist. The man who applies the Golden Rule to life lives upon a higher plane than the man who applies the Rule of Gold. No one is quite above the level of the brute who considers mere wealth in estimating success in individual or national life. If food and physical development are all that one wants the beasts of the fields may surpass him; if fine apparel is man's chief desire the flowers and the birds outstrip him; if his only thought is of himself, and if he only labors to gratify himself, he puts himself in the class with the vulture and the glutton. He only values life as he should who recognizes it as a responsibility no less than a privilege and strives to measure up to his opportunities. If his ideals are lofty enough to keep his face turned upward to the very end of life and his principles are strong enough to keep him always moving forward he will find the very highest education and the most extensive knowledge insufficient to gratify his ambition to serve.

## Memorial Day.

Once more the matron and the maid, the veteran and the verdant youth, wend their way to the city of the dead and make the mound-marked beds of the nation's sleeping patriots beautiful and fragrant with floral offerings of affection and gratitude.

Peace to the ashes of those who have fought in the wars that are past, and to their survivors wisdom and strength to win victories in the future, whether they be triumphs of arms or triumphs of peace.

## WHY NOT PROTEST AGAINST ALL TRUSTS?

The Missouri and Kansas bankers, at their convention held in Kansas City on May 15, adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That the members of this association have carefully listened to the recent discussion of the subject of branch banking as advocated by the able gentlemen from the east, and combatted by some of the ablest and best known members of this state association and of our neighboring state of Nebraska, and we hereby affirm our unswerving allegiance to that view of the proposition which condemns it in all its forms as being unpatriotic, un-American, unbusiness-like and as tending to establish a monopoly of the great and honored business of banking in the hands of a few millionaires, to the exclusion of the men of the west, old and young, who have labored so faithfully and well to make our banking system what it is today, the best in the known world.

It has been a habit of the republican managers to use bankers' conventions very generally for the adoption of resolutions giving cordial approval to republican policies. The bankers' conventions figured very conspicuously in the last two presidential campaigns.

While the Missouri and Kansas bankers are to be congratulated upon having the courage to denounce one republican scheme, it is not out of place to direct attention to the fact that this is the first occasion wherein a convention of bankers has gone on record against a trust.

Is it not significant that during all the time that plans were being laid for the organization of trusts that prey upon the people generally, no banker's association was heard to make a protest, but, on the contrary, bankers' associations, very generally gave ready encouragement to the political party which they knew was the faithful guardian of trusts?

Now that the trust system which many bankers have told has "come to stay" begins to encroach upon the banker's domain; now that the shoe pinches the banker's foot, he is heard to protest against the banking trust as being "unpatriotic, un-American, unbusiness-like, and as tending to establish a monopoly of the great and honored business of banking in the hands of a few millionaires, to the exclusion of the men of the west, old and young, who have labored so faithfully and well to make our banking system what it is today, the best in the known world."

Is it not somewhat strange that these gentlemen did not think of these things in the presence of other trusts?

Every trust that is in existence today, that has risen upon the wrecks of smaller corporations, has been "unpatriotic;" it has been "un-American;" it has been unbusiness-like;" it has tended "to establish monopoly of a great and honored business," to place that particular business in the hands of "a few millionaires, to the exclusion of the men of the west," of the south, of the east and of the north, old and young, who had labored "so faithfully and well" to make their particular business successful.

The tendency of the banking trust will be to drive out of business independent bankers and to