

# READING AS NECESSITY FOR GOOD EDUCATION, TOPIC OF H. W. KINNEY

### School Superintendent Delivers Timely Address to McKinley Graduates.

Speaking to the members of the class of 1916 of the McKinley high school at the commencement exercises in the Opera house last Friday evening on the benefits of reading in the securing of a good education, Henry W. Kinney, superintendent of public instruction, said:

"I do not see why anyone should talk about reading," says Kinney, who remarks that it is not necessary to make remarks at high school exercises. I have chosen the subject of reading, not only because it is necessary to our progress, but because on this occasion a few words on the subject of reading may not be entirely amiss.

I do not believe that the McKinley high school, or for that matter any other reputable institution, pretends to produce graduates who are fully educated. While speaking after the fashion of the five-foot book shelf advertisements, we have all the knowledge which an educated man should have.

High schools, gymnasias, colleges only serve to give you a rudimentary education, a basis on which to build. They give you the tools with which, if you employ them correctly and with industry, you may secure the knowledge which leads towards education and culture.

The most important of these tools is the habit of reading, a habit which is, unfortunately, becoming obsolete; and this accounts, I think, to some extent for the fact that, flashy and showy as we may appear with our smatterings of knowledge on a great diversity of subjects, we are far behind our fathers in real and solid culture.

It is possible that because the complexities of modern life bring forth yearly a host of subjects on which we must have some information it has become necessary to some extent for us to secure a large portion of our information in abridged form through the newspapers and the magazines.

Magazines of the type of the Review, the Nation, the Literary Digest and others such furnish us an opportunity to keep informed on the subject of what is going forward in many channels of human activity, and without these it would be difficult to secure the information which is necessary for the ordinary needs of civilized life. I can see the great use of and the necessity for these periodicals, but I can also see that because they furnish us with easy means for the gathering of a vast fund of superficial knowledge, many of us become more borrowers of the ideas and opinions of others, imitative echoes of the special article writers and book reviewers, without having any opinions which we have honestly worked out for ourselves from the raw material of the basic facts.

However, while this danger attends the reading of the class of magazines which I have referred to, it is only the abuse thereof which is to be guarded against. This, however, can hardly be said to be the case with the ever-growing class of so-called fiction magazines, which are insidiously stealing away from many of us the time which we should use for really useful reading. We all have the magazine habit, more or less, I think, and, referring to this class of magazine, what do we get out of it that is at all commensurate with the amount of time which we devote to the reading thereof?

It is true that quite occasionally one finds in the modern magazine a story which in every way repays the time spent on the reading thereof, but, on the other hand, we must wade through yards of worthless stuff for every such find. It is true that such reading is not altogether wasted—for, at least, one gains an idea of the trend of modern writing of this kind—but spending such time on the pursuit of time looking for jewels in this lit-

erature is hardly worth while. I do not intend to enter into a discussion on the subject as to whether the art of short story writing has declined or not, but I do certainly contend that in the magazines, which are now the chief publishers of short stories, one finds but a small number of meritorious ones in proportion to the number published. Think of the dozens of stories which you have read during the past few years—then try to recall the names thereof, the plots, the characters. I am sure that you will remember but a few. The great majority of them will have vanished completely from your mind—and for this a kind providence should be thanked. But who can forget a Poe story? A story such as Guy de Maupassant's "The Necklace" stands out clear in the memory and is never forgotten. I mention these as examples. Several modern writers produce stories which have the power to impress themselves on our minds, but these are comparatively rare. Probably the explanation lies in the fact that a few score years ago there were only a few stories produced, whereas now the great increase in the market for short stories, caused by the prosperity of the fiction magazines, has brought forth a demand for stories so great that there are not enough really good ones produced to go around. So we have to take the bitter with the sweet, the mere space-filler with the real stories. It is well, I think, to cut down the time which we spend with this class of literature, and to devote it to the reading of books worth while. I am sorry to say that I do not always practise what I preach.

The question of what one should read should be solved by each individual for himself. It is better to read something than not to read at all. I would rather have a boy of mine read Diamond Dick and similar trash to having him show no interest whatever in books. If he has brains at all, he will soon desire better mental pabulum and will gradually develop a taste for better things. If he has no brains it makes little difference what he reads, anyway.

I am sure that it is a mistake to try to force oneself in one's leisure hours to read books for which one does not care, merely because one thinks one ought to read them. It is a very sure way of spoiling whatever innate taste for reading one may possess. If you do not care for James, read Kipling; if you do not find pleasure with the great Rudyard read O'Henry; but read something, and after a while you will develop some kind of a literary taste—possibly not a very orthodox one, possibly not one which will meet the approval of the higher and lesser lights of the esthetic temple of your particular neighborhood, but it will be worth while nevertheless, for it will be your own, and it will be far preferable to those which have been borrowed ready-made from the book reviews.

Many persons differentiate between their "serious reading" and their "light reading." They try to devote a part of their time to literature of a formative character, the heavier works, which require the expenditure of some degree of thought and attention in the reading; and they combine with this the reading of lighter books of the kind which can be read without effort in the way of a pastime when the brain is too tired for the former. I think that this practice is a good one. One secures in this manner a sort of balanced ration, meats and dessert, and mental indigestion is thus avoided.

I shall risk dragging in again our poor old friend Ruskin. He says on the subject of reading for young girls: "Let her loose in the library as you do a fawn in the field. It knows the bad weeds twenty times better than you, and the good ones, too, and will eat some litter and prickly ones good for it, which you had not the slightest thought would have been so."

While Ruskin says this only in respect to girls, in my opinion it holds true quite generally. There is no way

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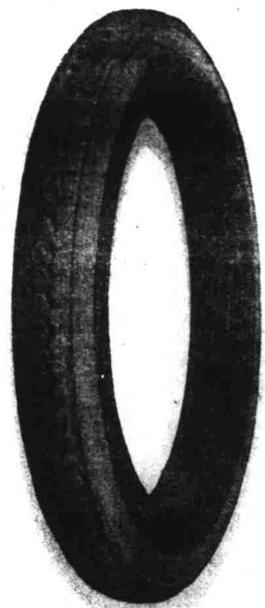
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## MILLS COLLEGE OAKLAND, California

The high quality of the work done at Mills College is indicated by the fact that undergraduates transfer to the Universities of California and Stanford without loss of status, their credits being accepted at full unit value. There have been students among those transferred to Stanford who have been appointed to assistantships and readerships before securing the bachelor's degree, as well as during their year of graduate work. Typical instances are: Celeste Young, reader in history; Josephine Cressy, assistant in German; Rachel King, assistant in mathematics.

Graduates of Mills College secure their second degree and their teacher's certificate at the University of California in one year. Bern Lemon, M. S. Mills 1913, S. C. California 1914, is an instructor in biology in the Fresno Normal School; Joyce Lohme, B. L. Mills 1912, M. L. California 1913, is English in the Idaho State Normal; Esther Lohme, B. L. Mills 1912, Mills College, is a teacher in the same school; and many others have distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavor.

- Paula E. Aldern, California, (Mrs. Frederick Stewart)
- Norrie H. Baker, Stanford
- Mrs. Albert C. Barker
- Paula Boyd, California
- Mrs. John E. Brown, California

to develop the reading habit as effective as that of accumulating a good library in which one may browse at will. Good libraries are not very common. Size has little to do with this. I can readily conceive of a library of a hundred books which is far more creditable to its owner than are other collections which I have seen which are many times its size.

In this respect you of the McKinley High School are fortunate, for I know of no local example of a well selected, well balanced and purposeful library than that which is found in your alma mater. You will find in this sad world many so-called libraries which are mere storehouses for books. If it is ever your good fortune to have access to a really intelligently selected library, you must by all means take advantage of the opportunity; although in almost any kind of institution of this kind you may, at the expense of more or less effort, and possibly with the loss of much time and some temper, find something to repay your labor.

Use the library; use money which you would otherwise spend on the light magazines, for books, and after 10 years have passed you will find that you have acquired at least some solid knowledge, and not a misty recollection of glittering trash.

I mentioned buying books. Every thinking individual should have books of his own. A home without books is, from an intellectual standpoint, as barren as would be, from the more material viewpoint, a home without a stove. Here, of course, we run against a common sham, namely that of buying books by the foot, books for their binding, books with which to fill a certain bookcase or to offstage as a factor in a scheme of decoration. But you can tell a man by his books. Fifteen minutes spent in a library are likely to tell you more about his position in matters intellectual than you could learn in many times that time in any other manner. The well filled bookshelves, proudful of their arrays of sets of the various classics in full or in abridgement, one, least of all the owner, despises. The books are merely the show, the vanity, the pride of the owner.

How often you want to read—and what you want to read—surround yourself with those books and make them a part of your everyday life, and you will find, as did our fathers before us, that in the end you will be a well informed, cultured man, whereas he who has sought his intellectual food in the ephemeral publications, who has taken his drama in the moving picture shows, instead of in the theaters and in books is, comparatively speaking, a mental bankrupt.

I have at least given brevity. I shall end by summing up the entire burden of my song in just this: You have been taught how to read, but your reading you must do yourselves. The task of your teachers is finished; it is yours to go forth in the world, use the tools which have been given you and thus show that the labor of the past years has not been in vain.

## BABY SHOW WILL BE BIG FEATURE OF MAUI'S FAIR

(Special Star-Bulletin Correspondence) WAILUKU, Maui, June 24.—A baby show is to be a feature of the Maui county fair, to be held in Wailuku November 30, December 34. This was decided upon at the meeting of the executive committee held on Tuesday night. Just how the show is to be handled was not decided, nor was a committee appointed to take charge of the feature. It was suggested, however, that the Alexander House Settlement would be the proper institution to handle it, and between now and the time of the next meeting something definite will be learned in this respect.

The reports of the various committees indicate that most of the departments are going to be fully up to what had been expected of them, for the reason that popular interest is very keen on the matter of the fair. One interesting report was made by William Seaby, who has charge of the agricultural machinery division. It is probable, said Mr. Seaby, that several firms will bring gasoline tractors to the fair, and the agents have asked for from five to ten acres of land on which to demonstrate the capacity of their machines for plowing.

## ASSURANCE GIVEN OF PARTICIPATION IN HAWAIIAN EXPOSITION

Percy Hunter, head of the New South Wales tourist bureau, in a letter to the local Pan-Pacific Club, says that he is intensely interested in the proposal for a Hawaiian Pacific exposition in 1919 and announces that he will come here for the preparatory convention.

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