OUR GENERATION ARRAIGNED AS WASTERS BY AUTHOR

Owen Johnson, Novelist, Sees Americans' Heritage Passing to Foreign Born Unless Parents and Educators Institute Noteworthy Reforms

WAR'S effects are considered only lightly by Owen Johnson in the accompanying interview about his new book, "The Wasted Generation," and the object he had in writing it. Rather does his message apply to American civilization as a whole, and his indictment of our educational methods is particularly specific. Parental discipline—or rather the lack of it—is compared to its disadvantage with that of England and France. The entire article should prove illuminating to the thoughful members of the older generation of the day.

By TORREY FORD.

ASKING an author whether or not he really means what he writes is a delicate task, calling for a rare show of tact and minute discretion. But now and then it must be done, especially when the subject matter drifts from the beaten trail and into fields that have hitherto been regarded as the pet hunting grounds of industrially prominent persons who need the exercise.

Thomas A. Edison can scoff at the school system, calling it harsh names in several languages, and the educators come to their own sturdy defence; Henry Ford can get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas, and no one really cares, but when a fiction writer turns prophet he must be attended to promptly.

So when it was announced that Owen Johnson, a writer who has previously committed nothing more violent than a searching survey of schoolboy life, with a brief whirl at the daring flapper, had christened his latest novel "The Wasted Generation" something had to be done about it. Some one had to see Mr. Johnson. And at this exciting turn of affairs we were rushed into the game.

After an informal conference, followed by a formal interview, we are inclined to the belief that Mr. Johnson has not reached down in the bag and pulled out a title that he thought might have a popular appeal. Not alone does the book belie this intent, but the author is quite ready to back up his fictional challenge to American manhood with his confirmed personal opinion.

When a character sets down the words: "We see the failure of our generation—its failure to rise to its opportunities and responsibilities, its consequent weakening and approaching impotence and the inevitable surging up from beneath of another more virile force," it is actually Owen Johnson speaking.

Qualifies the Wastage, But Only in Minor Way

Mr. Johnson believes that the generation is being wasted, although he wishes to qualify this for general circulation.

"I am not saying that the whole generation is wasted," he explained. "Of course, that is not true. But the generation of the class that has power and opportunity has failed to carry on. The sons of the men who have accumulated wealth and attained enviable positions of leadership are not assuming their responsibilities.

"The old American strain is gradually losing its heritage and yielding before another that has not been long in this country. The natural process is to have a strong, invigorating strain coming up from the bottom. Certainly the self-made man is the strength of America, but the weakness is that the sons, with all the advantages of wealth, education and friendships, do not utilize their opportunities.

"To my mind, the greatest problem which we are facing to-day is whether the future of America is going to be in the hands of the descendants of America or passed on to German-Americans, Russians and others who have been here but a short time.

"The problems to-day are so tremendous that they should almost arouse the instinct of self-preservation. If the moneyed classes are going to be turned over to sons who have never known the battle of life, who take no interest in political institutions, then will come radicalism and socialism. If they do not realize that wealth means responsibility, they are going to be swept away."

Here Mr. Johnson paused, intense in his subject, yet unwilling to assume the preacher's role. He was ready to talk about something else if we wished. But we asked him to go on.

Blames Educational System And Colleges Mostly

"As I see it," he continued, "the great defect lies in our educational system. I do think that education falls down if it cannot carry on a developed type. Instead of turning out men inspired to be leaders, our American universities take the sons of successful men and stifle any interest they may have in politics. The universities have become mere social clearing houses. They turn out men who are chiefly concerned with getting the most enjoyment out of life, with no sense of values or responsibilities.

"I began criticising the colleges with 'Stover at Yale,' questioning their social systems, their secret societies, their spirit of leadership and their lack of interest in the world of affairs. If you will remember, I inserted a questionnaire that was much on the order of the Edison questionnaire. Many complained that it was too severe, but it was mild compared with Mr. Edison's.

"There are many bigger things in college than book learning. The college man must be inspired to take up the responsibility of politics. He must be made to realize that it is up to him to go in and make his influence felt and not sit back and let us all wonder where the American leadership is coming from. The destiny of the country is too important for any such haphazard system.

"I believe in a graded system of education. A college career is not essential for every man. It is not compatible with the intellect of all grades of civilization. Let each man be educated according to his requirements and his possibilities, but as we are a democracy there should be opportunities open for the unsual man in every grade to come up to a higher level.

"But when our universities, the peak of our educational system, fall down in their duties, there is this inevitable waste of the generation.

Many Realize the Crisis And Sound Warning Notes

"Mine is not one voice crying out in a wilderness. Edison, Beck and many others are protesting over the failure of the second generation to utilize its full opportunities. It isn't the fault of the generation itself; it is a defect in the system.

"The son of the wealthy man to-day is not expected to go in and assume the reins of leadership that have been relinquished by his father. In the first place, he is not prepared to do so. He is permitted to sit back and enjoy the fruits of his father's efforts. He has never been tossed into the battle of life. He knows only the men of his own social class. He grasps the privileges of wealth without assuming the responsibilities.

"In England scions of the old families are made to feel a pride in their aristocracy. The sons are sent into the army, the clergy or diplomatic circles. They are expected to distinguish themselves and uphold their lineage.

"In America we make no such demands on our younger generation. We let them run wild until gradually parents have lost all grip on them. They are strangers in the house."

Mr. Johnson was asked if he believed the future of America was as much in the hands of the young women of to-day as in the hands of the young men.

"I certainly do," he said. "And, furthermore, I believe the girls of the wealthier social families are as unprepared to carry on their responsibilities as the young men. The American woman is brought up to believe she is different from man, an *objet de lux*.

"Take the debutante year. In no other country does it exist to the extent that it does in America. I have talked with many young women who complained that a year of attending parties night after night and sleeping until 2 o'clock in the afternoon gradually brought on a nervous breakdown. Not only this, but it robbed them of an energy which they would have preferred devoting to more practical ends.

Domestic by Accident Only, Too Busy Socially to Learn

"If the average girl of to-day knows anything about domesticity, it is mere accident. She is ignorant of the simplest practices of cooking, sewing, economy and servant management. Previous to her marriage she has been too busy with social activities for these things, and afterward she feels that it is too late for her to learn.

"The average French girl of the same social standing is trained to be a housewife during the years that her American cousin is 'coming out.' By the time she marries she is an accomplished needle worker, she knows something about cooking, she has managed her mother's household, she has done the ordering and learned how to buy economically. In other words, she is ready to assume her duties at the head of her future husband's household.

"I am not so familiar with the English girl, but I presume she is somewhere between the French and American types."

In his latest novel, "The Wasted Generation," published this month by Little, Brown & Co., Mr. Johnson contrasts the two civilizations, French and American. During the war the author spent much of his time in France as a correspondent, and while there discovered some of the reasons why the contrast is not always to the advantage of America.

According to his findings, the French civilization is built around the family, while the American is around the individual.

"The whole contrast between our two civilizations, French and American, is here—in the family," he writes. "Thinking on this to-night, I understand Bernoline better. The sense of duty that dominates her life and makes sacrifice so easily possible is the sense of family solidarity. Love of the mother, respect for the authority of the father, companionship with the children—it is France in miniature, and that greater love of country is but a tradition of family pride.

"I do not think we have this strongly disciplined sense of duty nor this unquestioning acceptance of sacrifice. How often children are but accidents, and sometimes strangers under the same roof! In my own case, what is my father to me? Do I know him as well as I know the boy I roomed with at school, I wonder? There is hardly an opinion we share or an outlook on life which we could understand together. He has never really discussed anything with me, as though instinctively he divined I would take an opposite view."

Literally, this is an autobiographical sketch set down by David Littledale, a New England Harvard man, a character conceived by Owen Johnson. But actually it is the author giving full play to his views and criticisms of American civilization. Mr. Johnson referred to the family of which David came.

Author's Views Given Play Through New England Character

"At 11 o'clock David writes: 'We departed to Sunday worship; Ben and my mother to the Unitarian Church, Aunt Janie to the Congregational, with father, and Molly and myself to a Presbyterian service, accompanied by the servants.'

"No scene is more typical of what we are, a group of individualists, bound together by mutual tolerance. Are we a home, I wonder, or simply a shelter over a group of lodgers for this night or many nights? Of course, it is not fair to take us as typical of America. Yet we are typical of one thing—a developed type of traditional New England."

Under the cover of David's philosophy, Mr. Johnson proceeds with his idea. Again David writes:

"My little sister, who hangs on my arm and comes to me with her confidence, knows deep in her heart that this is not her home. To-morrow she will look in the eyes of some stranger and despite all our entreaties, pleadings, warnings, put her hand in his and follow him into the outer world. No wonder we have colonized the earth, when each of us has in him the soul of the pioneer."

And Mr. Johnson himself asks:

"Isn't this all quite true? How much family life have we to-day? How often does the daughter consider the pride of her family when she marries? She is thinking only of the family she expects to create, which will, in turn, be broken up by the persistence of individualism and the lack of family solidarity."

Turning back to the novel again, we hear David asking:

"What is the basic impulse, then, that moves through our Anglo-Saxon civilization? It is the relation between man and woman, and this conception of love as heroic is of the origins of our race. . . . So to-day the children in the house are but waiting the touch of destiny, free agents, held by no family tradition, impatient for life to open to them.

"Under all the sentimentalism of our literature and art there is this abiding instinct, the need of love that shall come as a directing purpose. Each child, in the imagination of a boy or girl, holds it as his right to give his heart where it pleases him, no matter what the wrench or the sacrifice, as the beginning and meaning of life. In this instinct to determine our own existence as children in our father's house we remain fierce and rebellious, as our Saxon heroes who served but feared neither their gods nor their masters.

"We do not inherit our homes; we create them."

And here, so far as we could determine from talking with Mr. Johnson and reading his book, is the main cause of his complaint against modern American tendencies. Tradition means nothing to us; family pride less. A generation born to lead, educated to lead, refuses to lead.

And the nation must take the consequences.

"Why shouldn't our college men step into politics and take an active hand in the management of the nation's affairs?" asked Mr. Johnson. "Why should the leadership be turned over to men less qualified to serve? I feel very strongly that the American universities are at fault in not inspiring men to this leadership.

"Theodore Roosevelt was the type of man who inspired to leadership those with whom he came in contact. I knew Roosevelt well, and many of my ideas are reflections of long conversations I have had with him on the subject. He, too, saw the failure of the second generation to carry on."

Mr. Johnson was uncertain where it would all lead, whether or not the American strain would become completely submerged and the leadership pass on to internationals.

"France and England both were formed as we have been formed," he said. "In the beginning, France was a polyglot mass of nationalities. To-day it has the strongest national feeling, based on the solidarity of the family."

In putting these ideas in novel form Mr. Johnson has adopted a war background. David Littledale, awakening to the problems of the day while serving in the Foreign Legion, senses the American failure to produce a continuing class of leadership. Coming in contact with poilu and aristocrats, he has opportunity to contrast the ideals of the French people with the lack of ideals he has observed in America. He finds the French father different from the American father, the French girl different from the American girl.

It is a bitter disillusionment for him with respect to his own generation. He sees the dangers that are threatening America.

Certainly David Littledale sees much in France that the average veteran of the A. E. F. failed to see—perhaps because he understood the language and the people better, perhaps because he was an integral unit of the French fighting army. At any rate, he gives the average American much to think about.

"My heart is very much in the book," said Owen Johnson, "but next time I hope to write more of a constructive novel. And perhaps I will get on to the responsibilities that the young woman of America should assume. When I wrote 'The Salamander' several years ago, I was a little ahead of the time."

And with a wave toward Manhattan in general, Mr. Johnson asked:

"But did I exaggerate?"

Owen Johnson, author and playwright, who feels so strongly about the present generation of Americans that he has written a book warning of disaster unless conditions are improved by parents and educators.

From a portrait study by James Montgomery Flagg. Courtesy of the artist.

HIGH LIGHTS OF 'THE WASTED GENERATION' AND THE INTERVIEW WITH ITS AUTHOR

THE old American strain is gradually losing its heritage and yielding before another that has not been long in this country.

The self-made man is the strength of America, but the weakness is that the sons, with all the advantages of wealth, education and friendships, do not utilize their opportunities.

The great defect lies in our educational system. Instead of turning out men inspired to be leaders our American universities take the sons of successful men and stifle any interest they may have in politics.

The universities have become mere social clearing houses.

When our universities, the peak of our educational system, fall down in their duties there is this inevitable waste of the generation.

In England scions of the old families are expected to distinguish themselves and to uphold their lineage. In America we let them run wild until gradually parents have lost all grip on them.

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Colleges Only Social Clearing Houses, He Says, and Rich Men's Sons Fail to Accept Responsibilities---Girls Scored, Too, for Lack of Domestic Knowledge

Dog's Gift of Tracking

NOT long ago some interesting experiments were made in England to test the strength and acuteness of the sense of smell in dogs.

There was a terrier that could not be thrown off his master's track upon the pavement of Regent's Park although his track was crossed and recrossed by hundreds of fresher ones and by thousands that were not so fresh.

To make a test with a setter the master had his men in Indian file, and the gamekeeper brought up the rear of the line. Each man placed his feet in the footprints of his predecessor. The master's scent was most overlaid; that of the gamekeeper was the freshest. When they had gone 200 yards the master turned to the right, followed by five of the men; the other six turned to the left, keeping their usual order. The setter followed the common track with such eagerness as to overshoot the point of divergence, but, quickly regaining this point, chose at once the track to the right.

The master and a stranger to the dog exchanged shoes and then went different ways. The setter followed his master's shoes and found the stranger. When the master and the stranger walked the park with bare feet the setter followed its master's trail, but not with the eagerness with which it followed the trail of his shoes. When he walked in new shooting boots the setter would not follow. The master glued a single thickness of brown paper to the soles and sides of his old shooting boots. The setter did not take the trail until it came to a point where, the paper having worn away, the bottom of one heel touched the ground. Walking in new cotton socks left no trail that the setter could follow; in woollen socks that had been worn away the trail was followed, but not eagerly.

The master walked fifty yards in his shooting boots, then kicked them off and carried them with him while he walked in his stockings 300 yards, then took off his stockings and walked 300 yards more barefoot. When the setter was put upon the track at the outset it followed with usual eagerness and maintained the pursuit throughout the whole distance.

Accompanied by a stranger to the dog, the master rode out along a carriage way several hundred yards from the house, then alighted and walked in shooting boots fifty yards beside the carriage. He then entered the carriage and his friend got out and walked 200 yards along the way. The setter ran the whole 250 yards at full speed without making any pause at the point where the scent changed. The master walked in his ordinary shooting boots, having first soaked them in oil of anise seed. Although the odor of the anise seed was so strong as to be perceived by a friend an hour after the trail was made, the dog followed the track of its master, thus disguised, with usual speed, after having examined the first three or four steps carefully.

Other experiments tested the power of scent through the air. The master walked down a trampled field by a zigzag course for a quarter of a mile, then turned on one side, got over a stone wall and walked back toward the house. The stone wall was breast high and about a hundred yards to the windward of his course down the field. The dog, taking the trail at the top of the field, rapidly followed its master's winding course. The moment it gained the "wind's eye" of the place where he was standing, with only his eyes above the top of the wall, the dog threw up its head, turned from the track it was following and went straight to its owner, although there were at the time several overheated laborers near it in the field.

Where the Money Goes for Our Navy

Continued from Preceding Page.

aviation during the current fiscal year. Out of this sum it is necessary to purchase the fuel for the aircraft. An effort is being made to obtain fuel for this branch of the service from the general fuel fund of $17,500,000, which would give naval aviation authorities an opportunity to expand in other directions, which they are anxious to do, in view of the rapid development of aeronautics.

Airplane bombs for both the army and the navy cost in the neighborhood of $1 a pound, but it is expected that the expense of this type of ammunition will be reduced somewhat when quantity production is attained. At present aircraft bombs are in their infancy in development. It is the hope of the ordnance officers that bombs can be produced in time for as low a figure as 45 cents a pound.

But at the present time a twenty-five pound bomb may be set down as costing $25, a 300 pound bomb at $300, a 1,000 pound bomb at $1,000 and a one ton bomb, the largest yet in the service, at $2,000. The Army Ordnance Department is now building a bomb to weigh 4,000 pounds, to be dropped in October at the Proving Grounds at Aberdeen, Md., and its actual construction is expected to cost $4,000. As a matter of fact, when single bombs are built for the first time the expense is much heavier, the additional outlay being required for engineering and development.

The TNT which the bomb contains, costs about fifty cents a pound. This is the deadliest "safe" explosive so far found by ordnance experts. Its "safety" comes from the fact that it may be handled under normal conditions without much danger. When not confined for firing in a bomb or projectile it is virtually harmless.

In a general way, the cost of projectiles and of bombs, when the matter of weight is considered, is just about the same. The bomb, however, carries much more explosive than the projectile and, therefore, is much more powerful. About 5 per cent. of the weight of a projectile is TNT, while the explosive charge of a bomb runs from 50 to 60 per cent.

It should be realized, however, that much of the weight of a projectile is made up with metal for the penetration of armor plate, while the bomb, which contains from 50 to 60 per cent. explosive, is not. There are armor piercing bombs that contain only 5 per cent. of explosive.

Depth charges, such as were used effectively by the navy during the war in the operations against submarines, cost just about the same as bombs; that is, $1 a pound, or slightly less. They contain about the same percentage of explosive charge as bombs. In many ways they are similar in character.

Torpedo the Most Expensive Piece of Ordnance

Torpedoes cost about $15,000 apiece. The Whitehead type, used by the navy for firing from tubes aboard ships and also from airplanes, are fine pieces of mechanism, capable of self-propulsion and stabilization. They are, of course, the most expensive piece of ammunition in use by either the army or the navy. It is interesting to note that aboard every vessel of the fleet a record is kept in the utmost detail, as of a man, of every torpedo that is issued.

The army type of 16-inch gun costs slightly more than that of the navy. One is just being tested at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds for the ultimate defence of New York Harbor, which is of the disappearing type and which cost $300,000. The reason for the slightly increased cost is the necessary construction of a firing platform.

The projectile, however, costs less. The figures show that the projectile, when turned out in quantity, requires an expenditure of $706, although the depreciation is greater, figured at $1,000 depreciation for each round fired. Like the navy 16-inch guns, the army gun is good for about one hundred rounds before it has to be relined. It, too, may be relined three or four times. Even when the gun itself wears out, the mechanism, or rather the mount, will still be good.

While this gun may be fired by two men if necessary, yet a large crew is intended for its operation. The crew includes ammunition passers, range finders and the like, always varying in number and, while contributing to the effectiveness of the gun, cannot be strictly said to be in the firing detail.

It is the rule in the army that in time of peace six rounds of ammunition be fired during a year from the guns of major calibres. This is divided into two practices. The remainder of the time is passed in sighting the gun and becoming accustomed to its mechanism.

In addition to the 16-inch guns, the armament for the coast defence provides for 14 and 12-inch guns. They cost about the same as the navy guns, or slightly more than $100,000 apiece. The corps artillery maintains the railroad mounts to operate along the coast, and they have 12 and 16-inch guns.

The field artillery's armament ranges from 3 to 6-inch guns. The corps artillery's from 6-inch up to the guns of the railroad mounts.