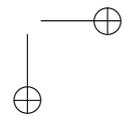
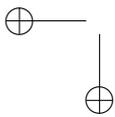


New Horizons in American Life



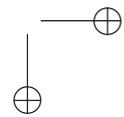
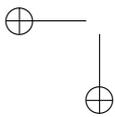




New Horizons in American Life

John Jay Chapman

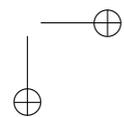
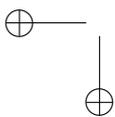
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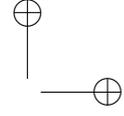
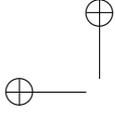




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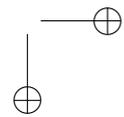
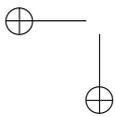
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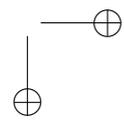
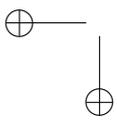
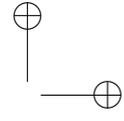
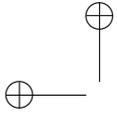


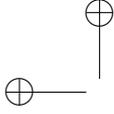


CONTENTS

Our Universities	1
Trends in Popular Thought	25





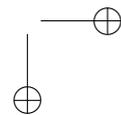
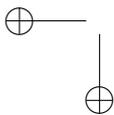


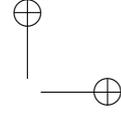
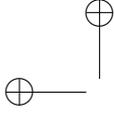
OUR UNIVERSITIES

In man's intercourse with man there are two Languages – the Language of the Intellect and the Language of the Emotions; or, if you will, Science and the Fine Arts. The language of the emotions is divided into various dialects – Poetry, Painting, Music, etc. We call them the Humanities.

The symbols of science are accurate and convey the same meaning to every scientist. On the other hand, the symbols of the humanities are fluid and convey a different meaning to each individual.

The era which we are passing through is an age of science. Open any scientific journal. Our land is filled with such a blaze of genius in the fields of technical and applied science as reminds one of art during the Italian Renaissance or music in Germany in the eighteenth century. Every

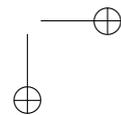
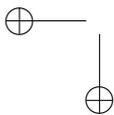




NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

branch of science is organized and concatenated between the abstract and the concrete, the theorist and the inventor, the manufacturer and the consumer. The great machine whizzes and dazzles. The carpet of opportunity is unrolled before early scientific talent as it was before the infant Mozart. Science is today the popular language that is drawing the world together, and many people think that it is taking up the mission of the old humanities: the two are often mingled together in the public mind. But the two Empires of Science and the Humanities are in truth governed by two different kinds of force. The first is automatic and is recorded and manipulated by instruments and mathematical calculations. The second is personal and is recorded in aesthetic and philosophic symbols and traditions. Science cannot say a kind word, make a joke or turn a tune. Science has neither heart, lungs, body, taste nor feeling. It detects what the eye cannot see and records what the ear cannot hear. It transmits man's various voices, but has no voice of its own. It is more silent than the sphinx.

In Commander Byrd's expedition to the Antarctic there was assembled such a complete outfit of the apparatus of science as had never before been brought together into so small a compass.

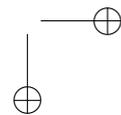
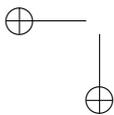




OUR UNIVERSITIES

The latest devices for observing and recording natural phenomena – astronomy, meteorology, natural history, geology, geography – in all the symbols which science has devised, were the important part of the venture. Yet Commander Byrd had not forgotten those fields of human endeavor which he had left behind in the North. His taking a Boy Scout to the South Pole was a gesture of reverence made by science to a language which it cannot speak. In that case science bowed its head quite naturally, sincerely, lovingly, to that sound-heartedness in the American people which is our best quality. This living sympathy is the same passion that should flicker between the schoolmaster and his boys, between the professor and his students. It springs from a consciousness of the unity of human nature, and a desire to transmit to future generations all the pieties of the race.

Our present age was ushered in by Benjamin Franklin in the eighteenth century. It may well be described as the age predicted by Jules Verne. It advanced with such fury as to transform the externals of man's life upon the globe and almost to persuade him that they are the whole of it, or at least the most important part. For three or four generations we rushed to the window to see a comet or a fire engine, throwing aside our



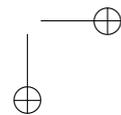
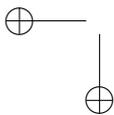


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

chisels and pens, our brushes and our lutes. On returning to pick them up, we find ourselves a bit rusty and out of practice. Our senses have become blunted by the cruelty of mechanical reproductions, the starkness of photography, the clatter of the phonograph, the crudity of diagrams. As for science, her lingos have made a psychological chasm between ourselves and the past which is as appalling as the subsidence of Atlantis. The devil-machines of science have reproduced for our benefit the pictures of the past – falsified in monochrome and polychrome – the voices of the past shorn of their overtones, the past dehumanized of its envelopes, ticketed and ticked off.

All such devices are infinitely useful in a thousand ways – and so is strychnine, which they somewhat resemble in their effects – but we must not confound these devices with the fine arts and the handicrafts, with poetry, music, dancing or good conversation, which are transmissible only from mind to mind in the studio, in the market place, the drawing-room, the workshop. We must not be beguiled and led astray by these miracles of mechanical reproduction, or they will kill in us the creative inspirations of art.

The boundaries between these two major provinces, science and the humanities, are very dis-

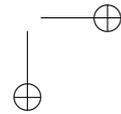
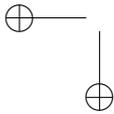


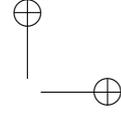


OUR UNIVERSITIES

tinct; and yet they have become confused in the public mind, and sometimes even in the minds of important men of science. The chief difference between science and art is this, that the statements and conclusions of science can be verified. They all depend upon measurements and calculations on which all the professional scientists of the world agree. But as to music and painting and poetry, the meanings and messages they bring differ with each listener or observer or reader. A second difference is that science comes to stay because it is a utility. It is a constant and cumulative possession. The ages of art pass like clouds: they cannot be arrested. Whistler put the idea plainly in the best thing he ever said: "There is no such thing as Art: there are only artists." There is really no way of verifying the power and significance of a painting or of a poem or of an essay. And yet there is great public curiosity about the meaning of our emotions, especially of our religious feelings.

A curious thing has happened in regard to this matter. The popular enthusiasm for scientific advance has, of late years, led our people to call on distinguished scientists for news of the next world, for theories of morality, advice about sex and the fine arts, etc., and some of them have responded quite frankly that they know



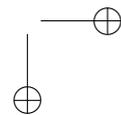
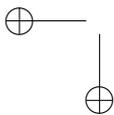


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

no more about such things than we do. The greatest scientists of the ages have in their own lives illustrated the fact that it is the *search* for truth that ennobles men. The field to which a man devotes himself is of lesser consequence.

There is yet another difference between science and the emotional arts. Both the theories and the verifications of science are arrived at by a tension of the intellectual faculties. With the fine arts it is different. In order to sound a note that carries, the artist and his instrument must be possessed and enveloped in a vortex of feeling which obliterates the very means that create the blast and leaves only a message of emotion. So far as any verification is possible, it comes through receptivity, self abandonment and repose. Chopin's highest praise, when listening to a pupil's performance was, *rien ne me choque*.

It is a good thing for a devotee either of science or of the fine arts to rest his mind with a study of the other – for the poet to read a scientific journal as a diversion, and for the mathematician to go to a concert. In an age like our own, which is engrossed in close thinking and in practical results, in the exclusion of all emotional factors from the mind, men become unfitted for painting and writing and poetry, for

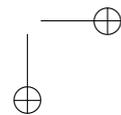
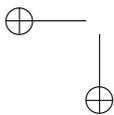




OUR UNIVERSITIES

composing and playing music, for singing and acting arts in which the technical difficulties are surrounded by a nimbus and cloud of emotion which directs and controls them. Science demands clear thinking and nothing else. The shutting out of emotional disturbance from his thought went so far with Darwin that he could no longer enjoy music or Shakespeare's plays; and something of the kind has been happening to the children of this Age of Science. Perhaps the very men who might have been our poets have become our geologists, mathematicians and astronomers.

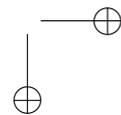
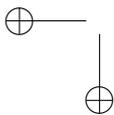
It would, indeed, be a normal reaction in any era that has been mad for science if it should be followed by a revival of the fine arts. There are signs that such a reaction is in progress all over the world today. The smoldering embers of archaeology have always been the source from which the fine arts were fired. When Peisistratus edited Homer, in the sixth century B.C., he was preserving a monument. The professional reciters had kept the Iliad and the Odyssey alive for a thousand years by an appeal to the passion for archaeology in the breast of the Greek peoples. It was this same instinct of conservation that governed the rise of sculpture and painting in Italy and, later, vitalized the literatures





NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

of Europe at the time of the Revival of Learning. Indeed archaeology – in this wider sense – and art are so commingled that one cannot say which is which. To take a small domestic illustration, Henry Ford could not tell you why he collects old furniture. He has been touched by an influence that is in the air – the breath of a new era that has been waited across Europe ever since the discoveries at Troy, Mycenae and Tiryns. This was the antitoxin for a mechanical age. The general reception of it showed the need of it. Schliemann was the rising star of a new era which began, as always, long before the passing age had reached its climax. These discoveries of Schliemann aroused an enthusiasm, a craving, which science had been powerless to satisfy. The objects found at Mycenae were thought to be the arms and adornments of the best-known mythical figures in European history. Had these objects been commonplace they would have excited only passing notice; but they were beautiful, precious, marvelous works of art. They were immediately reproduced and expounded in hundreds of popular books. Ever since the discoveries of Schliemann a new flame has been burning in all the universities and museums of the world. The later finds have come like rockets at midnight. Crete, Egypt, Sumer,



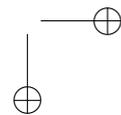
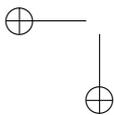


OUR UNIVERSITIES

have become lands of promise and the Ultima Thule of romance. The daily literature of exploration has become so great that a man must devote his whole time to it to keep track of it. In Walter Scott's day an antiquary was a solitary old fellow who poked about for the traces of a Roman wall. Today he is the best scholar in your classical department, who sets out for Mesopotamia with the equipment of an engineer, the learning of a historian and the feelings of a poet.

The old humanities are the vehicles by which man has recorded his inner experiences – his religion, his love, his hopes and fears, his social feelings and domestic life – his soul's history. All the old arts and crafts spring from deep roots in human nature and are entwined in the history of civilization. They are interwoven and interlocked with one another. The meanings of the older records are deciphered or guessed at by the meanings found in the later records. The whole series is a congeries of hieroglyphics, from the caves of Altamira to the tabloid found in an afternoon paper. Any acquaintance with any part of the record passes into the current social life of the world and affects the race indefinitely.

The survival of Greek literature civilized the Romans, and the Revival of Learning trans-

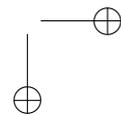
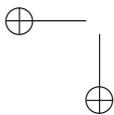




NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

formed the mind of modern Europe. You will say that it is a strange thing that man should advance by looking backward, yet it seems to be a fact that literature and the fine arts have always been the outcome of man's endeavor to reconstruct an imaginary past. We sit, as it were, with our backs to the driver and can only deal with what we see, or think we see, in the past. Any acquaintance with the past fertilizes our minds. This assumption has always been taken as the basis of all education. It is the corner stone on which every school and university in the world has been founded. The notion that we belong to the future seems to sterilize a man – as may be seen in those recent attempts in painting, poetry and music in which the author consciously endeavors to separate himself from the past. The future is a cold mystery, the past is warm with life.

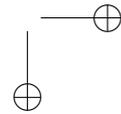
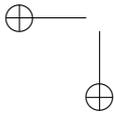
I have hazarded my remarks thus far as a prelude to the subject of education. "The School and College Curriculum" is a deadly phrase, and does not convey the idea which alone makes education of value – namely, inspiration. For the essence of education is to inspire, and this is a matter of personal influence, and about it there always hangs a mystery. Between mother and child, teacher and schoolboy, professor and stu-





OUR UNIVERSITIES

dent, great thinker and lesser thinker on any subject, there flows an unnamable power which conveys the import of the matter in hand, whether it be a song from Mother Goose or a problem in astronomy. The invention of printing somewhat clouded this subject and made us tend to accept a book for a man. In the early days of the Revival of Learning it was the very person of the great teacher toward whom the students flocked; and this is still the case with the great masters of medicine, physics, embryology, chemistry, etc. The same attraction of personality is seen today in the case of popular poets, novelists and dramatists. The larger public feels a desire to see the person of any author who has stimulated them. Thus our lecture halls are crowded with commuters who listen to foreign authors and get inspiration from the contact. Your bright boy of six is taken to see the great actor in Hamlet. He ought, if you can manage it, to be taken to see every great man who passes through town. If our eyes could be opened to the nature of things, we should see no books or textbooks, but only the human influences behind them. Let us take the case of the mother who is talking to her baby, or that of a primary schoolmistress who is teaching the alphabet to a small child, or, if you prefer, that of the latest editor of Oedipus, who





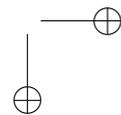
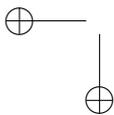
NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

is reading the play in a seminar with a group of postgraduate students. The child in the first two cases and the students in the third are getting more from the teacher than from the book.

I have drawn my illustrations from the earliest steps in education and from the latest ones. If you seek for examples of good teaching in America in any stage between the two, the nursery and the seminar, you will find it hard to discover one. And if you glance out of the window at any passing child or youth, with his twenty pounds of books in a satchel, you will see the disease that is ravaging our young people.

The American mind pictures education as a succession of long lanes with hurdles in them which the scholar must leap over. The hurdles are books. The teacher is as much harnessed by regulations as the scholars. The whole system is designed to shackle personal influence. Every point in this system – which ought to distribute spiritual energy – is furnished with a nonconductor.

Meanwhile there is probably not a high school in the land that does not contain one or two boys who are fitted by nature and disposition for a life of scholarship. A youth of this sort ought to walk home with the master after class, and on passing to the university, should carry a line



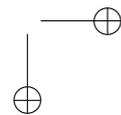
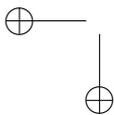


OUR UNIVERSITIES

of introduction to the head of its Latin department. You smile. It is nevertheless worth while to consider things that seem to be impossible, for they sometimes give the key to the future. That a boy should walk home with his teacher involves the infiltration of a new spirit into our education and the general acceptance of a very simple truth which to the American mind seems incomprehensible – namely, that education is not baggage but power.

The best teaching that I have ever experienced was at the Harvard Law School in the late eighties. Each class meeting was an inquest. Professor Ames, after saying good morning to the large roomful of youths who sat as silent and intent as if they were about to listen to a Beethoven quartet, would state the point at issue and, in answer to a raised hand, would say: “Perhaps Mr. Johnson will tell us his view.” After that, the discussion would take such a form as the general interest and his own guidance by quiet suggestion gave to it. The men left the room stimulated, eager, enthusiastic. They dispersed slowly: the discussion was continued in scattered groups as they went to luncheon.

When my boys were at Harvard, I used occasionally to attend their English classes and listen in. I remember a Freshman class in En-

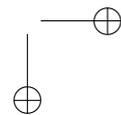
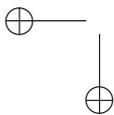




NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

glish Composition in which the instructor was using a textbook. He was teaching the boys that “prose is divided into narrative, argumentative and” – something else. I examined the book. It was a monstrous and horrible piece of dogmatic nonsense. I waited after class and, seeing that the instructor was an intelligent and benevolent young man, I asked him why he did not throw away the book and teach the boys what he knew. “I can’t,” he said; “it’s prescribed.”

There you have a sample of that system of schedules and textbooks which crystallizes the blood in both teacher and scholar in our American schools and colleges. It is due to a reliance on the punching of tickets at the gate ways of entrances and exits. I could lie awake at night thinking of the fate of all those American men and women who take up teaching as a profession and spend their lives working the tickers invented by persons who should have been employed in drawing up railroad timetables. Even our college authorities dare not rely on their own judgment in appointing a second assistant professor. They need the moral support of some document which establishes the man’s competency: they require the backing of a PhD. Almost any kind of PhD will suffice; and the applicant must take a year and write a thesis



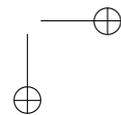
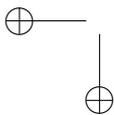


OUR UNIVERSITIES

which will, very likely, leave him less inspiring as a teacher than he was before he wrote it.

Our marking system – the grading of everything by percentages – has been borrowed from business life and fantastically developed into a kind of amateur psychology. Your American believes that you can express anything whatever by figures. The dons at Oxford who received the Rhodes scholars were somewhat puzzled by the decimal fractions as to merit with which the American educators had documented the applicants, especially by the points for “Leadership,” so-called, which appeared in some of the certificates. The dons waited in order to find out by experience what these points for Leadership might mean; and one of them is said to have written to the American shippers, “Please do not send us any more ‘Leaders.’”

I picked up an anecdote at Oxford that shows the difference between the British idea of education and our own. A don is in charge of a Rhodes scholar and says to him: “Go to such an alcove, read the books on William Pitt and bring me a paper on him.” The boy goes and after a time reappears with his essay. The don says on examining it: “But you have brought me only facts. I want ideas.” The boy goes again and returns with another paper which the



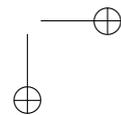
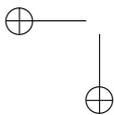


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

don reads. He exclaims again: "Why, you have simply copied out other people's opinions. I am not interested in them. I want *your own*." "Oh" cries the boy, "if I should do that in America, they'd say 'Hot air!'"

A similar case occurred with my son Victor at the age of ten, when he was at a private preparatory school of the first order. He was a dreamy child, and when asked in a geography examination "What are the exports of Italy?" he sank into a contemplation and finally hazarded "Pomegranates." "Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed the teacher indignantly; "the book says not a word of pomegranates." Now Victor's mother was half Italian. He had heard of pomegranates and perhaps had seen one.

Our American system is the same from baby classes up to Rhodes scholarships. The absurd decimals used in our marking system give a boy a false view of the whole subject of education. Moreover, they hold down and shackle the schoolmaster and press the life out of him. His life is at best a treadmill. He has to repeat the same function every day. He explains the same problem, translates the same passage, year after year, till he hardly knows who is at the other side of the desk. The experience of teaching somewhat cages a man. He becomes a subspecies



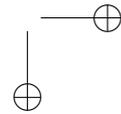
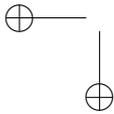


OUR UNIVERSITIES

of humanity. Your village schoolmaster has always been an isolated personage; your college don tends to become a prig; your professor, a mandarin. In Germany, where the humanities are regarded as a branch of science, the learned write exclusively for each other, making use of a hieratic language which protects them from the curiosity of the vulgar. Members of the teaching class everywhere are apt to carry their profession in their eyes, and even when they do not, society is afraid of them. When I was in college, visiting foreigners used to wonder why the Harvard professors were never asked to dine out in Boston; for there were three or four of them who would have added brilliancy to a dinner party in London, Paris or Berlin.

I cannot pass on from this point without taking off my hat to England, where the doors of the great houses are thrown open to every man of distinction in any field of human endeavor – a custom which perhaps England caught from France in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The tendency to eliminate scholars from polite life is strong in the United States – if one may call a tendency strong which is grounded on two kinds of weakness, the pride of the scholar and the timidity of his hostess.

The humanities are not learning itself, but the

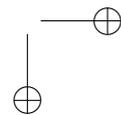
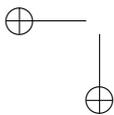




NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

fruits of learning. They are a means of enlarging our powers of enjoyment, of sympathy and of communication with others. They are fields of thought that lie between man and man, while universities are in theory the roof that stretches over man's whole intellectual kingdom. Universities draw their life from the people at large and become mirrors, symbols and microcosms of the community. In every age universities have reflected the social, political and religious preoccupations of the day. Every one of them has pictured an epoch, and an epoch is a natural product. No man makes an epoch: every man is a consequence, a creature of his age. And so also every university is a consequence of its age.

In glancing at our American universities today one sees that they embody the traditions and reflect the ideals of our contemporary life much as the universities of 1300 embodied the ideals and traditions of the Middle Ages. Our social conditions, our literary and philosophic thought, our amusements, hygiene, private convictions, personal ambitions, are strikingly exhibited in our university life. It goes without saying that these institutions should today be run as branches of executive business, because this is the only kind of management that our present age understands.

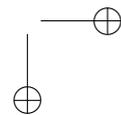
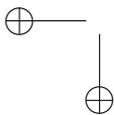




OUR UNIVERSITIES

It is in vain that you argue with one of our university managers that the aim of a university is to connect the mind of the student with the thought of the ages. He wishes to prepare the student for the life of the day. He regards himself as the Messiah of education. This is just the attitude of the rich men and religious persons who gave endowments to colleges in the Middle Ages. They desired so to mold the imaginations of the young that the young should see life as they themselves saw it.

Now it has happened that the last quarter of the nineteenth century was marked by the spectacular rise of big business in America, and the change was naturally reflected in our universities. The startling transformation of our old, somnolent halls or shanties of learning into gigantic factories of business men, which took place between 1870 and 1900, is a credit to the public spirit of our leading citizens. But it came about so suddenly and involved so much building, planning and operating that our benefactors and their subordinates, the college authorities, forgot that any kind of talent except business talent was required in the conduct of a university. The transformation was governed by the thought of the whole American people. Science was adopted as their dogma, and the manuals of



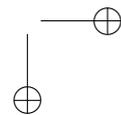
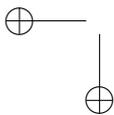


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

science as their prayer books. Science took the place which Dogma once held in the medieval universities; and Business, the daughter of Science, was given the niche in the rotunda once filled by Theology. The faithful were helped to find jobs on graduation; for a degree amounted to a certificate of orthodoxy. Our colleges thus became intelligence offices.

The sight of the new buildings blinds a man. They remind you of new meerschaum pipes, and one suspects that it will require a few generations of students to color them. They suggest *the present* so violently that one needs smoked glasses to avoid being made dizzy by them. Some months ago I visited one of the new quadrangles at Harvard, and I was particularly struck with the library. It was large and luxurious, with extravagantly comfortable armchairs, electricity in all forms, rugs, tables, atlases – and two thousand books, all new, blazing from the walls with gilt titles; and beneath them a couple of golfers reading the newspapers. This library, for the use of young scholars, was done in the taste of a millionaire's yacht club.

This transformation of our older universities came so suddenly and involved such tremendous financial commitments that the managers are obliged to serve the passing age and provide

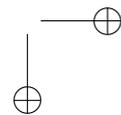
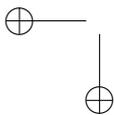




OUR UNIVERSITIES

such surroundings as the benefactors will pay for and as the general public will support. Our colleges have become, as it were, the racing-stables of competing millionaires, and the whole movement of university-building has become a kind of national sport. But one cannot say that this is an unmixed evil. There is an ethical element in sport. The competing merchants of Athens paid enormous sums for the staging of the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Our colleges are today constantly reviving Greek plays, and their graduates present them with stadia and open air theaters. Tomorrow these same benefactors may subscribe to raise the salary of the Greek professor. The present age is so sensitively organized that a sincere revival of scholarship in any small college would be felt and reflected everywhere. All depends on what shall go forward in the breasts of the American people *outside* of the universities.

At any rate it can never be said that we have not thoroughly tried out the experiment of a mass production of the humanities. It does not work: we must try other methods. We wish to encourage the race and breed of scholars. What shall we do? If it were a question of fine roses, everyone knows that you must place a few of them under favorable conditions and



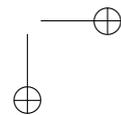
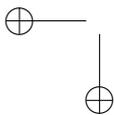


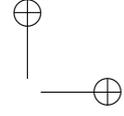
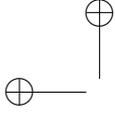
NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

cultivate them. You do not plant out seventy acres in roses and then swear that they are the finest in the world because there are so many of them. The building at Harvard of a series of vast halls which give a burlesque of college life is like the erection of crystal palaces when we need hotbeds.

Just as the key to improvement in our whole system of education lies in the removal of non-conductors between teacher and scholar, so the key to our university life lies in creating groups where special intellectual conductivity is provided for by segregation.

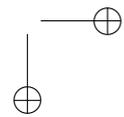
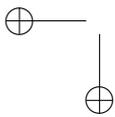
No sudden revolution in our system of university government is necessary or desirable. The reforms that creep in almost unnoticed are the important ones, for they show the tendency of the age. New and liberating influences can be set in motion without a ukase. The red tapes can be snipped severally as we come to see where they pinch. Each of them is an attempt to save somebody from a responsibility that should be thrown upon him. All regulations should be such that they can be easily relaxed in favor of exceptional talent in a student or exceptional intellectual power in a professor. Any one of our universities could quietly place a small group of scholars in charge of a house and grounds and

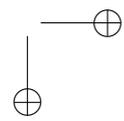
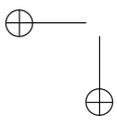
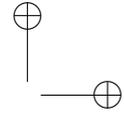
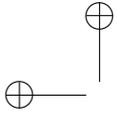


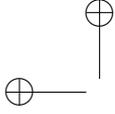


OUR UNIVERSITIES

allow them to live scholastically and socially. If such an experiment should succeed, it would become famous, and in ten years every clever boy in the country would be trying to get into the enclosure. The development of the humanities is subject to universal law. One must subserve Nature.



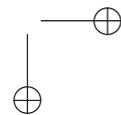
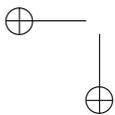




TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

This is an age when any man must feel embarrassed to find himself on a platform, booked to preach on what is in everyone's mind – war, peace, science, religion, art, industry, social life – for they all point today to the same text on the blackboard, to the impending unification of human life upon the globe: “Ye are members one of another.”

It was the Great War in Europe that brought us up against this text. The mere fact that we are all destined to think about the same problems at the same time has an almost crushing significance. Can the mind of man get used to the strain of it? No doubt it can. Our descendants will accustom themselves to the harness, and world problems will become like village life to them.

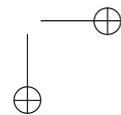
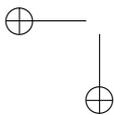




NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

We who passed through the Great War are hardly the best judges of the matter. The new epoch came in with a physical shock like the slipping of the earth's crust. The War went on for four years. They seemed like twenty. At that time we older ones had a fright which we cannot quite get over. But the younger generation has not had such a fright. The Great War is to them only a bad dream of their early years – as remote as the Deluge. To us who are still on the stage it was no dream, but a reality. It obliges us to review our own personal history and to take a glance at the present general conditions of our Republic.

To begin with what is notorious: The corruptions of our political life and of our business life – which are so interlocked with one another that we cannot tell which is which – bear some relation to the timidity of the average American in expressing an opinion on any domestic subject. Is it not a notable fact that the American mind, so low-browed at home, seems to emerge in a new light when it takes up international matters? We have had an illustration of this – our slow but steady illumination as to what was at stake in the European War, and our decisive work when we once got into it.



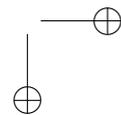
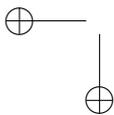


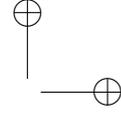
TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

And note this – that in the case of this great emergency the problem stood outside of our domestic political imbroglios. The same ability has been shown by many Americans who have worked with and under the League of Nations, and outside of the League on foreign affairs. A whole tribe of unselfish and extremely competent men and women seem to be behind our flag in the international trenches.

Beside these specialists we have an army of popular writers on kindred world-subjects. One cannot open a newspaper or magazine without running across the work of able American students, investigators, reporters, translators – publicists in the best sense of the word – whose papers are read with avidity by millions of Americans who, before the War, hardly knew that Europe existed. The link between these various thinkers in America is to be found in a truth-seeking quality which they all have in common. This is a tonic to the whole country.

Moreover, a sort of silent agreement has been arrived at and is understood by all, that our international problems must be kept out of the clutches of Congress. This is a constant stabilizing factor in our foreign affairs. It is, moreover, destined to have a valuable influence on our national political life. It will constantly add

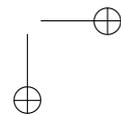
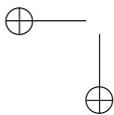


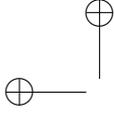


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

strength to whichever one of our national parties seems most competent to deal with international matters in a cosmic spirit. The very defects and miseries of our domestic politics seem to work toward a consummation that is to be wished; for there are among us many able men and women who find no opening for their talents in American political life and are being drafted into the new and larger field of world interests.

If one glances back into our history one can see – or think one sees – those elements in our early colonial life which formed us, molded us and unconsciously fitted us for the very role that is making us useful in world affairs. There are certain traits in the American character that run straight back through all our history and have their origin in the life of the early settlers, whether of seamen by the shore or of backwoodsmen. The first trait is thrift; the second, a desire for social improvement, for the development of a community life. In about one hundred and fifty years, between the early seventeenth and the late eighteenth century, these refugees and adventurers, farmers and tradesmen, had somehow gained enough experience to draw the Constitution of the United States – an imperfect document if you will, yet a notable achievement. And remember too that we had by this time





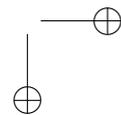
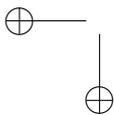
TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

produced John Marshall and Daniel Webster to interpret that Constitution.

Both of our chief preoccupations – money and the desire for social betterment – are practical and unimaginative, and both of them run straight through all the vicissitudes of our national growth and survive as the controlling elements of our life today. The only imaginative epoch in our history is the Antislavery Epoch, which gave us our belated place in the moral progress of the world – and this epoch is treated somewhat as a footnote by the average American historian. Our writers show a tendency to ignore it.

Money-making and social betterment, the pioneers' twin passions, survive among us in all their pristine force today. We are preoccupied with money, and we understand social service – to which the forward movement of women all over the world has added an enormous impetus. There are thus two tremendous organized camps in this country – the financial camp and the camp of social uplift. In every new contact with the outer world the representatives of both causes take the field automatically.

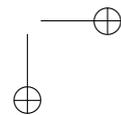
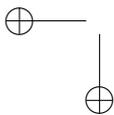
As the smoke from the Great War cleared away, the influence of the American uplift and of the American money-power began to show





NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

itself in Europe. I will hazard a word or two about each of them. The uplift is the outcome of religious training. We are, I know, in the habit of ridiculing the conflicts between the Christian sects in America, both the colonial conflicts and those of today; yet all of our moral ideals are the outcome of religious influence – the influence, you might say, of Christ seeping through the various sects of Christianity. The same thing is true of the dogmas of the older Roman Church in Europe. That Church preserved the New Testament. While elaborating the husk, it preserved the kernel, and the same thing is true of all the later sects and offshoots of Christianity. By their fruits ye shall know them. When an American woman appears before the Parliament of India to oppose child-marriage, she is the voice of the American uplift which is becoming merged in a world uplift. When the leading American bankers and statesmen appear at Paris in the matter of a moratorium for Germany, they are the voice of American finance, which has become merged in the world finance; and both of these interests have become part of the bone and tissue of the American during his experience of three hundred years of hard-minded practical life.



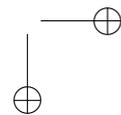
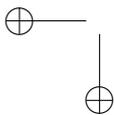


TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

So much for the most apparent consequences of the Great War. But there are other consequences, less visible, yet perhaps more important – educational consequences. The chief difference between any American and any European during the last three hundred years is that the mind of the European is furnished: it can't help being furnished. He has only to look at the Tower of London, or at the Louvre, or the Colosseum, or the Aqueduct of Segovia, to become aware of deep things. He drinks in the great past through every pore as he leaves his cradle. He is a humanist by environment – strive as he may to throw it off.

The American child is deprived of the strongest educational influence in the world – the influence of objects. If the ruins of a Roman Forum were standing somewhere in each state of the Union, the young American would have an earlier baptism into the mysteries of time and into the imagination of man.

The Great War has made us receptive to historic influence. What an avalanche of information and of ideas has been poured into the American mind during the last thirteen years! No sooner was the War at an end than we began to read ravenously – books old and new, philosophic and narrative; fiction, verse, travel;



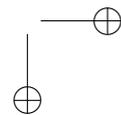
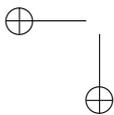


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

yet predominantly biographical and historic in character. The American had always lacked mental horizon – was bleak-minded because he had not the habit of wide reading. Well, today we have it, if ever a people had. This was our most obvious need, and the War supplied it.

But we do not only read, we write. All America is writing – writing furiously. The close of the War seemed to let loose a bottled-up passion for self-expression in the whole Western World of Europe and America, and the appeal of these writings is international. The nations have to a large extent lost their vitriol in criticizing one another and lost their sensitiveness to what a neighbor might say. They all but shake hands; like small boys who have fought each other in a back yard till they were exhausted, they have become reasonable.

The World War was followed by a general collapse of social and aesthetic standards both in Europe and here. The stage, fiction, domestic morals, showed symptoms of abandonment. These alarming conditions were, however, not wholly due to the War. The War merely dramatized certain changes which had been in progress for several generations. The forces of an industrial age had been multiplying the populations and vulgarizing the intellectual standards of the





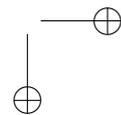
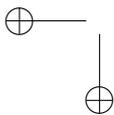
TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

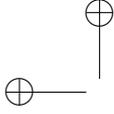
Western World. The great artists, musicians, poets, literary figures, statesmen and political figures of the nineteenth century were no more. Victor Hugo, Tolstoi, Brahms, Verdi, Wagner, Browning, Tennyson, Emerson, had left no successors. Daniel Webster, Cavour, Lincoln, Bismarck, Gladstone, had left no successors. The giants of the forests were down, and the world began to look like a jagged clearing in the wood. One might cry out with Cleopatra, "The crown of the earth doth melt and there is nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon."

The literature of the Western World has since the Great War been a sort of underbrush.

Europe naturally enough believes that America is somehow to blame for all of these distressing and unromantic conditions, because we turned the scales of the War. It is easy to regard the whole influence of the industrial era as an Americanization of the world. Yet we were not especially to blame either for the War itself or for its social and intellectual consequences.

Let us admit our deficiencies. The difference between European cultivation and our own is a difference in complexity. Theirs has more resonances, more overtones. It stirs thicker. There are more threads to an inch in the tapestry. Nevertheless, ours is improving. The number of



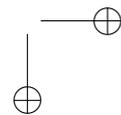
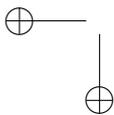


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

serious, scholarly, competent books produced in this country increases every year. One can follow them in the pages of the Literary Supplement to the London Times, where they receive the same benevolent and discriminating treatment that is given to the rest of the current literature of the world.

The other day my eye fell on an advertisement in this journal of a General Catalogue of the Printed Books in the British Museum. The subscription price of the catalogue is by prepayment of £400. The Museum authorities say, "The desire to have the ground covered in a single alphabet right down to the present day has caused a demand to spring up, largely in American libraries, sufficient to make the enterprise a fair business risk."

America is here seen as an important factor in encouraging the higher learning of Europe. One should remember such comparatively invisible influences, such proofs that there are scholars in the United States, when we feel oppressed by the character of much of our popular literature. The multitudes of our cheap books of every sort – and cheap in every sense – tend to obscure the good ones and to make them physically difficult to find in a bookshop. But this fact does not limit their function; and for aught we know, the





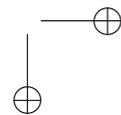
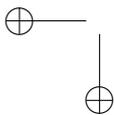
TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

cheap ones are a necessary concomitant of the better ones. It is a law of nature that readers who have sound wits – however deficient they may be in early advantages – tend to gravitate upward in their choice of books.

The use of literature is to excite thought, and one must begin with what people are thinking about. Neither philosophy nor poetry, neither religion nor the search for moral truth, has ever succeeded in exactly harmonizing any two human minds. Each man's endowment is unique, each man's experience is unique. The nearest approach that any two natures can make toward one another comes about when each of them has a harmonious development of his own. Each of them is a solitude, and solitudes are communicative. One deep crieth unto another.

The words a poet uses, the words a writer of any sort uses, change color on the wing and alight transfigured in the world of another's mind – harmonized and taken up into new forms of intellectual power. I say that the important part of any book comes from the focalization of the writer's mind: this stimulates and focalizes the mind of his reader.

It is one of the calamities of human nature that the evil of the world in all its forms is more visible than the good; faults, than virtues.



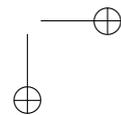
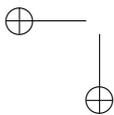


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

Any steady undergrowth of improvement is not noticeable till we see it in some shining example. The advance of cultivation is made through the patience of lost writers who find an audience with a lost public, but whose influence is not lost. It passes silently from individual to individual till a group, a school, perhaps an age, emerges.

I have to confess, in looking over the railway bookstalls in England that the literature of the masses is of a higher class than our own; and in examining the kiosks on the streets and squares of small towns in France, that the popular reading of the French seems to be amazingly more intellectual even than that of England. In this country, the illiteracy and lack of professional training of those who serve the counter in a bookshop are noticeable. The Niagara of new books, domestic and foreign, is such that the booksellers are not able to find men whom they can train to use a catalogue. The men can earn more money by selling bonds. All that a shopman can tell you is, "That pile over there came in this morning."

Our critical journals cannot handle the flood; nevertheless, our critical journals are steadily multiplying and improving. They are beginning to organize a system by which the books for review shall be referred to experts; but the



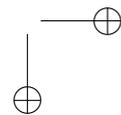
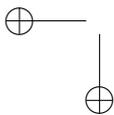


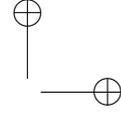
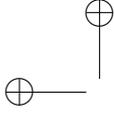
TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

formation of such a system implies years of experience, and the small sums paid to reviewers make it hard to find critics.

There is another subject, closely allied to that of books and reading and perhaps the more important of the two – the question of spontaneous utterance in personal talk. All good writing is the result of an acquaintance with the best books; but the mere reading of books will not suffice. Behind the books must lie the habit of unpremeditated, headlong conversation. We find that the great writers have been great talkers in every age. Ben Jonson says that Shakespeare would run on at such a rate that he had to be stopped. Shelley said that Byron's talk was an intoxication. Burns was one of the best talkers that ever lived. Among our own writers of the nineteenth century there were great talkers – Washington Irving, Dr. Holmes, John Fiske, Mark Twain, Lowell; and on the other hand, the social silences of Emerson and Hawthorne can be felt in the thinness of their writings.

It is no exaggeration to say that the life of good writing in every age depends upon conversation. The literary idiom is a sublimation of the spoken idiom; and unless speech is constantly kept alive by the free ebullitions of wit, opinion, whim, jest, by social explosions of idea



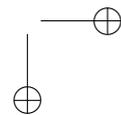
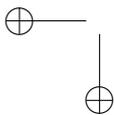


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

– the literary idiom will grow muscle-bound and rheumatic.

The English have never stopped talking since Chaucer's time. And the other Europeans are ready-tongued, vocal, imaginative people, whose very folklore and early dialects have been preserved by the ceaseless stream of talk on castled terraces and on village greens since Gothic times.

But our democracy terrifies the individual, and our industrialism seals his lips. The punishment is very effective. It is simply this: "If you say such things as that, I won't play with you." Thus the average American goes about in quite a different humor from the average European, who is protected and fortified by his caste and clique, by his group and traditions, by manners and customs which are old and change slowly. The uniformity of the popular ideals and ambitions in America is at the bottom of most of our troubles. Industrialism has all but killed the English language among us, because every man is afraid to make a joke – unless it be a stock joke. We are all as careful as diplomats not to show our claws. We wear white cotton gloves like waiters – for fear of leaving a thumb mark on a subject. Emerson's advice about this problem is covered by his apothegm, "If you are afraid to do anything, do it!"



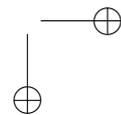
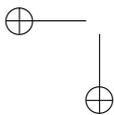


TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

There has been a marked improvement in our social courage since the War. The Winds of Doctrine are blowing away the fogs of that stupid old obsequiousness of Americans towards each other in their private intercourse – and this is of the greatest consequence. The rise of letters in past ages has always been due to groups and coteries of men whom destiny somehow drew together, and who – well, they *talked*.

Our political life is undergoing rapid transformations, and the chat on street corners is more free. You are alarmed at the coarseness and feebleness of our journals? It is better than silence. You grieve at their multiplicity? This is nature's way. She tries experiments and thus finds out which germ will grow and which will not.

As for our commercial and political wickednesses – our crimes, immoralities and cynicisms – they defy all diagnosis. And yet it is through attempted diagnosis that the cure creeps in. Some man enters the lists with an idea or a remedy. You think his labor is lost. But it is not lost. He has to some extent cleared his head by unbosoming himself. He has affected a few individuals and affirmed his own nature in the process. He has made the atmosphere a little more resonant. The radiations of benevolent energy are never lost.



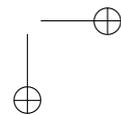
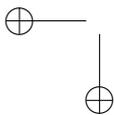


NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

But you say, "How can we tell in which direction the whole process is tending?" Only by the outcome: The whole ferment is absolutely beyond our comprehension, and we can only assist it as the surgeons do with a broken leg, by applying such remedies as experience suggests and leaving the cure to the inscrutable operations of the universe.

The multitudinous theories and causes both private and public – the benevolent activities into which our people plunge – are grindstones of character and intellect. The leaders of these movements deal with realities: they come to know their world. There is more philosophy to be picked up at a conference held by one of them than from the reading of Aristotle. They represent the core of the American intellect, and it seems to be the kind of intellect that the great world stands much in need of.

As for literature and the fine arts, we do not know what forms they may take on in America. Hitherto they have in the Old World always represented the blossoming of national tradition, national traits and talents, national ambitions. It is safe to say that whenever they emerge among us, it will be under national forms. Every language is itself an outcome of nationalism – the voice of some nation. And each of the fine



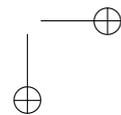
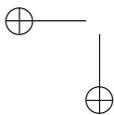


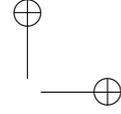
TRENDS IN POPULAR THOUGHT

arts has hitherto been an outcome of nationalism and in a sense the voice of some nation. The same thing will in all likelihood hold good for the future.

To end where I began: We were drawn into the War by a perception that our destiny was involved in that of Europe. At the close of the War we refrained from joining the League of Nations. It was a profound and practical instinct that kept us from prematurely joining the League. We felt that it was not by wrangles and votes in committees that America could help Europe, but by occasional activity in international matters on subjects which our people understand. Our first post-War cooperation on the large scale with Europe has arisen in financial matters. It came about in the process of putting our own house in order: behold, our house turned out to be the whole Western World. Events have drawn us to the task. Time will test the value of our work. And so with regard to our prospective share in world history, our contribution will in each case arise, not as part of a theory, but as part of the day's work. It will be controlled in each case by the vision of the American people at large.

In the early stages of the Great War a strenuous attempt was made by the French and British





NEW HORIZONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

generals to get General Pershing to intermingle our soldiers with those of France and England. Pershing refused to consider the idea, and it is one of his greatest services; for it was plain that no soldiers would fight well under such an arrangement. There is a story that at the time of this episode, Clemenceau went over the heads of all the military commands and wrote a personal appeal to President Wilson on the matter. Wilson gave an answer that covered the whole subject in a word – namely, “That if the American troops should be intermingled with foreign troops, the American people would not support the War.” This same thought holds good as to the future influence of the United States upon world politics. Our influence must come, not from the submergence of our agencies in European agencies, not from intrigue and calculation, but from a voice – the voice of the American people.

