

Learning

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(*Learning and Other Essays*, 1910)

An expert on Greek Art chanced to describe in my hearing one of the engraved gems in the Metropolitan Museum. He spoke of it as ‘certainly one of the great gems of the world,’ and there was something in his tone that was even more thrilling than his words. He might have been describing the Parthenon or Beethoven’s Mass, – such was the passion of reverence that flowed out of him as he spoke. I went to see the gem afterwards. It was badly placed, and for all artistic purposes was invisible. I suppose that even if I had had a good look at it, I should not have been able to appreciate its full merit. Who could? – save the handful of adepts in the world, the little group of gem-readers, by whom the mighty music of this tiny score could be read at sight.

Nevertheless it was a satisfaction to me to have seen the stone. I knew that through its surface there poured the power of the Greek world; that not without Phidias and Aristotle, and not without the Parthenon, could it have come into existence. It carried in its bosom a digest of the visual laws of spiritual force, and was as wonderful and as sacred as any stone could well be. Its value to mankind was not to be measured by my comprehension of it, but was inestimable. As Petrarch felt toward the Greek manuscript of Homer which he owned but could not read, so did I feel toward the gem.

What is Education? What are Art and Religion and all those higher interests in civilization which are always vaguely held up to us as being the most important things in life? These things elude definition. They cannot be put into words except through the interposition of what the Germans call ‘a metaphysic.’ Before you can introduce them into discourse, you must step aside for a moment and create a theory of the universe; and by the time you have done this, you have perhaps befogged yourself and exhausted your readers. Let us be content with a more modest ambition. It is possible to take a general view of the externals of these subjects without losing reverence

for their realities. It is possible to consider the forms under which art and religion appear, – the algebra and notation by which they have expressed themselves in the past, – and to draw some general conclusion as to the nature of the subject, without becoming entangled in the subject itself.

We may deal with the influence of the gem without striving exactly to translate its meaning into speech. We all concede its importance. We know, for instance, that the admiration of my friend the expert was no accident. He found in the design and workmanship of the intaglio the same ideas which he had been at work on all his life. Greek culture long ago had become a part of this man's brain, and its hieroglyphs expressed what to him was religion. So of all monuments, languages, and arts which descend to us out of the past. The peoples are dead, but the documents remain; and these documents themselves are part of a living and intimate tradition which also descends to us out of the past, – a tradition so familiar and native to the brain that we forget its origin. We almost believe that our feeling for art is original with us. We are tempted to think there is some personal and logical reason at the back of all grammar, whether it be the grammar of speech or the grammar of architecture, – so strong is the appeal to our taste made by traditional usage. Yet the great reason of the power of art is the historic reason. 'In this manner have these things been expressed: in similar manner must they continue to be said.' So speaks our artistic instinct.

Good usage has its sanction, like religion or government. We transmit the usage without pausing to think why we do so. We instinctively correct a child, without pausing to reflect that the fathers of the race are speaking through us. When the child says, 'Give me a apple,' we correct him – "You must say, 'An apple.'" What the child really means, in fact, is an apple.

All teaching is merely a way of acquainting the learner with the body of existing tradition. If the child is ever to have anything to say of his own, he has need of every bit of this expressive medium to help him do it. The reason is, that, so far as expressiveness goes, only one language exists. Every experiment and usage of the past is a part of this language. A phrase or an idea rises in the Hebrew, and filters through the Greek or Latin and French down to our own time. The practitioners who scribble and dream in words

from their childhood up, – into whose habit of thought language is kneaded through a thousand reveries, – these are the men who receive, reshape, and transmit it. Language is their portion, they are the priests of language. The same thing holds true of the other vehicles of idea, of painting, architecture, religion, etc., but since we have been speaking of language, let us continue to speak of language. Expressiveness follows literacy. The poets have been tremendous readers always. Petrarch, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Byron, Keats – those of them who possessed not much of the foreign languages had a passion for translations.

It is amazing how little of a foreign language you need if you have a passion for the thing written in it. We think of Shakespeare as of a lightly-lettered person; but he was ransacking books all day to find plots and language for his plays. He reeks with mythology, he swims in classical metaphor: and, if he knew the Latin poets only in translation, he knew them with that famished intensity of interest which can draw the meaning through the walls of a bad text. Deprive Shakespeare of his sources, and he could not have been Shakespeare.

Good poetry is the echoing of shadowy tongues, the recovery of forgotten talent, the garment put up with perfumes. There is a passage in the *Tempest* which illustrates the free-masonry of artistic craft, and how the weak sometimes hand the torch to the mighty. Prospero's apostrophe to the spirits is, surely, as Shakespearian as anything in Shakespeare and as beautiful as anything in imaginative poetry.

“Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves;
And ye, that in the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him.
When he comes back; you demi-puppets, that
By moonshine do the sour ringlets make.
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid (Weak masters though
ye be) I have bedimmed

The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt: the strong-bas'd promontory
Have I made shake; and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers; oped and let them forth
By my so potent art."

Shakespeare borrowed this speech from Medea's speech in Ovid, which he knew in the translation of Arthur Golding; and really Shakespeare seems almost to have held the book in his hand while penning Prospero's speech. The following is from Golding's translation, published in 1567:

"Ye Ayres and windes; ye Elves of Hilles and Brooks, of Woods
alone,
Of standing Lakes and of the Night approach ye every chone.
Through helpe of whom (the crooked banks much wondering at
the thing)
I have compelled streams to run clean backward to their spring.
By charmes I make the calm seas rough, and make the rough
Seas plaine.
And cover all the Skie with Clouds and chase them thence again.
By charmes I raise and lay the windes, and burst the Viper's
jaw.
And from the bowels of the Earth both stones and trees doe
draw.
Whole woods and Forestes I remove: I make the Mountains
shake,
And even the Earth it selfe to grone and fearfully to quake.
I call up dead men from their graves: and thee O lightsome
Moone
I darken oft, though beaten brasse abate thy perill soone.

Our Sorcerie dims the Morning faire, and darkes the Sun at
Noone.

The flaming breath of fierie Bulles ye quenched for my sake.
And caused their unwieldie neck the bended yokes to take.
Among the Earthbred brothers you a mortell war did set
And brought a sleepe the Dragon fell whose eyes were never
shut.”

There is, and is to be, no end of this reappearance of old metaphor, old trade secret, old usage of art. No sooner has a masterpiece appeared, that summarizes all knowledge, than men get up eagerly the next morning with chisel and brush, and try again. Nothing done satisfies. It is all in the making that the inspiration lies; and this endeavor renews itself with the ages, and grows by devouring its own offspring. The technique of any art is the whole body of experimental knowledge through which the art speaks. The glazes of pottery become forgotten and have to be bit upon over again. The knack of Venetian glass, the principle of effect in tiles, in lettering, in the sonnet, in the fugue, in the tower, – all the prestidigitation of art that is too subtle to be named or thought of, must yet be acquired and kept up by practice, held to by constant experiment.

Good artistic expression is thus not only a thing done: it is a way of life, a habit of breathing, a mode of unconsciousness, a world of being which records itself as it unrolls. We call this world Art for want of a better name; but the thing that we value is the life within, not the shell of the creature. This shell is what is left behind in the passage of time, to puzzle our after-study and make us wonder how it was made, how such complex delicacy and power ever came to co-exist. I have often wondered over the *Merchant of Venice* as one wonders over a full-blown transparent poppy that sheds light and blushes like a cloud. Neither the poppy nor the play were exactly hewn out: they grew, they expanded and bloomed by a sort of inward power, – unconscious, transcendent. The fine arts blossom from the old stock, – from the poppy-seed of the world. I am here thinking of the whole body of the arts, the vehicles through which the spirit of man has been expressed. I am

thinking also of the sciences, – whose refractory, belligerent worshipers are even less satisfied with any past expression than the artists are, for their mission is to destroy and to rearrange. They would leave nothing alive but themselves. Nevertheless, science has always been obliged to make use of written language in recording her ideas. The sciences are as much a part of recorded language as are the arts. No matter how revolutionary scientific thought may be, it must resort to metaphysics when it begins to formulate its ultimate meanings. Now when you approach metaphysics, the Greek and the Hebrew have been there before you: you are very near to matters which perhaps you never intended to approach. You are back at the beginning of all things.

In fact, human thought does not advance, it only recurs. Every tone and semi-tone in the scale is a keynote; and every point in the Universe is the centre of the Universe; and every man is the centre and focus of the cosmos, and through him passes the whole of all force, as it exists and has existed from eternity; hence the significance which may at any moment radiate out of anything. The different arts and devices that time hands to us are like our organs. They are the veins and arteries of humanity. You cannot rearrange them or begin anew. Your verse-forms and your architecture are chosen for you, like your complexion and your temperament. The thing you desire to express is in them already. Your labors do no more than enable you to find your own soul in them. If you will begin any piece of artistic work in an empirical spirit and slave over it until it suits you, you will find yourself obliged to solve all the problems which the artists have been engaged on since the dawn of history. Be as independent as you like, you will find that you have been anticipated at every point: you are a slave to precedent, because precedent has done what you are trying to do, and, ah, how much better! In the first place, the limitations, the horrible limitations of artistic possibility, will begin to present themselves; few things can be done: they have all been tried: they have all been worked to death: they have all been developed by immortal genius and thereafter avoided by lesser minds, – left to await more immortal genius. The field of endeavor narrows itself in proportion to the greatness of the intellect that is at work. In ages of great art everyone knows

what the problem is and how much is at stake. Masaccio died at the age of twenty-seven, after having painted half a dozen pictures which influenced all subsequent art, because they showed to Raphael the best solution of certain technical questions. The Greeks of the best period were so very knowing that everything appeared to them ugly except the few attitudes, the few arrangements, which were capable of being carried to perfection.

Anyone who has something to say is thus found to be in one sense a slave, but a rich slave who has inherited the whole earth. If you can only obey the laws of your slavery, you become an emperor: you are only a slave in so far as you do not understand how to use your wealth. If you have but the gift of submission, you conquer. Many tongues, many hands, many minds, a traditional state of feeling, traditional symbols, – the whole passed through the eyes and soul of a single man, – such is art, such is human expression in all its million-sided variety.

II

I have thrown together these remarks in an elliptical and haphazard way, hoping to show what sort of thing education is, and as a prologue to a few reflections upon the educational conditions in the United States.

It is easy to think of reasons why the standards of general education should be low in America. Almost every influence which is hostile to the development of deep thought and clear feeling has been at the maximum of destructive power in the United States. We are a new society, made of a Babel of conflicting European elements, engaged in exploiting the wealth of a new continent, under conditions of climate which involve a nervous reorganization to Europeans who come to live with us. Our history has been a history of quiet colonial beginnings, followed by a national life which, from its inception, has been one of social unrest. And all this has happened during the great epoch of the expansion of commerce, the thought-destroying epoch of the world.

Let us take a rapid glance at our own past. In the beginning we were settlers. Now the settlement of any new continent plays havoc with the

arts and crafts. Let us imagine that among the Mayflower pilgrims there had been a few expert wood-carvers, a violin player or two, and a master architect. These men, upon landing in the colony, must have been at a loss for employment. They would have to turn into backwoodsmen. Their accomplishments would in time have been forgotten. Within a generation after the landing of the pilgrims there must have followed a decline in the fine arts, in scholarship, and in certain kinds of social refinement. This decline was, to some extent, counteracted in our colonial era by the existence of wealth in the Colonies and by the constant intercourse with Europe, from which the newest models were imported by every vessel. Nevertheless, it is hard for a colony to make up for its initial loss; and we have recently seen the United States government making efforts on a large scale to give to the American farmer those practices of intensive cultivation of the soil which he lost by becoming a backwoodsman and has never since had time to recover for himself.

The American Revolution was our second serious set-back in education. So hostile to culture is war that the artisans of France have never been able to attain to the standards of workmanship which prevailed under the the old monarchy. Our national culture started with the handicap of a seven years' war, and was always a little behindhand. During the nineteenth century the American citizen has been buffeting the waves of new development. His daily life has been an experiment. His moral, social, political interests and duties have been indeterminate; nothing have been settled for him by society. Is a man to have an opinion? Then he must make it himself. This demands a more serious labor than if he were obliged to manufacture his own shoes and candlesticks. No such draught upon individual intellect is made in an old country. You cannot get a European to understand this distressing overtaxing of the intelligence in America. Nothing like it has occurred before, because in old countries opinion is part of caste and condition: opinion is the shadow of interest and of social status.

But in America the individual is not protected against society at large by the bulwark of his class. He stands by himself. It is a noble idea that a man should stand by himself, and the conditions which force a man to

do so have occasionally created magnificent types of heroic manhood in America. Lincoln, Garrison, Emerson, and many lesser athletes are the fruits of these very conditions which isolate the individual in America and force him to think for himself. Yet their effect upon general cultivation has been injurious. It seems as if character were always within the reach of every human soul; but men must have become homogeneous before they can produce art.

We have thus reviewed a few of the causes of our American loss of culture. Behind all these causes, however, was the true and overmastering cause, namely, that sudden creation of wealth for which the nineteenth century is noted, the rise all over the world of new and uneducated classes. We came into being as a part of that world movement which has perceptibly retarded culture, even in Europe. How, then, could we in America hope to resist it? Whether this movement is the result of democratic ideas, or of mechanical inventions, or of scientific discovery, no one can say. The elements that go to make up the movement cannot be unraveled. We only know that the world has changed: the old order has vanished with all its charm, with all its experience, with all its refinement. In its place we have a crude world, indifferent to everything except physical well-being. In the place of the fine arts and the crafts we have business and science.

Business is, of course, devoted to the increase of physical well-being; but what is Science? Now, in one sense, science is anything that the scientific men of the moment happen to be studying. In one decade, science means the discussion of spontaneous generation, or spontaneous variation, in the next of plasm, in the next of germs, or of electrodes. Whatever the scientific world takes up as a study becomes "science." It is impossible to deny the truth of this rather self-destructive definition. In a more serious sense, however, science is the whole body of organized knowledge; and a distinction is sometimes made between "pure" science and "applied" science; the first being concerned solely with the ascertainment of truth, the second, with practical matters.

In these higher regions, in which science is synonymous with the search for truth, science partakes of the nature of religion. It purifies its votaries;

it speaks to them in cryptic language, revealing certain exalted realities not unrelated to the realities of music, or of poetry and religion. The men through whom this enthusiasm for pure science passes are surely, each in his degree, transmitters of heroic influence; and, in their own way, they form a kind of priesthood. It must be confessed, too, that this priesthood is peculiarly the product of the nineteenth century.

The Brotherhood of Science is a new order, a new Dispensation. It would seem to me impossible to divide one's feeling toward science according to the divisions "pure" and "applied"; because many men in whom the tide of true enthusiasm runs the strongest deal in applied science, as, for instance, surgeons, bacteriologists, etc. Nor ought we to forget those great men of science who have an attitude of sympathy toward all human excellence, and a reverence for things which cannot be approached through science. Such men resemble those saints who have also, incidentally, been kings and popes. Their personal magnitude obliterates our interest in their position in the hierarchy. We think of them as men, not as popes, kings or scientists. In the end we must admit that there are as many kinds of science as there are of men engaged in scientific pursuits. The word science legitimately means an immense variety of things, loosely connected together, some of them deserving of strong reprobation. I shall use the term with such accuracy as I am able to command, and leave it to the candid reader to make allowance for whatever injustice this course may entail.

To begin with, we must find fault with the Brotherhood of Science on much the same ground that we fought the old religions, upon grounds of tyranny and narrowness, of dogmatism and presumption. In the next place, it is evident that, in so far as science is not hallowed by the spirit of religion, it is a mere extension of business. It is the essence of world-business, race-business, cosmic-business. It saves time, saves lives, and dominates the air and the sea; but all these things may be accomplished, for ought we know, in the course of the extinction of the better nature of mankind. Science is not directly interested in the expression of spiritual truth; her notation cannot include anything so fluctuating, so indeterminate, as the language of feeling. Science neither sings nor jokes; neither prays nor rejoices; neither

loves nor hates. This is not her fault; but her limitation. Her fault is that, as a rule, she respects only her own language and puts trust only in what is in her own shop window.

I deprecate the contempt which science expresses for anything that does not happen to be called science. Imperial and haughty science proclaims its occupancy of the whole province of human thought; yet, as a matter of fact, science deals in a language of its own, in a set of formulae and conceptions which cannot cover the most important interests of humanity. It does not understand the value of the fine arts and is always at loggerheads with philosophy. Is it not clear that science, in order to make good her claim to universality, must adopt a conception of her own function that shall leave to the fine arts and to religion their languages? She cannot hope to compete with these languages, nor to translate or expound them. She must accept them. At present she tramples upon them. There are, then, in the modern world these two influences which are hostile to education, – the influence of business and the influence of uninspired science. In Europe these influences are qualified by the vigor of the old learning. In America they dominate remorselessly, and make the path of education doubly hard. Consider how they meet us in ordinary social life. We have all heard men bemoan the time they have spent over Latin and Greek on the ground that these studies did not fit them for business, – as if a thing must be worthless if it can be neither eaten nor drunk. It is hard to explain the value of education to men who have forgotten the meaning of education: its symbols convey nothing to them.

The situation is very similar in dealing with scientific men, – at least with that large class of them who have little learning and no religion, and who are thus obliged to use the formulae of modern science as their only vehicle of thought. These men regard humanity as something which started up in Darwin's time. They do not listen when the humanities are mentioned; and if they did they would not understand. When Darwin confessed that poetry had no meaning for him, and that nothing significant was left to him in the whole artistic life of the past, he did not know how many of his brethren his words were destined to describe.

We can forgive the business man for the loss of his birthright: he knows no better. But we have it against a scientist if he undervalues education. Surely, the Latin classics are as valuable a deposit as the crustacean fossils, or the implements of the Stone Age. When science shall have assumed her true relation to the field of human culture we shall all be happier. To-day science knows that the silkworm must be fed on the leaves of the mulberry tree, but does not know that the soul of man must be fed on the Bible and the Greek classics. Science knows that a queen bee can be produced by care and feeding, but does not as yet know that every man who has had a little Greek and Latin in his youth belongs to a different species from the ignorant man. No matter how little it may have been, it reclassifies him. There is more kinship between that man and a great scholar than there is between the same man and some one who has had no classics at all: he breathes from a different part of his anatomy. Drop the classics from education? Ask rather, Why not drop education? For the classics are education. We cannot draw a line and say, 'Here we start' The facts are the other way. We started long ago, and our very life depends upon keeping alive all that we have thought and felt during our history. If the continuity is taken from us, we shall relapse.

When we discover that these two tremendous interests – business and commercial science have arisen in the modern world and are muffling the voice of man, we tremble for the future. If these giants shall continue their subjugation of the gods, the whole race, we fear, will relapse into dumbness. By good fortune, however, there are other powers at work. The race is emotionally too rich and too much attached to the past to allow its faculties to be lost through disuse. New and spontaneous crops will soon be growing upon the mould of our own stubbly, thistle-bearing epoch.

In the meantime we in America must do the best we can. It is no secret that our standards of education are below those of Europe. Our art, our historical knowledge, our music and general conversation, show a stiffness and lack of exuberance – a lack of vitality and of unconscious force – the faults of beginners in all walks of life. During the last twenty-five years much improvement has been made in those branches of cultivation which

depend directly upon wealth. Since the Civil War there seems to have been a decline in the higher literature, accompanied by an advance in the plastic arts. And more recently still there has been a literary reawakening, perhaps not of the most important kind, yet signifying a new era. If I may employ an obvious simile, I would liken America to a just-grown man of good impulses who has lacked early advantages. He feels that cultivation belongs to him; and yet he cannot catch it nor hold it. He feels the impulse of expression, and yet he can neither read nor write. He feels that he is fitted for general society, and yet he has no current ideas or conversation. And, of course – I say it with regret, but it is a part of the situation – of course he is heady and proud of himself.

What do we all desire for this ingenuous youth on whom the postponed expectation of the world, as Emerson called it, has waited so long? We desire only to furnish him with true advantages. Let us take a simultaneous survey of the two extremities of the youth's education, namely, of nursery training and of the higher education. The two are more intimately dependent upon each other than is generally suspected. With regard to the nursery, early advantages are the key to education. The focus of all cultivation is the fireside. Learning is a stove plant that lives in the cottage and thrives during the long winter in domestic warmth. Unless it be borne into children in their earliest years, there is little hope for it. The whole future of civilization depends upon what is read to children before they can read to themselves. The world is powerless to reconvey itself through any mind that it has not lived in from the beginning, – so hard is the language of symbols, whether in music, or in poetry, or in painting. The art must expand with the heart, as a hot rod of glass is touched by the gold-leaf, and is afterwards blown into dusty stars and rainbows of mantling irradiation. If the glass expand before it has been touched by the metal, there is no means of ever getting the metal into it.

The age of machinery has peopled this continent with promoters and millionaires, and the work of a thousand years has been done in a century. The thing has, however, been accomplished at some cost. An ignorant man makes a fortune and demands the higher education for his children. But

it is too late: he should have given it to them when he was in his shirt sleeves. All that they are able to receive now is something very different from education. In receiving it they drag down the old standards. School and college are filled with illiterates. The whole land must patiently wait till Learning has warmed back to life her chilled and starved descendants. Perhaps the child or grandchild of the fortune-builder will teach the children on his knee what he himself learned too late in life to stead him much.

Hunger and thirst for learning is a passion that comes, as it were, out of the ground; now in an age of wealth, now in an age of poverty. Young men are born whom nothing will satisfy except the arts and the sciences. They seek out some scholar at a university and aim at him from boyhood. They persuade their parents to send them to college. They are bored and fatigued by everything that life offers except this thing. Now, society does not create this hunger. All that society can do is to provide nourishment of the right kind, good instruction, true learning, the best scholarship which history has left behind. I believe that to-day there is a spirit of learning abroad in America – here and there, in the young – the old insatiable passion. I feel as if men were arising – most of them still handicapped by the lack of early training – to whom life has no meaning except as a search for truth. This exalted famine of the young scholar is the hope of the world. It is religion and art and science in the chrysalis. The thing which society must beware of doing is of interposing between the young learner and his natural food some mechanical product or patent food of its own. Good culture means the whole of culture in its original sources; bad culture is any substitute for this.

Let us now examine the higher departments of education, the university, the graduate school, the museum, – the learned world in America. There is one function of learned men which is the same in every age, namely, the production of text-books. Learned men shed text-books as the oak sheds acorns, and by their fruits ye shall know them. Open almost any primary text-book or school book in America, and you will, on almost every page of it, find inelegancies of usage, roughnesses, inaccuracies, and occasional errors of grammar. The book has been written by an incompetent hand.

Now, what has the writer lacked? Is it grammar? Is it acquaintance with English literature, with good models, with the Bible, with history? It is all these things, and more than all. No school-room teaching can make a man write good English. No school teaching ever made an educated man, or a man who could write a good primary text-book. It requires a home of early culture, supplemented by the whole curriculum of scholarship and of university training. Nothing else but this great engine will produce that little book.

The same conditions prevail in music. If you employ the nearest excellent young lady music teacher to teach your boys to play the piano, she will bring into the house certain child's music written by American composers, in which the rules of harmony are violated and of which the sentiment is vulgar. The books have been written by incompetent people. There is a demand for such books and they are produced. They are the best the times afford: let us be glad that they exist at all and that they are no worse. But note this: it will require the whole musical impulse of the age, from the oratorio society and the musical college down to the street organ, to correct the grammar of that child's music book. Ten or twenty years from now a like book will perhaps be brought into your home, filled with better harmony and with truer musical feeling; and the change will have been wrought through the influence of Sebastian Bach, of Beethoven, – of the masters of music.

It is the same with all things. The higher culture must hang over the cradle, over the professional school, over the community. If you read the lives of the painters of Italy or of the musicians of Germany, you will find that, no matter where a child of genius was born, there was always an educated man to be found in the nearest village – a priest or a schoolmaster – who gave the child the rudiments himself, and became the means of sending him to the university. Without this indigent scholar, where would have been the great master?

It is familiarity with greatness that we need – an early and first-hand acquaintance with the thinkers of the world, whether their mode of thought was music or marble or canvas or language. Their meaning is not easy to come at, but in so far as it reaches us it will transform us. A strange thing

has occurred in America. I am not sure that it has ever occurred before. The teachers wish to make learning easy. They desire to prepare and peptonize and sweeten the food. Their little books are soft biscuit for weak teeth, easy reading on great subjects; but these books are filled with a pervading error: they contain a subtle perversion of education.

Learning is not easy, but hard; culture is severe. The steps to Parnassus are steep and terribly arduous. This truth is often forgotten among us; and yet there are fields of work in which it is not forgotten, and in such fields art springs up. Let us remember the accomplishments of our country. The art in which we now most excel is architecture. America has in it many beautiful buildings and some learned architects. And how has this come about? Through severe and conscientious study of the monuments of art, through humble, old-fashioned training. The architects have had first rate text-books, generally written by Europeans, the non-peptonized, gritty, serious language of masters in the craft. Our painters have done something of the same sort. They have gone to Europe, and are conversant with what is being done in Europe. If they are developing their art here, they do it not ignorantly, but with experience, with consciousness of the past.

I do not recommend subserviency to Europe, but subserviency to intellect. Recourse to Europe we must have: our scholars must absorb Europe without themselves becoming absorbed. It is a curious thing that the American who comes in contact with the old world exhibits two opposite faults: he is often too much impressed and loses stamina, or he is too little impressed and remains a barbarian. Contact with the past and hard work are the cure for both tendencies. Europe is merely an incidental factor in the problem of our education, and this is very well shown in our conduct of our law schools. The Socratic method of instruction in law schools was first introduced at Harvard, and since then it has spread to many parts of the world. This is undoubtedly one of our best achievements in scholarship; and Europe had, so far as I know, no hand in it. The method consists in the viva voce discussion of leading cases, text-books being used merely as an auxiliary: the student thus attacks the sources themselves. Here we have American scholarship at its best, and it is precisely the same thing as the European article: it is simply scholarship.

If we can exhibit this spirit in one branch of learning, why not in all? The Promethean fire is one single element. A spark of this fire is all that is needed to kindle this flame. The glance of a child of genius at an Etruscan vase leaves the child a new being. That is why museums exist: not only for the million who get something from them, but for the one young person of intelligence to whom they mean everything.

Our American universities exhibit very vividly all the signs of retardation in culture, which are traceable in other parts of our social life. A university is always a stronghold of the past, and is therefore one of the last places to be captured by new influence. Commerce has been our ruler for many years; and yet it is only quite recently that the philosophy of commerce can be seen in our colleges. The business man is not a monster; but he is a person who desires to advance his own interests. This is his occupation and, as it were, his religion. The advancement of material interests constitutes civilization to him. He unconsciously infuses the ideas and methods of business into anything that he touches. It has thus come about in America that our universities are beginning to be run as business colleges. They advertise, they compete with each other, they pretend to give good value to their customers. They desire to increase their trade, they offer social advantages and business openings to their patrons. In some cases they boldly conduct intelligence offices, and guarantee that no hard work done by the student shall be done in vain: a record of work is kept during the student's college life, and the college undertakes to furnish him at any time thereafter with references and a character which shall help him in the struggle for life.

This miscarriage of education has been developed and is being conducted by some of our greatest educators, through a perfectly unconscious adaptation of their own souls to the spirit of the age. The underlying philosophy of these men might be stated as follows: "There is nothing in life nobler than for a man to improve his condition and the condition of his children. Learning is a means to this end." Such is the current American conception of education. How far we have departed from the idea of education as a search for truth, or as the vehicle of spiritual expression, may be seen herein. The change of creeds has come about innocently, and the consequences involved

in it are, as yet, perceived by hardly anyone. The scepticism inherent in the new creed is concealed by its benevolence. You wish to help the American youth. This unfortunate, benighted, ignorant boy, who has from his cradle heard of nothing but business success as the one goal of all human effort, turns to you for instruction. He comes to you in a trusting spirit, with reverence in his heart, and you answer his hope in this wise: 'Business and social success are the best things that life affords. Come to us, my dear fellow, and we will help you toward them.' Your son asks you for bread and you give him a stone, for fish and you give him a serpent. It would have been better for that boy if he had never come to your college, for in that case he might have retained a belief that somewhere in the world there existed ideas, art, enthusiasm, unselfishness, inspiring activity.

In so far as our universities have been turning into business agencies, they have naturally lost their imaginative importance. Our professors seem to be of little more consequence in the community than the department managers of other large shops. If learning is a useful commodity which is to be distributed for the personal advantage of the recipients, it is a thing to be paid for rather than to be worshiped. To be sure, the whole of past history cannot be swept away in a day, and we have not wholly discarded a certain conventional and rhetorical reverence for learning. A dash and varnish of education are thought to be desirable, – the wash that is growing every year more thin.

Now, the truth is that the higher education does not advance a man's personal interests except under special circumstances. What it gives a man is the power of expression; but the ability to express himself has kept many a man poor. Let no one imagine that society is likely to reward him for self-expression in any walk of life. He is much more likely to be punished for it. The question of a man's success in life depends upon society at large. The more highly an age is educated, the more highly it rewards education in the individual. In an age of indifference to learning, the educated man is at a disadvantage. Thus the thesis that education advances self-interest – that thesis upon which many of our colleges are now being conducted – is substantially false. The little scraps and snatches of true education which a

man now gets at college often embarrass his career. Our people are finding this out year by year, and as they do so, they naturally throw the true conception of the higher education overboard. If education is to break down as a commercial asset, what excuse have they for retaining it at all? They will force the colleges to live up to the advertisements and to furnish the kind of education that pays its way. It is clear that if the colleges persist in the utilitarian view, the higher learning will disappear. It has been disappearing very rapidly, and can be restored, only through the birth of a new spirit and of a new philosophic attitude in our university life.

There are ages when the scholar receives recognition during his lifetime and when the paths which lead to his lecture-room are filled with men drawn there by his fame. This situation arises in any epoch when human intellect surges up and asserts itself against tyranny and ignorance. In the past the tyrannies have been political tyrannies, and these have become well understood through the struggles of intellect in the past; but the present commercial tyranny is a new thing and as yet little understood. It lies like a heavy fog of intellectual depression over the whole kingdom of Mammon, and is fed by the smoke from a million factories. The artist works in it, the thinker thinks in it. Even the saint is born in it. The rain of ashes from the nineteenth-century Vesuvius of business seems to be burying all our landscape.

And yet this is not true. We shall emerge: even we who are in America and suffer most. The important points to be watched are our university class-rooms. If our colleges will but allow something unselfish, something that is true for its own sake, something that is part of the history of the human heart and intellect, to live in their class-rooms, the boys will find their way to it. The museum holds the precious urn, to preserve it. The university, in like manner, stands to house the alphabets of civilization – the historic instruments and agencies of intellect. They are all akin to each other as the very name and function of the place imply. The presidents and professors who sit beside the fountains of knowledge bear different labels and teach subjects that are called by various names. But the thing which carries the label is no more than the shell. The life you cannot label; and

it is to foster this life that universities exist. Enthusiasm comes out of the world and goes into the university. Toward this point flow the currents of new talent that bubble up in society: here is the meeting-place of mind. All that a university does is to give the poppy-seed to the soil, the oil to the lamp, the gold to the rod of glass before it cools. A university brings the spirit in touch with its own language, that language through which it has spoken in former days and through which alone it shall speak again.