

TALE FOR JUNE 15, 1954

Some of you may have heard the story of the teacher who invited to his house a blind student.

When the teacher offered the ^{blind} student a glass of milk, ~~the blind student~~ ^{the student} asked ^{him} "What is milk?"

"Milk," said the teacher, "is a white liquid."

"What is white?" asked the student.

"White," said the teacher, "is the color of a swan."

"What is a swan?" asked the ^{student} blind man.

"A swan," said the teacher, "is a bird with a curved neck."

"What is curved?" asked the student.

At this point the teacher took the arm of the blind ~~man~~ ^{student}, stretched it out and said, "This is straight."

Then he bent the arm of ~~the student~~ and said, "This is curved."

There was a moment of silence and then the blind student said, "I ~~am afraid~~ ^{believe} I ~~would not~~ ^{would not} care for milk."

This story ^{just} goes to show that we cannot get very far if it is necessary to define ~~the~~ the terms which we use.

If you do not know what it means to be educated, no definition will be of much use to you.

But ~~if you do~~ ^{if you do} know what it means to be educated, then a definition may give you ^{some} pleasure--the pleasure of recognition.

Well, then, just what do we mean when we say that a person is educated?

^{According to Ellen Key:} In my book, being educated consists of what is left when you have forgotten everything that you have learned.

On this, we can probably all agree, and we shall ~~only~~ ^{only} have to part company if some of you should now propose that the colleges ^{special schools} ought to offer classes in what is left when you have forgotten everything that you have learned. ^{lectures understood}

To get an education is not the only reason why a student goes to school.

~~To get an education~~ ^{To get an education} the school can fill three different needs.

First of all, ^{it} they can teach skills. Secondly, ^{it} they can convey understanding of our

world by transmitting knowledge ^{it} and thirdly, ~~the schools~~ can endow those who are not immune ^{with} with such wisdom as can be derived from the study of the humanities--i.e., history and literature.

{ The skills and knowledge you acquire determine what you can do.
Your knowledge and wisdom determine ~~at least in part~~ who you are. }

In our society, there is a market for skills and knowledge.

~~But~~ I have some doubts if there is ~~in our society~~ ^{much of} a market for wisdom.

This doubt is apparently shared by ~~our graduate~~ ^{the} students, and as a result of ~~this doubt~~ ^{it} there is a conspicuous decline all over America in the study of ~~humanities~~ ^{the} on the graduate ~~schools~~ ^{schools}.

From the point of view of the student, wisdom is a luxury, but from the point of view of the nation, it is an urgent necessity.

And here you may have in a nutshell the tragedy of our times.

George Bernard Shaw once said that there will ^{always} be trouble in the world ~~as long as~~ ^{until} Greek scholars ~~do not~~ become prime ministers ^{or} and prime ministers ~~do not~~ ^{will} become Greek scholars.

That there is trouble in the world today can hardly be doubted, ^{but} ~~it is not so~~ sure that ~~the~~ ^{this} trouble could be ~~remedied~~ ^{avoided} by increasing the number of students in the humanities ^{in the graduate schools}.

~~At present~~ ^{We could never} ~~all we produce in the graduate schools is a small minority of educated people, and our political system does not put a premium on educated people.~~ ^{do not necessarily select for office} ~~for office.~~ ^{small fraction of the}

Whether educated or not, our last three Secretaries of State were not historians ~~two of them were lawyers and one was a general.~~

And even if through some magic, all the college seniors emerged as educated men at Commencement time, we would still not be safe ^{and they did just that in 1948} for the people might manage to elect a president without a college education ~~as they did in 1948.~~

Obviously, the only safe course is to see that all citizens of the United States ^{without exception} are educated. ^{then}

Then, we could give a sigh of relief and turn to the Republican ^{and} Democratic Conventions with a smile and say to them, "Gentlemen, do your worst."

~~But whether or not you accept this argument, I hope you will agree if I say that our great educational problem in the United States today is not so much in the colleges~~

really

What I am trying to say is this:

The great educational problem in our society does not lie at the college level but at the level of the high schools *and the high schools are doing a bad job.* This affects the ~~country~~ *the country as a whole* and ~~the colleges are not educated in any meaning of the term.~~

~~It also affects the colleges of course.~~ The colleges complain bitterly about this fact, but do not seem to see that it is within their power to seek a remedy. *Might it be* could they do anything about it?

It seems to me that five to ten of our leading colleges could get together, set up a reading program and recommend it to high school students who plan to apply for admission to any one of them.

These colleges would have to ~~take it clear~~ *tell* the high school students that if they go through such a reading program ~~the chance of being admitted to the college or receiving a scholarship will be greatly improved,~~ *their chance for admission and of receiving* even though the reading program is not required for either, ~~for admission or scholarships.~~ *for*

The colleges could arrange with the College ~~Examination Board~~ *Entrance* that a student, if he pays a modest fee, ~~will~~ *will* be given a special test.

And the Board ~~could then certify that~~ *to the college* the student has ~~in fact~~ read perhaps one-third, perhaps one-half of the recommended books.

When boys or girls in high school reach the mature age of fifteen or sixteen, they begin to think about ~~that~~ *of the* college they would like to ~~go to.~~ *go to.*

And if that college ~~participates in the~~ *indorses* reading program, ~~they~~ *they* are likely to take this program in order to get into the college of their choice.

The colleges ~~could want probably to~~ arrange with the high schools that each high school appoint one teacher who will assist ~~these~~ *the* students who want to do serious reading along ~~the lines~~ *those* of the program. ~~and they may have to see to it that such students are relieved~~ *this teacher will* from other high school activities ~~that would too much encroach on their time.~~ *which* ~~the plan as it stands will~~ *will* of course, affect at first only a small fraction of the high school population.

But once the seed has been planted and particularly if the high schools are sympathetic, ~~other high school students who may not plan to go to any college~~ *will* ~~might join this elite and~~ *the reading* there is no way of telling ~~at the present~~ *intend* where this process might stop.