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STANDARDIZING LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

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preempt developing minds with wholesome truth and to rescue the fallen.

To quote from the report of the Chicago Vice Commission, "The immensity of the social evil problem is no excuse for us to stand idly by and do nothing in an attempt to solve it. The sin of impurity may not be cured in a day, a year, or perhaps in generations. But we assume that by earnest, wise, and persistent effort on the part of individuals and organized groups in society we can do something—how much we can only discover by trials."

STANDARDIZING LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

MRS. ANNA GARLIN SPENCER,

Honorary President, The Child Welfare League, N. Y.

Now, why do some of us believe that today, of all times in the world, and with increasing need, we must try to educate the ethical judgment of the potential citizens of the United States in the public schools? Mine is a social reason. We are entered for the first time in the history of the race upon the stupendous task of making over the entire social surroundings of human beings; we are in the very trough of the wave of environmental change and the current is sweeping us along. It presses us toward a new form of life such as no civilization even caught sight of before, and it means the standardizing of the entire social fabric. It means, for example, a standardizing in health and sanitation. Nobody is allowed to have tuberculosis in peace; nobody is allowed to feed children according to the ancient formulas; nobody is allowed to use his back yard as he pleases for refuse heaps; no one is allowed to follow his own uninstructed or differently instructed sense of what is in keeping with public health.

We are standardizing by conferring powers upon boards of health which are without precedent in any previous civilization. We are standardizing in child care and child protection, and we succeed in getting higher and higher age limits for legal wage-earning of the child. We are standardizing the protection of children and we are enforcing our standard upon those who have not yet accepted them. We are standardizing in

economic conditions and we are often in great confusion in our effort to secure economic change; as for example, for insurance against unemployment, old age, and sickness, subsidies for widowed mothers and many similar movements. We are behind many other countries in matters of state subsidies, but we are moving fast in that direction; and it seems, we must admit, a necessity to subsidize human lives that are in such a state of poverty that their enforced plane of living is below that required by health and work efficiency. If however, our generation emphasizes nothing but the requirement of the individual for a decent wage and decent human conditions, without regard to his efficiency as a worker, his faithfulness as a worker, his character as a person, we shall so press this external environmental change to the detriment of the old ideas that have made us what we are through struggle and earnest effort to surmount difficulties, that we shall develop dangerous elements in our population. It may require, after such changes in the condition of men and women, many generations to make the character equal to the condition. We are now standardizing, let us remember, men who have learned that lesson of the ages which family responsibility has taught to men, socially standardizing men who would suffer and serve to the very last to protect wife and children, but we do not end with standardizing those on that high plane. We are also standardizing the grown-up children, men who are so close to savage ideals that they have not learned the lesson of family responsibility; only the women have learned it, because they have had to learn it, being tied so fast to the children.

These things are mentioned not to multiply difficulties, but to show why some of us believe that if the sociological doctrine is true, that this great change in environment must be made and this great wholesale uplift of the race in its physical condition must be accomplished, and I as a sociologist do so believe,—we must also believe that this change in the environment, which affects the individual from without, must be accompanied step by step, by the uplift of the individual from within. More than that, since within our population here in the United States we have differences of religion, of racial tendencies, of family training, and forms of idealism, since we have these great rifts and chasms in our population, not alone in the way they speak or where they live or what they earn, but in their own upward reach towards what is to them the

best, then must we somewhere have some unifying influence, which shall not consist alone in sentiment and ideals, but in actual understanding of that which is to be taught as good, as a common aim in action.

I believe there never was such a need pressed upon any people in the world as is now pressing upon us, the need to develop somehow a unifying influence; not on the outside by mechanical standards, but on the inside by unifying the spiritual essentials.

Where can it be done? It cannot be done in the homes, because the homes are so divergent; and the only way we can get the rising generation near together is often by separating them in a tragic manner from the ideals and the conceptions and the very thought and language of their fathers and mothers. It cannot be done through the churches, because the churches differ. If we all could come together on such a definition of religion as we have heard from this platform tonight the problem would be simple, but religion is like the home, it has to live in a house. Each house of religion is built in a different way, and fronts toward different streets, and the entrances are very unlike, and the things that are alike in religion are the things we are climbing towards in the heights of our being, and the things that differ are the familiar household things that are most in the minds of the humble and the unlearned. Hence, although we can depend upon the church to unify the ethical life in some degree, in larger measure we are depending and must depend upon those great currents of public opinion, which rise sometimes like the crest of the wave in moral enthusiasm to bind the whole people together in some great idea. I hope that we shall never fail to do justice to those great movements, for which no human being is responsible, those inevitable responses to "whatsoever forces draw the ages on." But something more we must have than unconscious response to social movements. I know a little girl whose relationship to her mother was spoiled, so far as deference on her part to her mother's judgment was concerned, by a difference of standard on the simple matter of taking baths, between her mother and her teacher. Her mother sewed her up in her warm clothes, to stay sewed up all winter; the teacher said she must have a bath in the nice new bathroom that had been put into the modern school house, and when the little girl took the note home to her mother she brought back one quite

as decided: "I am a good mother, I have sewed my Anita up for the winter in warm clothes, she shall be warm and she shall not be wet, and besides she goes to school to learn books, not to be wet." The teacher must be obeyed, the bath must be taken, but mark you, Anita, little, delicate, under-sized, longing in her soul for beauty that she cannot possess, gets her working papers at fourteen and goes out, a forlorn little leaf upon that great current of our competitive industrial system, the first in the world to allow greed and lust to come so close to its maidenhood so early in life. She goes out "to get a place" and earn her money and come home Saturday night with her pay envelope. What does she know of the wolves that lurk at the corner of every street? Because she has learned the lesson that her mother's judgment was of no value about the bath, she thinks her mother's judgment is of no value about the wolf.

Our standardizing from without by mechanical means, must be softened and spiritualized by a standardizing from within. For this we can not wait for the small percentage of pupils in the high school, and the smaller percentage that go on to the college. We must somehow have a clearing up of moral confusion in the minds of younger children. We are moving so fast now-a-days that there is a moral and a spiritual chasm between the idealism of the parent and the idealism of the children in many families on the topmost reaches of our social and intellectual life. We are now engulfed in these great currents, which move us with differing gospels of social change by which to achieve social uplift. The elder Lord Asquith said, "The test of every civilization is the point below which the weakest and most unfortunate are allowed to fall." We are feeling that as it was never felt before, and we are moving towards some radical changes, it may be by one name or it may be by another by which to raise that point. As we move with such immensely increased velocity in this hour of rapid ethical change, the young life is bewildered. It is true that the life must be consecrated, but to what shall we consecrate it? Not alone in the ideal that can be sought after, but in the daily problems that must be worked out in the drudgery of social and moral reform. I believe that if we who seek to standardize life were only more united, if our teachers could only clearly understand, not alone these great things of the spirit which are expressed through their

personality, but also something of the program making in the conduct of life, they could make clear, simple and realizable for the oncoming generation a better way of living. We must agree not only as to what religion means, but as to what practical every-day ethics demands of us day by day, week by week, year by year, if we would guide youth. We could secure a finer outreach toward the practical details of life in our teaching if we had a clearer purpose ourselves.

Another thing is needed, that is to put into the very structure of the school life the kind of association between children and the kind of relationship between children and the school order which we hope to see in the life that is to be. There was a time when salvation meant personal achievement. It is now the rule in business and in many other relationships of life; but the finest ethical sense has moved along and it finds that salvation is not what we get, one for each, but what we get, all for each and each for all. That new principle must write itself out in the school-room. The finest personality of the noblest teacher that ever lived cannot teach children how they ought to live as men and women in this world of ours if personal achievement is made the basis of all the progress and all the advantages in the school-room; the noblest personality of the finest teacher that ever lived cannot offset the evil influence in a system that makes a child "going up" mean somebody else "going down"; the finest of all appeals loses its force if we have a direct contradiction of it in the order and disciplining of the school. For example, I was in a school-room not so very long ago and a child was given demerits because he followed out the natural, generous impulse of his heart and told his little mate, the part of their lesson his little mate had forgotten. Look at such an action. Here we are trying with all the force of our lives to get the altruistic spirit into people, and we punish a child for generously helping his mate to remember something that mate had forgotten. We have got to reorganize the school room; it is an individualistic, aristocratic institution, it comes down from an individualistic and aristocratic state of society, and we think that out of school we are going to make life democratic, and we cannot. No influence will offset that constant effect of a discipline that is out of drawing with the altruistic impulses of the day. We must make over our schools. That doesn't mean alone making over the teachers. If that was all we had to do our part would be easy! It means making

over school boards; it means making over the sources of authority; it means making over the community; it means taking this inverted pyramid of public education and turning it upside down and putting it where it belongs, where the youngest child shall have the best, and if there is any scrimping it shall be done at the top.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION AS FACTORS IN PROGRESS*

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The nineteenth century was a century of emancipation. Never before was the meaning of Freedom so well understood because that age witnessed an extension of the powers of democracy, and a magnificent effort sustained over many years to provide liberty not for the few but for the toiling masses of the people. This movement was accompanied by a revival of moral enthusiasm the effects of which have been continued into the twentieth century, and is seen in the proceedings of the legislatures of the modern world. In Britain, for example, much of the labor of Parliament is spent upon such matters as education, sanitary laws, housing of the poor, insurance; and in the enactment of minima in sanitation, hours of work, education and even wages some see a realization of the socialist Utopia. It is a strenuous struggle that is going on not only in the old lands, but in the new, where many people realize that every effort must be put forth to prevent a repetition in the new world of evils that through neglect have rooted themselves in the older civilization.

On this side of the water we are faced with the effects of an immense movement of the people westward across the world. You have now for a generation had to deal with a rapidly increasing multitude of men and women in search of the new home of liberty. Latterly we in Canada find ourselves in a similar condition, the main difference being that during the last ten years you have had a much larger proportion of

*Abstract of address at the Cleveland Convention, March 10, 1913.