

WHAT THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS ARE DOING FOR OUR GIRLS

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The wording of our topic reminds me of the man who when asked what his son was going to do with four years of Latin replied: "I am not half as much concerned about what my son is going to do with Latin, as I am what Latin will do with and for my son." When Emerson wrote:

New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth.

he brought to our attention a truth that is of wide application.

An ever-increasing number of women are every year going into new fields of labor due to the pressure of industrial and economic necessity.

1000 WOMEN WANTED. You might have read it on a great canvas sign that was stretched across an industrial establishment in lower Manhattan at the time our boys were leaving for war.

The owner of the factory, who put it there, only knew that he was advertising for labor, of which he found himself suddenly in need. But he had all unwittingly written a proclamation that is a sign of the times. Prior to this the cities of Europe, for four years, had placarded the sign. "Women Wanted" "Women Wanted." All over the world it was seen on street cars, barns and in colleges. It hung not only above the factories and the coal mines, but also in the halls of Government, the farmyards, the arsenals and even in the war office. The Pennsylvania Railroad, which had so rigidly opposed the employment of women on its staff, in June, 1917, announced a change of policy and took in its various departments five hundred women and girls.

We may no more return to the methods and ideas of ante-bellum days than we may turn back the hands on the clock of time. This has not been the result of a woman's movement. It has been the outgrowth of a constructive time plan by Him who moves in a mysterious way.

Our Federal Board for Vocational Education has made the statement: "This social and economic movement of our day is placing tremendous responsibilities upon society for the construction of a program of purposeful education that will insure the best type of womanhood and maintain the integrity of the woman worker."

The passage of the act in February, 1917, came simultaneously with a National awakening and at a time when social, economic, and educational institutions were being brought to a strict accounting for their contributions to our National efficiency.

The Federal Vocational Education Act was passed in order to provide an opportunity for the preparation and improvement of workers for effective participation in wage-earning pursuits. It likewise anticipated the continuous development and expansion of the industries of the United States.

The act provides for the development of two services. The first of these is the administration of Federal funds to encourage States to inaugurate

schools and classes designed primarily (a) to prepare persons for entrance to a chosen field of employment, through day trade classes; (b) to increase the trade and technical knowledge of those already employed, through part-time and evening schools; (c) to prepare teachers, supervisors, and directors for the organization and conduct of such classes. The second service is to extend, through State and local authorities, the friendly offices of the Federal Board for Vocational Education to industries interested in developing programs for training their own workers. For this purpose the act provides for the making of studies, investigations, and reports with particular reference to the determination of courses of instruction and the establishment of classes in the four general industrial fields—namely, (1) agriculture, (2) trade and industry, (3) commerce, and (4) home economics.”

Many are particularly interested in the field of home economics. At the earliest possible time each school district should install such a department in their schools. All of the millions of girls between ten and fourteen years of age should have an opportunity to have at least a minimum of two years of home economics as a part of their general education. It has not been possible to secure an accurate record on which to base even an approximate estimate as to the number of girls in the seventh and eighth grades that are enrolled in home economics classes. Home economics is now being offered in evening schools; secondary schools; junior high schools; continuation schools and work of county vocational supervisors.

School offers to young girls the only assured opportunity for the instruction and training which will serve to meet their immediate needs and responsibilities in their personal and family life. For many, the instruction they receive during these years, may be the only basis for preparation for their deferred but ultimate occupation, homemaking.

In this group belong the girls who must leave school early to earn a living; girls who are likely to drop out of school early, because the academic type of instruction given does not interest them; girls who will, in the senior high school, prepare for a commercial or industrial pursuit which they will follow for a period of several years before taking up the vocation of homemaking; girls who will, in the senior high school, concentrate their efforts in preparing for college.

A special responsibility rests upon our United States to reach the girls and women who have left school and who are between 16 and 45 years of age. Special unit courses in vocational homemaking should be available for those who desire this instruction.

It has been estimated that at the present time only one out of every four hundred is now having the opportunity to enrol for courses in homemaking designed to meet their specific needs as homemakers.

The following groups of women should have such instruction available:

(1) Groups of young women who are following a gainful occupation and who desire and need instruction and training in homemaking just prior to taking up this vocation.

(2) Groups of women who are wage-earners outside the home and have in addition many responsibilities in the home. They need training to help them perform their work in the home with greater ease and proficiency.

✦ (3) Groups of foreign girls and women who desire and need to be initiated into American standards and methods of homemaking.

(4) Groups of homemakers who are urgently in need of instruction to help solve their home problems in the care and feeding of children.

(5) Groups of women in domestic service who are untrained in such service and who desire training that will help them to dignify their position and earn a living wage.

(6) Groups of girls coming from well-to-do modern homes, who are in school but do not practice homemaking. The school and innumerable other activities demand the time and attention of our girls to the exclusion of household tasks, and home economics in the school provides the training that is essential.

Did it ever occur to you in trying to think out, and through, this school problem, that by capitalizing the mistakes of our forefathers, we might preserve and perpetuate our State and Nation? For example, our sons have been expected to establish and maintain a government—a democracy—under the supervision of a few trained specialists in governmental affairs, with the average voting male citizen considered a suitable participant, in spite of the fact that having become twenty one years of age was his only qualification.

Equally lax have been the requirements for homemaking. Hitherto, girls have been considered qualified for the manifold responsibilities of homemaking if old enough to repeat the marriage vows.

These things being true, great is the wonder that our Ship of State has so long weathered the storm, and that the home, the most sacred of our institutions, has withstood the test. America should train her children, not only to be able to make a living, but to live.

Our girls should be trained for homemaking; practicing an occupation, for which one is not trained, is drudgery. When we have more respect for the job of homemaking—the greatest vocation in the world—we will see that our girls are trained for it.

Homemaking is a business and social enterprise. As the manager of a business enterprise, the homemaker must determine the expenditure of much of the family income, and must direct or perform the labor required in running the home. She is responsible also for the care and rearing of children.

Ignorance and poverty are the chief contributing factors in the mismanagement of a home; and poverty is the offspring of ignorance in most instances.

Home economic departments aim to develop intelligent executive ability; to produce conscientious buyers who will realize their responsibility toward labor and capital which has produced goods which she buys. In this department our girls are taught food values; that inadequate or unsuitable food is the chief direct cause of malnutrition.

They are taught business procedure and principles, sufficient to enable them to intelligently develop the plans for the household in a business-like way.

It is also the ambition to start girls out in life with a working knowledge of the fundamental principles of Art which underlie the selection of suitable,

because tasteful and economical, clothing and house furnishings; the conservation of child-life and material wealth.

Our National and international peace and prosperity is commensurate with our National and international intelligence and education. All education fails that does not confer upon us the ability to solve more successfully the everyday problems of home, State, and Nation. That type is best that produces continued growth of the dignity and usefulness of the individual, and an ever-increasing solidarity and stability of society.

*IS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AN ESSENTIAL PART OF
THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM?*

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The answer is "yes." Public education in the United States has for more than a hundred years answered this question in the affirmative. West Point and Annapolis are public vocational schools for soldiers and sailors. There are now over three hundred public vocational schools for teachers in the United States, some of which are nearly a hundred years old and yet they do not begin to supply the demand. Public vocational schools for lawyers, doctors, engineers, farmers, and other trades and professions have been in existence for nearly half a century. It would be almost impossible to find a higher educational institution in America that does not offer one or more vocational courses. Of the 13,000 high schools in the United States, it is estimated that approximately half of them offer some sort of vocational training, meager and inadequate as it may be. It is a truism in education that what higher education does in one generation the secondary school attempts in the next.

It would seem that whenever public safety or public welfare demands trained workmen in any field, and public consciousness is aroused to this demand, the taxes are levied, the buildings built, the teachers hired, the courses organized and the student-workmen go into training at public expense.

It would seem that there are no limits to the amount and kinds of education provided at public expense except the limits imposed by the will of the public. The wealth of the public is not, as we have so long assumed, the important factor governing the amount and kind of education provided by the public. However important wealth may be, day by day in every way it is becoming clearer and clearer that the will of the public is more important than the wealth. There is considerable discussion just now as to who should be allowed to go to college. College authorities think they can answer that question. But public school officials know from their intimate contact with the public that the answer given by college authorities will probably not prove acceptable to the masses. The masses will answer it in their own way. Those who will go to college cannot be denied. If the will is not focused no matter how great the wealth, little will be

¹ National Education Association of the United States Journal of the Proceedings and Addresses (Ann Arbor Michigan, 1912), 1032-1033.