

**THE MAKING OF A UNIVERSITY;
WHAT WE HAVE TO LEARN
FROM EDUCATIONAL IDEALS
IN AMERICA**

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The making of a university; What we have to learn from educational ideals in America by W. M. Ramsay

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What We can Learn from
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Educational Ideals

BY

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THE
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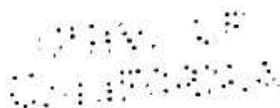
WHAT WE HAVE TO LEARN FROM
EDUCATIONAL IDEALS IN AMERICA

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PREFACE

THIS article was written in the spring of 1914, and is now printed as written, except the footnotes and some special sentences about the hero of the tale, which are added in January, 1915. The article was intended for English readers, and was about to appear in an influential daily newspaper in a series of parts; but the outbreak of the Great War relegated such topics to an upper shelf. Being written to explain to English readers the aspects of American education which are most useful for us to study, it is to some degree one-sided.

We have been trying a dangerous experiment, government by an uneducated democracy. A man who is not educated up to his capacity for receiving and profiting by education—which varies widely in different people—may be called uneducated, for society loses all the service that his higher education would have qualified him to perform. We trust order, conduct, work, and national defence to the voluntary choice of the individual man, but we do not give him the knowledge needed to choose wisely; and, if he chooses badly, the common reflection is that he is ruined by getting too much education.

It will do us no good merely to win the Great War in which Germany resolved to conquer us, unless we reform ourselves and re-model our education. That cannot be done by Act of Parliament: it can be done only by changing the heart of the people and training the teachers of the future.

The reason why we too often "muddle through," instead of going clean through, lies not in defect of character, but in lack of knowledge. In education we lay too exclusive stress on "how to learn," and too little on "what to learn". The Prussian system, on the other hand, has sacrificed to mere

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material efficiency the highest side of education and the highest development of human character. The aim of this short study is, while pointing out the faults in both, to ask why we should not eliminate our defect and yet keep our excellence. The plan was conceived in America in 1913, and worked out for the press in 1914. All footnotes belong to 1915.

I do not try to philosophize about the character of good education or the faults of bad education. I tell the story how an American College was created by the faith and work of one man—not because American Colleges and Universities are by any means perfect, but because they make a nation believe in them and attend them and work boldly to improve them.

THE MAKING OF A UNIVERSITY

I

TWENTY years ago, travelling for the first time in some eastern districts of the United States, and visiting a number of the educational centres, I found the idea growing almost unconsciously in my mind that the future of the States lies in the Colleges and Universities. It is a true instinct that leads the people to turn so much attention on their educational institutions and give so much to them, as the future will show. I often expressed the wish that I might live to return fifty years later, when the Colleges had grown to their higher possibilities, concurrently with the general development of the educational system.

The Universities make the school teachers of the future ; and the schools will produce the College students, demanding more and more and doing more at the Universities, as the years pass. The growth of each part of the system reacts on all the rest.

The prime necessity is the teacher. Without a high order of teachers, inspired with ideals and actuated by sound and vigorous moral sense, neither Government Department and laws nor local Boards will be able to establish a good educational system. The order of teachers must first be made, and it

cannot be created in a year or a decade : it has to be evolved slowly by the entire educational system and the genius of the nation.

A Republic is the government of an educated people. An uneducated people can, at the best, only delegate the government to some individual, and then the republican form is a sham, worse in some ways than a straightforward despotism, for the cloaking of a despotism under the guise of democracy produces many evils. This great truth is felt in America. There the influx of such large numbers of totally uneducated workers, knowing nothing of freedom and often mistaking liberty for licensed lawlessness, has brought it home to all thinking Americans that the true University is the soul of true democracy. If, however, the Universities stood apart from the national life, and were too much like nurseries for advanced scholars, the people would not be so ready to support them.

Moreover, the Universities tend to be conducted in a religious spirit, some freer, some more strait-laced, but all with a deep-lying recognition of religious duty and of patriotic feeling ; and America is deeply penetrated with a religious sense, which is more active and more widely diffused as a practical power than in Europe at present.

Four years ago it was my fortune, on a second visit to America, to make the acquaintance of and come into very friendly relations with a man who held much the same opinion as I have stated about

the importance of the Colleges in the future of the United States, and who was so possessed with this idea that he had staked his entire life and work on it, and was giving the whole of his abounding energy to the realization of this idea in creating a new University. The same idea is widely dominant in the States; but with him it was a passion determining his whole life, and guiding all his conduct and his plans. This man was Dr. Isaac Conrad Ketler.

In 1913 I went to pay a second visit to his College and himself on his urgent and repeated invitation. On the railway platform of the town where he lived we learned of his sudden death. "The zeal of his College had worn him out": he died of over-work; another name was applied to the final form which his illness took, but the real disease was seventeen hours a day, the rate of work mentioned in conversation as often reached by him. That is the same rate that was indicated by Mommsen to a student entering Berlin University, who asked the great historian for advice on his career, saying that he wished to be a scholar. "No young man," said Mommsen, as the story runs, "has any right to aim at a scholar's life unless he is prepared to work seventeen hours a day." The law is hard. Few people have Mommsen's marvellous constitution, physical health, and power of work; and yet if we take into account, as Mommsen certainly did, the time spent in meetings of societies