

# The State's Voice

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## "WITH ALL THY GETTING GET UNDERSTANDING"

A Continuation of the Discussion of Educational Problems Begun  
In the Issue of December 1.

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*"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get UNDERSTANDING."*—Proverbs IV, 7.

This article is a continuation of the discussion of educational problems begun in the last issue of the State's Voice. First let us acquaint you with the reactions of a few of our readers to the former article.

### Former Article Receives Acclamations.

After reading the article in the issue of December 1, Mr. Jesse A. Williams, banker of Waxhaw, who had just subscribed for the Voice, said the educational article was worth the dollar he paid for a year's subscription. Mr. Williams is a member of the school committee for his town.

Dr. D. T. Smithwick, of Louisburg, a rather omnivorous reader, wrote as follows under date of December 7:

"I believe your article in the State's Voice of December 1, 'Do the Schools' Products Function Properly', is the most valuable article that has appeared in any paper this year."—(North Carolina paper, I assume, the Doctor means.—Editor).

One of the ablest members-elect of the next General Assembly, wrote: "I read with much pleasure your article on Schools in the December 1 issue of your paper. I hope you will write some more about the subject."

Capt. S. A. Ashe, clerk of the Federal Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, wrote as follows:

"My chief clerk, Mr. Bateman of one of the eastern counties, today came into my office, and pointing to your paper praised you as much as anyone could have done—your ears should have burned. Certainly, I agreed with all he said. I am sure he was carried away by your article on Schools."

Before proceeding, let us thank these gentlemen, representing five counties, and others, for their generous appreciation and approval. It is good to know that at least part of my fine list of "thinking men" do find the Voice worthy of close reading. I fear many, overloaded with reading matter and being the busiest of men, have failed to read not only that article but others of equal significance upon other topics. However, it is gratifying to note that Attorney Willis G. Briggs, of Raleigh, writes that he believes the Voice is more thoroughly read than most papers and that he is preserving a file of the copies. This somewhat allays my fears that my big guns are not being recognized as such simply because they are not being heard. Too many people are afraid of a long article; yet it requires a whole book to discuss some questions—and some people actually read whole volumes!

### The Sine-Qua-Non of Education.

Readers of the former article recall that it consisted largely of an analogy between the Ford automobile plant and the public school system. Therein it was stated that two of the sine-qua-nons of an automobile—of any make or quality—are the carbureter and the ignition system, without which a Packard would be more worthless than a wheelbarrow, since the basic purpose of every car is to transform power produced by the combustion of gasoline into motive power. The implication was, or is, that the schools are too frequently failing to provide those essentials in its products, and that therefore young men and women are coming from the schools utterly un-equipped to function properly, whatever the elegance or cost of the bodies and accessories, speaking figuratively.

But it is well to give a name to the power-producing essential of a human-being. I choose the good old Anglo-Saxon word, UNDERSTANDING. And I feel that I have good authority for thus naming the prime essential of the educated man or woman. So soon as the carbureter and the ignition system have functioned in an automobile engine, the power that drives an Austin

or a Rolls Royce exists. A naked wire in the ignition system of our Ford hindered us an hour on a recent journey. After the power is produced, and only then, do other features of the car matter at all. That UNDERSTANDING plays an equally basic part in any successful equipment of a youth I affirm upon the word of Solomon himself, who says, presumably of God, "I have understanding; I have strength"—or power. That is as if an automobile should say: "I have a carbureter, pistons, and an ignition system; I can produce power."

Understanding is the generator of power, or strength; Wisdom must direct the utilization of that strength. O yes; the generation of the power is the sine-qua-non of an automobile, but it takes a whole lot more of mechanisms to convert that power into motive force and to direct it in producing the smoothly gliding car. Wisdom, in the educational scheme, performs that part with respect to the power produced by Understanding. It will be worth the reader's time to turn to the Bible Concordance and follow out therein, without looking up the passages, the many suggestions as to the functions of "wisdom" and "understanding." But I am concerned today chiefly with "Understanding," which I declare to be the prime essential of all education. Wisdom cannot function without it; yet without Wisdom, of which the fear of God is the beginning, the possessor of the most thorough understanding may readily crash upon the highway of life. The understanding man knows the dangers of the road; the wise man avoids them. The child knows how to walk; Wisdom must choose his paths. But only the Understanding can hear the voice of Wisdom.

### The Task of the Schools.

The supreme task of the schools, then, is to help the pupils get understanding—to equip them with understanding minds—and to lead them into the paths of wisdom. It is the result that counts, not the means. An understanding mind, directed by wisdom, is an achieving mind, whether its owner ever attended school a day or not. The mind without the power and the habit of understanding is a fruitless mind, whatever number of diplomas or degrees its owner may have secured. But the schools should be, and are, the chief reliance for producing understanding minds. Occasionally a person is endowed with a natural subsoiler. He as naturally goes to the bottom of things as does a ground mole. You cannot prevent such a person from becoming a man of a considerable degree of understanding, but even the schools can hinder his attaining his potential maximum by practicing, so generally and persistently, a skimming process instead of a sub-soiling one. And that, I believe, is being done in the cases of ten-talent pupils. The plow is set for three-inch furrows instead of 12 or 18-inch ones.

I saw a tractor, right out there on the street the other day, drawing a harrow frame with four great sub-soilers, similar to the arms of cant hooks. There was power and inclination to plunge into the earth. A three-foot strip of the road was being pierced to its very bowels by the sub-soiling monster. I thought what such a machine would do for the deep red soil of Chatham county, opening up the sub-soil for aeration and as a reservoir for moisture! But what would an eight-hundred-pound mule do with any such machine! And what folly to place one tiny four-prong rake or a garden hoe behind that monster tractor! Yet analagous things are being done in the schools. The youth with a fifty-H. P. mind is being geared to the very same machine as the 1-2 H. P. mentality. The same procedure is required of both. The gear is set to suit the mentality of average power. The time and talent of the finest minds, mentalities that properly developed should one day serve to sub-soil the aged-long economic and sociological hardpans that have so persistently defied even new-deal mentalities—yea, the very brain-trusts—and of the ex-

istence of which to this very day "big business" is utterly ignorant, having blithely ploughed above them all its days. On the other hand, the puny-lings are losing their opportunity to take their little garden hoes and thoroughly dig and pulverize their tiny cabbage patches.

But the curriculum must be run by the whole aggregation, even if a third of the class must be dragged along by the hair of their heads and the capable find the run only a boring and futile process! So much for the "course of study" that is proving a curse to half the students in our schools and a bar to the exercise of whatever skill in developing understandings the teachers may have.

### Lack of Thoroughness a Deadly Menace To Understanding.

I have incidentally in the above paragraph suggested the two necessary factors in developing the understandings of all grades of native mentalities. The child with the garden-hoe mentality must be kept to his little patch till it is thoroughly sub-soiled and pulverized. The acreage and difficulty of the hard-pan must be gauged in accord with the capacities of the children up to that of the fifty-talented youth, whose tractor-like mentality must be given sufficient area, containing roots, stumps, boulders, and whatever you have, to engage his powers and develop them to their highest capacities. No champion boxer or wrestler was ever trained by playing "cat," or marbles. To fail either in thoroughness or in providing a sufficiently difficult task for the developing minds is fatal to both weaklings and giant. Potential or actual giants can become the laziest souls alive. Here you have the explanation of the traditional failure of the high-honor man of the class—not his talents, but the habits formed by the travesty of teaching which he has undergone, have undone him. Unschooling he might have become a Patrick Henry, a Lincoln, an Andrew Johnson. But the schools have killed his initiative, lowered his aspirations, developed a habit of loafing, and benumbed his intellectuality, so that he perhaps has not even delved to the bottom of the little hard-pan that was laid out for his breaking. I have only to look in a mirror to see the image of one who came near ruin by that process. All that saved him was the little wisdom that he had acquired as a lad and the lack of funds to finance a course of debauchery for which the loafing time provided—saved him from the worthlessness which such an educational process is capable of begetting. And, don't forget teachers, that the saving grace of the fear of the Lord, which "is the beginning of wisdom," is accountable for his escaping the fate which nigh overwhelmed him. Two hours a day of casual study and a dozen hours of loafing on class and campus is no regimen to produce understanding minds, persistent sub-soiling, or minds trained in the ways of wisdom. Yet there was plenty of sub-soiling if he had been directed to it and encouraged to do it.

### Not the Depth of the Digging But Striking Water Produces the Well.

I have said above that lack of thoroughness, whatever the kind of mentality, is fatal. When one digs a well it is not a well till a supply of water wells up. When the North Greenville Baptist Association of South Carolina built its academy on a high hill overlooking the village of Tigersville forty-odd years ago, diggers set to work to get a well upon that height. Down through solid rock they went many feet; lost hope and moved to another site lower down the hill. There they dug many feet, became discouraged and quit. When I went there as principal of the school in 1898, the two dry holes were there, but water for the school had to be lugged up that steep hill from the village wells. All the digging in one place, I have always felt quite sure, would have produced a plenteous supply of water. But they quit before they "understood"

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