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ADDRESS

OF

PROF. FRED L. CHARLES

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

AND

RESOLUTIONS

ADOPTED BY THE

**Military Tract Educational
Association**

AT

MACOMB, ILLINOIS,

October 20 to 23, 1910

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

COUNTRY LIFE AND COUNTRY SCHOOLS AS FACTORS IN TRAIN- ING FOR SERVICE.

(Abstract of a paper read before the Military Tract Educational Association at Macomb, Illinois, October 22, 1910.)

Man's domestication of himself began many millenniums ago. It will continue for a goodly season yet to come before the "higher critics" will declare him well broken from his original untamed state. Arriving comparatively late in the evolutionary procession, he has thus far been much occupied in orienting himself in the natural world and has found little time as a race to take himself in hand for intensive cultivation. Of late his progress has been rapid, although an exaggerated perspective from such close range may render us too complacent in our judgment of his present status. In this long process, wherein he who was somewhat less than human has made himself something more than man, unfortunate condition has arisen, doubtless inevitably. The movement was, of course, away from the normal animal life, in touch with earth and sky, toward the manifold complexities and artificialities which characterize our modern social structure.

Primitive man dealt with crude forces; his battle was with the elements, he was occupied with the fundamentals out of which he had emerged. Modern man deals with subtler forces; his struggle is to find his place in a highly intricate system; he is occupied with refinements of his own creation. His indomitable quest for the unknown; his inventive genius; his success

in solving the riddles of natural law, and particularly the achievements of 18th and 19th century science; the development of industrialism and the congestion of population into urban centers,—have impelled him to a progress industrial, commercial, economic, at a rate too rapid for coincident biological adjustment. The result is that we clothe unwisely in raiment wonderfully devised from materials across the seas; we feed not wisely but too well upon viands wonderfully concocted from the offerings of foreign lands; we shelter in air-tight structures wherein the beasts of the field would perish miserably either from quick consumption or from slow asphyxiation; and we huddle our habitations into closed ranks with no regard for homeliness or landscapes. We cover earth's carpet of living green with one of brick, we live in a flat and we order our lives by the screech or the factory whistle. To "bring in wood" and "fetch water" are pleasantries of our grandparents which we must translate to our children. Ours is strictly a "press-the-button" age, an age of physical comforts which exacts from us the atrophy of much wholesome activity and of many a homely virtue.

All along the speedway of intellectual advance are evidences of the failure of physical adjustment, of bodily welfare, to keep pace with the shifting conditions. From that far away era when the biped position was first assumed—a posture for which we are yet unprepared and to which many of our ills may be ascribed—down to the spectacled age of fine print and badly lighted page, of embalmed beef and nervous dyspepsia, of automobile squint and air sickness, man has paid large forfeit for his sovereignty. Biologically, we have in large measure artificialized both ourselves and our environment.

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God gave his creatures light and air
 And water open to the skies;
 Man locks him in his stifling lair
 And wonders why his brother dies.

Much of our effort now must be corrective.
 Science must turn back upon itself and
 ameliorate the condition of its lord.

If we would find the type of man who
 best exemplifies the natural life, we must
 seek him who in forest or field, in peaceful
 valley or in mountain fastness, holding close
 to elemental nature, pursuing his way un-
 vexed by nervous mart or forum, still keeps
 apace the march of progress. Of such was
 western liberty born, and of these, today,
 the husbandman is the most significant
 figure. In the centuries to come he will
 still be the mainstay of the nation.

He who lives in God's out-of-doors has his
 complete being—three-fold, if you wish to
 call it such—under constant wholesome
 stimulation. Every nation challenges his
 interest, arouses his desire to know and to
 achieve. He becomes self-reliant, depend-
 ent first of all upon his own resources, re-
 cognizing his own sense training and valu-
 ing the evidence of his senses as the best
 authority. The tiller of the soil knocks at
 Nature's door and she yields her secrets
 and gives him generous admission to her
 precious stores. He knows the seasons as
 they come and go, and with native intui-
 tion reads the signs. Every morning he
 pioneers, entering the new day with the spir-
 it of an explorer, meeting emergencies, mas-
 tering situations, gaining dominion over the
 earth and its creatures. His whole environ-
 ment functions to make his life genuine and
 sincere, and from this hardy contact with the
 soil he is stamped as one of Nature's own.
 The simplicity of the life he leads becomes
 a portion of his nature and he is character-

istically rugged, fearless, honest, candid, free.

The country is the breeding ground of great men in every walk of life. Is our city man a blacksmith? Well for him that as a boy he handled horses. Is he a plumber or carpenter? Well for him that he grew up under circumstances that called forth all his ingenuity and skill. Is he a merchant? Luck for him that he knows the needs of the out-of-town trade. Is he a banker? Fortunate for him that he comprehends so well the economic principles that the nation's welfare is rooted literally in the soil.

Under twentieth century conditions the home has lost much, possibly most, of the old time homely activities and fireside industries which contributed in large measure toward the solidarity of the family and the development of fundamental virtues. In urban centers particularly the influence of a specialized and centralized machinery is everywhere manifest. The open country has been and ever will be the last to surrender the natural life and the play of primitive instincts. Yet even here it is already necessary that the school shall supplement or even supplant the home in many lines that were formerly conceived to be wholly domestic in character. Now that the pressing of buttons, the turning of faucets, and the manipulation of valves suffice to provide most of the comforts of life; now that the laundry wagon, the tailor shop, the vacuum cleaner and the grocery-mobile have erased the working days from the old fashioned home calendar, the school girl returns from her books to take little part in domestic affairs. In many, many dwellings, today, even among the well-to-do, the only rational self-care or home-care is that which owes its origin to a humanized and

humanizing school, where household science, manual arts, nature-study, personal hygiene, public health and sanitation combine with the humanities to spiritualize the soul of a girl. The country school must indeed be an integral part of country life, not an extraneous agency. I would go so far as to say that it must be indeed the truest and fullest expression of the rural idea.

But before this can be achieved, the farmer must learn the long, slow lesson of co-operation. Every rural community must be one united "boosting club," with the school and church at its center. The advantages which I have pictured as belonging to country life can hold no longer unless the country man masters the co-operative idea. We have much to learn in this matter from little Denmark and others of our sister nations across the sea. The farmer, too, is far behind his city brother in learning the value of united action. In production, transportation and consumption, in irrigation, cultivation and marketing, in soil resting, seed testing and cow testing, farmers must join hands to common ends. Consolidation of schools is but one phase of the great co-operative movement which must soon come in all enlightened communities where holdings are small. What city would tolerate a professional man or tradesman who for a lifetime of residence in that city deliberately, in practice and example, injured the municipality and lowered the values of its real estate? Yet unnumbered examples may be quoted, country-wide, of citizens in rural communities who, through ignorance, tradition or avarice, have mined the soil rather than farmed it, depreciated values and left to their children and their community the sorry remnant of a once fertile estate. We may forecast the time when such practices will be regarded as

intolerable or even criminal, and when such abuse of fertility will be regarded as on a plane with arson and related forms of wilful destruction of property. When the co-operative era of which I have spoken is at hand, when country folk are impelled by motive of mutual good and common welfare, then will country life—the natural life—assume significance as never before, as a world factor in training for service. And when this time, so fast approaching, is really at hand, perhaps, indeed, as harbinger of that day, the country school will come into its own. Its contribution to the community it serves, and the community's contribution to it, will surpass the present vision.

I am convinced that within a decade the vitalized and redirected country school will come to be in Illinois. With no neglect but rather a strengthening of its humanities, it will, in the course of its legitimate educational activities, make economic contribution to the community far beyond what is dreamed of today. It will test the milk, try-out the seed for vitality and purity and for excellence of strain, introduce new varieties of cultivated plants, judge the stock, teach rational methods of rearing, feeding and housing farm animals, revolutionize poultry keep, prune and spray the fruit trees, disseminate knowledge of injurious insects and fungi and make studies of their life history and the means of combatting them, create an irrepressible demand for good roads, improve machinery, and the comforts and sanitation of the home, establish higher ideals of landscape architecture, and in many other ways build up values material and spiritual and serve to tie the affections of youth to the land. No other appeal will so soon loosen the purse-strings of the farming community, open the way for consolidation, develop a long-awaited rural leadership,

and bring the new century agriculture into its own. Even now the country minister is aroused to the needs of the times and one of the most efficient means he has found in preparing for genuine service and uplift is to take a practical course in farming.

I have spoken of the economic contribution of the country school to the community whose creature it is, but the obligation is mutual, and while the schools are training for service, I insist that the community, not as an abstract social mass, but as individual servants of the common good, shall render like contribution to the school. Each farmer, striving as he should in some particular to excel his neighbors, is to invite teacher and pupils to his farm to witness some operation of which he is master and in which intelligence is involved. If farmer A has developed a meritorious breed of corn, let him invite the school to accompany him into the field before harvest time to follow him in the selection of his seed, and thus to learn the lesson of heredity and racial improvement. If farmer B has enriched his soil by the application of needed plant foods and the growing of beneficial legumes, let him—merely as a good citizen and not in a spirit of pride or of altruistic righteousness—invite the upper classes to visit his fields and learn the lesson of a scientifically controlled environment and the conserving of resources for a people that yet may be hungry. If the rural physician knows the pool where malarial mosquitoes breed, let him lead the school on a tour of inspection; then give demonstration of the means of correcting the evil. If a youth has enjoyed the advantages of a course in the College of Agriculture, let him seek occasion to demonstrate some worthy product of some simple operation of interest to the school. I can conceive no higher type of extension

teaching—no higher type of service—than this very expression of the civic virtues on the part of those who through superior opportunities are preparing to serve their fellows of the rural community. If a young woman has learned to cut and sew and mend, if she has learned to select meat for cooking or to plan a wholesome meal, she has a working capital which she may invest in the rural school. The community indeed bears obligation to the school. Parents, graduates, directors, tradesmen, ministers, professional men, each and all can and should train themselves for service to the school, and nowhere is the contribution more needed than in the open country.

We cannot say that the movement is now "back to the land," for the drift cityward is still on, although it may be to some extent subsiding. Improved conditions of living are doubtless now operating to hold boys and girls on the farm who formerly would have yielded to the lure of the city. The rural population, however, even in our own state, is shrinking not only relatively but absolutely, as the census just completed reaffirms. Land values are now so high and scientific method so essential to success that the farmer who does not put brains into his work is losing out while his neighbor who looks upon farming as a profession is absorbing his land. Thus the farm estates of Illinois are growing larger. The country school which guides its children in a wholesome attack upon environmental materials, as these materials may be organized in the form of problems suited to their years, will contribute its full quota of leadership in rural affairs and will be recognized as the foremost factor in training for service. The tremendous enthusiasm exhibited by cities in building up their population, the inordinate pride in swollen census returns, will

some time be deplored, and there will develop a saner appreciation of those common blessings which are afforded by the open country and which cannot be found in congested centers.

I have referred to man as an unfinished evolutionary product—a masterpiece still in the making—and in that making subjected in part to unfavorable conditions of his own determination. Probably the highest type of living, of naturalness and freedom is exemplified by an enlightened country folk. The present status of our rural people constitutes the burden of the thought and endeavor of great students and leaders of our national progress. There is no training ground for service superior to those vocational activities which characterize the agricultural life. In this training the rural school must be the foremost agent. In a day now dawning the school will broaden to serve the universal ends that lie before it, to play its part not along in theory, in discipline, and in what we have been wont to call the higher things of life, but in all the affairs of men. To achieve this end a duty rests upon each and all of us, not only as units but as integers. Whatever our capacities, we must rally to the reinforcement of that great training ground for righteousness and efficient citizenship—the American public school. The next great step in advance is to be taken by the school in the country. Let us apply ourselves unto its problems. Fellow teachers of rural Illinois, rejoice in the unequalled opportunity for service that opens before you. Shape your teaching to meet the needs both temporal and spiritual of the peculiar community you serve. The city lad answers the want-ads of the tradesman; the country youth is to answer the want-ads of nature. Stand with him and for him, and for the country girl. Study with them, enter into their lives. Give of yourself freely and the abundant reward of service freely given will be yours.

**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT MACOMB,
ILLINOIS, OCTOBER 23, 1910.**

With continued faith in the public schools and firm belief that the development of a great democracy is impossible without them, the Military Tract Educational Association, holding its third annual meeting in Macomb, and representing teachers and friends of education in western Illinois, makes the following declaration of principles and aims:

1. We are conscious of the present tendency to diversify and overburden courses of study in the elementary grades, and believe that the complaint of many business men that pupils from public schools are inaccurate and careless is a criticism not wholly unfounded. We therefore recommend to our membership that attention to the essential subjects, and the continuous drill necessary for accurate training be not relaxed; it is our belief that no course of study in any public school should be expanded at the expense of the essential and practical parts of the common English studies. But

2. We believe that the expansion of the common school to meet the needs of a growing civilization should be encouraged and continued. The present movement toward the consolidation of country district schools and the establishment of township high schools is an evidence of progress. We regret that this form of progress is more in evidence in many other states than it is in Illinois. We therefore urge upon our constituency the importance to the Military Tract of a fair distribution of opportunities for secondary education. There is absolutely no reason why the child in the

country should not receive the benefits of school education to an extent fully equivalent to the education furnished in the towns.

3. The character and efficiency of the schools depend upon the ability of the teaching body. To the end that the business of teaching shall attract men and women of higher intellectual attainments, more thorough training, and higher ideals, we urge upon the next General Assembly to consider and act upon the recommendations of the Illinois Educational Commission in the matters of the preparation and certification of teachers, and a provision for the more equitable support of teachers' institutes and improved rules for conducting the same. We furthermore respectfully represent to the public, and to the General Assembly representing the people, that the compensation of teachers should be more nearly equal to that paid in other pursuits requiring a like degree of preparation and intelligence; we request the next General Assembly to consider the recommendations of the Illinois Educational Commission with reference to a minimum salary law for teachers. We favor the extension of agricultural and other forms of industrial education, and especially commend the opportunities in these lines offered by our Western Illinois State Normal School at Macomb.

4. We are proud of the splendid material provision made by the State at Macomb for the training of teachers, and believe that the work of the school is up to the high standard established for Illinois by the older Normal Schools. We especially appreciate the evident desire of the management of the school to keep informed of and in touch with the actual conditions and needs of all types of schools in the Military Tract,

and to spare no effort to be of the greatest possible service to them.

5. Believing that the formation of character is the ultimate reason for the expenditure of millions for the maintenance of schools, we adopt, as our own, the declaration of the National Education Association at Boston, 1910, that "The fundamental consideration in any system of schools is the development of inflexible integrity and strong moral character in those receiving instruction. The republic cannot survive without a citizenship of high ideals, patriotism, duty, and service. This Association, therefore, commends most heartily the growing interest in the moral development of the children of the nation."

6. The successful efforts to set up a standard of efficiency in the country schools, the skillful guidance of the studies and deliberations of the Illinois Educational Commission, the wide dissemination, through the Educational Press Bulletin, of information to the public, and practical advice to school officials and teachers, and, in general, the broad-minded initiative, energy, and common sense of Francis G. Blair, Superintendent of Public Instruction, have earned the respect, while his genial candor and sincerity have won the affection of his co-laborers in education in every part of our State. His re-nomination, without opposition, was a credit to his party, and his re-election will be in the interest of a continued advance in public school education in Illinois.

WHEREAS, The more progressive universities in this country have established or are establishing Schools of Education or Teachers' Colleges, which shall adequately represent in the university organization the needs and ideals of the teaching profession;

WHEREAS, The present facilities at the University of Illinois for the training of high school and college teachers, for the advanced training of special teachers of the industrial arts, and for the training of supervisory and administrative officers are inadequate to the demands that the schools of the State are making upon the University for trained workers in these fields;

RESOLVED, That we do hereby request the Trustees of the University of Illinois to give to the School of Education of that University all the support that is needed for its development to the point where it may adequately serve the needs of the State; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we petition the General Assembly of the State of Illinois at its coming session to appropriate a sum sufficient for the erection and equipment of a building for the School of Education at the University of Illinois; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the secretary of this Association be instructed to send a copy of these resolutions, in the form of a petition, to the Governor of the State, and to the President of the Board of Trustees of the University, and to both houses of the General Assembly; and that the President of the Association be instructed to appoint a committee of five from this Association to co-operate with similar committees from other associations, in order to promote this course.

WHEREAS, There are now bills before Congress, with a favorable recommendation from the respective committees, both in the senate and the house, (Senate Bill No. 530, House Bill No. 24316) proposing to extend to the District of Columbia the benefits of the so-called Morrill Acts for the promotion of education in agriculture and the mechan-

ic arts, and to assign the respective funds to a private institution; and

WHEREAS, This Association is in full accord with the National Education Association in the belief stated in its latest declaration at Boston, that "Any appropriation from the federal or state treasury in support of private educational institutions is in direct contravention of the fundamental principles upon which our ultimate American public school education has been founded and has prospered; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the members of this Association would regard the passage of such a bill as a menace to the educational interests of the United States, and that the senators and representatives from this State are hereby requested to oppose the passage of said bill, and that the secretary of this Association is directed to send a copy of this resolution to each member of Congress from this State, and further, that the secretary of this Association is directed to send a petition, signed by the officers of this Association, against the passage of either of these bills to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to the President of the Senate.

(Signed.)

ALFRED BAYLISS,
CORA F. STONE,
CHAS. E. JOINER,
Committee on Resolutions.

THE Secretary, after several attempts, being unable to procure the address of Supt. B. B. Jackson, Moline, Ill, omits the same.