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TEACHING AMERICAN IDEALS
THROUGH LITERATURE

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, August 1, 1918.

Sir: The best expression of a people's ideals is to be found in their literature, and there is no better or more effective means of disseminating these ideals among the masses of the people than through the right use of the best of the literature in the schools and elsewhere. The great struggle in which we are now engaged for the maintenance of our American ideals of freedom and democracy among ourselves and for the possibility of their extension throughout the world makes this a most opportune time for setting forth these ideals in an orderly way and for calling to the attention of teachers and others who have the direction of the reading of large numbers of people the books in which they are most adequately expressed and suggesting methods of using them. For this purpose I recommend that the accompanying manuscript, prepared at my request by Dr. Henry Neumann, of the Ethical Culture School, New York, be published as a bulletin of the Bureau of Education.

Respectfully submitted.

P. P. CLAXTON,
Commissioner.

The Honorable the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

TEACHING AMERICAN IDEALS THROUGH LITERATURE.

In learning to be citizens nothing can take the place of practice. Here, as elsewhere, the first and last essential is conduct.¹ But vitally important as practice is, it needs to be propelled and guided by ideals, by a deep and intelligent love of the high aims for which our country stands. The following pages are offered as a suggestion of one way to foster such ideals.

Properly directed, there can be no more serviceable vehicle than American literature. In the first place, the very existence of so rich a literary production as our own is itself a striking witness to the idealistic strain in the American make-up. There are times, to be sure, when idealism would naturally seem to be our last and least characterization. As Mr. Arthur J. Balfour put it on his visit to Washington, "Because America was commercial, it was easy to suppose that she was materialistic." But all who love America understandingly have known better. They think how liberally Americans have endowed schools and other philanthropies; how generously they have responded to appeals from all over the world for food, for medicine, for education, for every lofty and heroic service; how eagerly their sons have volunteered their lives to free Cuba, to save Belgium and France; how devotedly they have given themselves to make our cities more beautiful, our working conditions more wholesome, our common life more genuinely human. If idealism means to do honor to those nobilities and pieties of life which can not be bought and sold, to cherish visions of a nobler living for mankind, and to spend one's best efforts in pursuing those visions, then there is no country more deserving of the title than our own.

These worthier expressions of the American spirit reach far back in our history. To mention but one instance:

Between 1630 and 1690 there were in New England as many graduates of Oxford and Cambridge as could be found in any population of similar size in the mother country. * * * There will always be something fine in the thought of that narrow seaboard fringe of faith in the classics, widening slowly as the wilderness gave way, making its road up the rivers, across the moun-

¹ See *Moral Values in Secondary Education*; Bureau of Education, Bulletin 51, 1917. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

talus, into the great interior basin, and after the Civil War finding an enduring home in the magnificent State universities of the West.¹

The American people have never been content to live by bread alone. Note how long is the roll of writers whom they have honored. That very fact is a signal testimony. A people who cared little for ideal things would never prize the beauty requisite for literary honors. They would never treasure the names of Hawthorne and Poe. When Ralph Waldo Emerson returned to Concord, he found that his townsmen had rebuilt for him the house which he had lost by fire. On his way he passed under a triumphal arch of roses which they had erected. They paid him this tribute because his life had been spent in teaching "Hitch your wagon to a star" and "Do not leave the sky out of your landscape." By thus honoring a writer they were also telling something significant about themselves and the idealism of the American people. To bring home the existence of this basic tradition, all use should be made of an enthusiastic teaching of American literature.

A second reason for its unique serviceability is the fact that literature touches the feelings far more effectively than information in history and civics. It selects for its themes the hopes that a country cherishes most widely and most ardently, and it sets these forth in the appealing garb of beauty. As we shall see presently, no noble American aspiration has ever lacked voice to utter it in song or story. Is it political liberty, is it brotherhood, is it a plea for justice or a passion for a better world order? Somewhere, we may be sure, a poet has framed to music what thousands of his countrymen are thinking and what they see and feel more vividly once they have heard his words. For it is the mark of all good literature that it possesses this rare power to clarify and to strike home. Often a single mighty phrase will light up the dark places of the mind and burn its way to the depths where motive powers are generated. At no time do heart and brain better reinforce each other than when the appeal is uttered in the beauty of literary art.

As a preliminary to the particular study of the appeals made by our literature, there are a few considerations of method that suggest themselves.

1. A distinct course in American literature has certain advantages, but in the high school (for the grades the matter is beyond all question) it will be found more advantageous not to concentrate the work into a single year. Under special conditions such a course may be desirable,² but in the main it would seem wiser to include American literature each year as part of that year's work. Concentration

¹ *The American Mind*, Perry, Bliss, p. 39.

² See Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1917, No. 2, *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*, pp. 33, 64. Consult for lists of recommended readings.

below the college years is apt to defeat its own object. Since our problem is essentially one of winning a love for ideals, there is every danger that we shall fail if we harp too long on a single string. Young people of high-school age have a way, too well known, of shutting their ears to the strains which are cherished by their elders when that cherishing is urged upon them monotonously. Moreover, by distributing the material over several years we make a better provision for growth at the different stages. Children will read "Evangeline" with greater enjoyment in the seventh or eighth grades than in the years when they feel capable of harder work.

On the whole, therefore, it is much more desirable to provide some study of American literature each year. For those pupils who wish more intensive study it ought not to be difficult to arrange a special course in a literary club.

2. Ideals, we have seen, become moving forces only when they are genuinely loved. They can never be forced as information, perhaps, can sometimes be. Like everything else which depends upon feeling, ideals are conveyed chiefly by contact of mind with mind. Hence it is that the stimulating contact between teacher and pupil which Carlyle described as "thought kindling itself at the living fire of thought" is particularly the need in the teaching of literature. The instructor whose own blood does not stir as he reads—

Still be ours the diet hard and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers, O pioneers!

had better leave Whitman's poem untaught.

Fortunately there is a characteristic of the teaching in American schools which lends itself with special readiness to the service of the literature course. This is the close and friendly relationship between class and teacher which observers have often noted as a mark of our schooling. Let us make the most of this fact at all times, but particularly when our aim is so notably to cultivate the appreciation of literature in the formative period of youth. The teacher need not say so in words, but in his attitude he ought to say even more clearly. "Here is something splendid for which I care a great deal; let us enjoy it together."

Perhaps the most useful method the teacher can employ is to read aloud. Just as the good statue needs to be seen, not described, and the good song to be sung, not recited, so the great poem or speech needs to be heard to convey the full message its author intended. Let the teacher do justice to his subject by reading aloud, if only the passages he cares for most. Let him read simply and sincerely and without any hesitation about showing his enthusiasm. He will find that many of his pupils will of their own accord commit to memory what they have learned to love because it is loved by him.

3. In this connection we shall do well to remember, in these days of new pride in America, how important it is for our boys and girls to care for their country's tongue at its best. Good reading aloud will do much to foster such affection. The French make a point of teaching their children French ideals by special attention to beauty in their written and spoken discourse. We can profit by their example. If we had no other reason for wishing our pupils to take over into their own speech something of the grace which characterizes literary utterance, we should find it in the fact that there is a subtle connection between the idealisms of a country and the language in which these are voiced. Note how the words of the least cultivated persons are lifted above the commonplace and take on a simple beauty the moment they give expression to the best that is in them. The Gettysburg Address is our classic instance of how dignity of thought and of phrase reinforce each other. Let us do all we can—and by no means only in the neighborhoods of the foreign-born, but in the native districts just as much—to furnish the standards that will supplant the tendency to slipshod speech and seductive slang. Language is a manner; a fine usage betokens the greater respect. Not that it is necessary (fortunately it is impossible) that children should learn to talk like books. But it is eminently desirable that they should learn by example how beautiful a medium the tongue of their country can become. Even though their conversation and their letters may never sound like Irving's or Hawthorne's, it is at least worth while for them to learn by this method among others that democratic freedom need not connote cheapness and vulgarity.

4. How shall we proceed in the explicit teaching of the truths which our poem or story embodies? Some of our texts will require little if any of such explication; some will need much. In the latter case, particularly where there is a distinctly ethical conception to be developed, there is often great temptation to drive at the point directly by asking the class "What does this poem teach?" Such a method is more than likely to kill the interest. A better procedure would be to stimulate thought by a series of less direct and less awkward questions. For example, in teaching "The Vision of Sir Launfal" to a high-school class, some such questions as the following might be asked to bring out the truth that democracy respects the divinity in men:

Why did the leper refuse the coin? Why did Sir Launfal toss it in scorn? Why is it inaccurate to say that he gave "from a sense of duty"? What would a genuine sense of duty require? Why did the knight shirk this real duty? Can you mention any instances where people offer a substitute (i. e., toss a coin) instead of doing the harder thing?

What was Lowell's purpose in revealing the divinity of the beggar? Why did he make him not only a beggar but the victim of a loathsome disease? Go back to the line "Daily we Sinais climb and know it not"; what does the reference mean? Why was the knight at first unaware that he was face to face with the Supreme Splendor? Does this poem tell you anything about the democratic ideal? How does democracy express this honor to the sacredness in men? Read Lowell's poem "A Contrast" and the essay "Democracy" and compare the ideas with the one in this poem. Read also Emerson's poem "Music," Whittier's "Democracy," and Whitman's "Give me the splendid silent sun." Read and discuss "Exit Charity," in Zona Gale's *Neighborhood Stories*.

5. The texts available for our purpose are easy to get. Lists of poems, essays, speeches, stories are given in the syllabi prepared in most schools for the different grades. For junior and senior high school, special attention may be called to the recommendations in *The Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1917, No. 2.¹ Collections of American poetry are found in Stedman's *Anthology of American Poetry*, Page's *Chief American Poets*, Stevenson's *Poems of American Patriotism*, Wallington's *American History by American Poets*, Humphrey's *Poetic New World*. A collection of new hymns is published in *The Survey* for January 3, 1914.²

What conceptions should a study of American poetry and prose enforce?

(a) *First is the idea of a certain greatness latent in the commonest of persons.* Take for illustration Whittier's "Snowbound." This household was utterly undistinguished. It was no more than one of countless others of the same plain type. The family were very ordinary folk; yet who would say that "commonplace" is the last word to characterize them? For that which is merely commonplace one can feel but little respect. Is this our feeling for the father and the mother in this poem; or do we not rather gain from the reading a heightened regard for the multitudes of whom these folk are but a type?³

Our democracy, instead of setting up the state as something distinct from and superior to the people, says that it is just ordinary men and women who make the nation and organize the state as its instrument:

¹ This may be procured from the Government Printing Office, Washington, for 20 cents.

² This may be procured from The Survey, 105 East Twenty-second street, New York, for 25 cents.

³ A study of Whittier should lead the students back to one of his inspirations, *The Journal of John Woolman*, an illustration of the spiritual perceptions attained by an early American who was a tailor.

I will have never a noble
 Or lineage counted great.
 Fishers and choppers and plowmen
 Shall constitute the state,

declares "The Boston Hymn." And in his essay, *Democracy*, James Russell Lowell aptly calls the democratic method "such an organization of society as will enable men to respect themselves and so to justify them in respecting others." Universal suffrage is one of the outward signs of this faith. Democracy proclaims that the grounds for such respect can be found in all.

(b) *America rates her children upon their own merits and not upon their birth.* The knight in Edwin Markham's poem, "The Cup of Pride," learns that what counts in the final judgment is not his ancestry but the man he makes of himself. The point is repeated often in our literature. Let the prince and the pauper in Mark Twain's story change clothes, and which is which? The theme is typically American. So it is in "Huckleberry Finn." Huck, the warm-hearted boy who scorns the conventional proprieties but is quick to do a kindly turn and as true as steel, is the son of a vagabond.

To-day this democratic principle of respect for merit bears with special significance upon the relations between our native stock and our foreign born. What hopes America has held forth to millions the world over! Victims of economic stress like the Italians, of political oppression like the Germans who came here in 1848, of religious persecution like the Russian Jews, have had special reason to call this the land of opportunity and to say with Bryant—

There's freedom at thy gates and rest
 For earth's down-trodden and oppressed,
 A shelter for the hunted head,
 For the starved laborer toil and bread,
 Power at thy bounds
 Stops and calls back his baffled hounds.

We should see that our pupils everywhere appreciate this important fact in our national life. Both in the foreign-born and the native communities we should encourage them to read the biographies and other writings of foreigners who found in America the chance to make lives for themselves and who have recorded their appreciation. Among such books the following are recommended: *The Making of an American, How the Other Half Lives, Out of Mulberry Street*, by Jacob Riis, a Dane who became a newspaper reporter and an important worker for social and civic betterment in New York; *A Far Journey, My Father's House*, by M. Rihbany, a Syrian who became a well-known New England clergyman; *The Promised Land, The Stranger within Our Gates*, by Mary Antin, a Russian Jewess who records her great debt to the American public

school; *The Schoolmaster of a Great City*, by Angelo Patri, a New York public-school principal; *Reminiscences*, by Carl Schurz, a German revolutionist who escaped in 1848, became a general in our Civil War, Senator from Missouri, minister to Spain, and Secretary of the Interior; *From the Bottom Up*, by Alexander Irvine, an Irish laborer who became a clergyman and reformer; *Joseph Pulitzer*, by Alleyne Ireland, the biography of an Austrian who became proprietor of the New York World; *Michael Heilprin and His Sons*, by Gustav Pollak, the life of a Polish Jew and his sons who attained distinction as scientists; *Louis Agassiz, His Life and Correspondence*, by Elizabeth C. Agassiz, the life of a Swiss who became a famous teacher of science at Harvard; *Threading My Way*, by Robert Dale Owen, a Welshman who came to Indiana with his father to found a cooperative commonwealth and became a Congressman and an important worker for American education; *From Alien to Citizen*; *Introducing the American*, by Edward A. Steiner, an Austrian who became a patriotic religious teacher; *The Life and Times of Stephen Girard*, by John B. McMaster, the biography of a Frenchman of the eighteenth century who became a distinguished merchant and philanthropist in Philadelphia.

No other land has tried on so generous a scale as ours this hopeful experiment of making one country out of people so diverse. In none but a democracy can such a venture hope to succeed. The grounds of that confidence are well put by Henry Van Dyke in his poem, "The Builders":

And thou, My Country, write it on thy heart:
Thy sons are all who nobly take thy part.
Who dedicates his manhood at thy shrine,
Wherever born, is born a son of thine.

To be truly democratic we must not only respect those who are different from ourselves, but we should prize their very differences. We must do more than require the immigrant and his family to become law-abiding citizens; we must cordially welcome everything valuable which they have to offer to America. Useful as is their contribution of muscle in our mines, in our kitchens, on our farms and railroads and highways, still more to be valued are those special mental and spiritual gifts which are different from those of the native stock. For example, many of our foreign-born bring with them traditions of literature, of song, of folk dancing and other arts, traditions of reverence, of cooperative community enterprise— from all of which our country can learn much.

To reap the best results of these diversities we must overcome our false prides and unworthy antipathies; we must show a genuine desire to understand these differences appreciatively and to use them. The legend carried by one of the societies of the foreign-born in this

year's Fourth of July parade, "America's best plus our best," suggests a far better aim than the flat uniformity which some of the native stock seem to prefer. To encourage the offering of these varied gifts is surely sound pedagogy. Every teacher knows that to foster devotion there is nothing better than to allow people a chance to do something valuable for the object of that devotion. If we set the pride of the immigrant at work to discover ways in which he can add the best in his cultural heritage to the best in America's, we shall be helping him and America better than if the giving is all onesided, whether through charity or through teaching him our language and institutions. Let us by all means promote this finer relation of interchange. Just because we are a diversified people, ours is a rare opportunity to set mankind a splendid example of the new type of society which the world so sorely needs, a society in which people of different gifts live with one another, not simply in peace, but in the friendly encouragement of one another's distinctive excellencies.

(e) *American literature sings the dignity of work.* To-day we have learned in a new fashion to look upon work as national service, a way of rendering one's unique and necessary help to his country and to mankind. That all honor is due to the workers has, however, long been a familiar theme of our writers. Whittier's "Songs of Labor" came from his desire—

To show

The unseen beauty hid life's common things below.

"I hear America singing," said Walt Whitman, and it is typical that when he imaged this ideal for his country the songs he heard were those of men and women engaged in the daily, commonplace labors:

The shoemaker singing as he sits at his bench,
the hatter singing as he stands,
The delicious singing of the mother or of the young wife
at work or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else.

As we shall see later on, writers have not been lacking to tell us that the lives of great masses of toilers are far from singing such songs as Whitman's contented toilers.¹

Who has given to me this sweet,
And given my brother dust to eat?

asks William Vaughn Moody, one of many to voice the need of better opportunities. But before our young people read, as they are certain to do some day or other, the literature of social reconstruction, it is essential that they first learn why work is so entitled to respect.

¹ See section A.

They will then understand better why changes are demanded. For those in later years who already incline to radical views it is especially necessary that they see our present modes of working-life at their best no less than at their worst. The true reformer, it has been well said, always appreciates the value of what he is trying to replace.

(d) *The American ideal sets great store by self-reliance.* Our tradition is eminently one of self-dependent, adventurous pioneering:

We detachments steadily throwing,

Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,

Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,

We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the hulms within,

We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

In a recent address the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Franklin K. Lane, pointed out the persistence of this tradition:

Spirit—what is the American spirit? Is it love of adventure? Two years ago Congress authorized the construction of a railroad in Alaska—500 miles straight away from the sea to the circle. We needed a thousand men, and within 60 days thirty-three thousand had made petition that they might take the hazards of that new-country—not idlers, the flotsam of the sea of civilization, but men of steady habit, employed already, but ready for a new adventure. There's something American about that.

There is no sense in saying that the spirit has gone out of a people when we as a landed proprietor are selling 12,000,000 acres of desert every year to people who earn it by living on it and turning it into farms. A few weeks ago we opened a tract of land in northern Montana where the thermometer falls to 40° below zero sometimes. There were 1,200 farms to be sold, and there were 27,000 applicants. Out of the first 150 names drawn from the box, not one failed to accept his opportunity. We challenged him to go into the wilderness and make a home, and he took the challenge. There's something American about that.

Emerson is the most notable exponent of this temper on its spiritual side. In his well-known "Fable," when the mountain taunts the squirrel for inability to carry trees upon its back, the squirrel replies with the home thrust "Neither can you crack a nut." On a loftier plane Emerson bids the reader, "Trust thyself. Every heart vibrates to that iron string." No graduate of an American high school should be unacquainted with the essays "Self-Reliance" and "The American Scholar," or with the ringing words from the address "Literary Ethics":

You will hear every day the maxims of a low prudence. You will hear that the first duty is to get land and money, place and name. What is this truth you seek? what is this beauty? men will ask with derision. If, nevertheless, God has called any of you to explore truth and beauty, be bold, be firm, be true. When you shall say: "As others do, so will I; I renounce, I am sorry for it, my early visions; I must eat the good of the land and let learning and romantic

expeditions go until a more convenient season," then dies the man in you; then once more perish the buds of art and poetry and science, as they have died already in a thousand thousand men. The hour of that choice is the crisis of your history.

(e) *America is good-natured, kindly, and fond of fun.* The combination is less accidental than it seems. There is a type of wit which is intellectually brilliant, but is intended to sting and to rankle. The type of humor prevalent in our country is of a different sort. When we think of the affection that goes out to our greatest humorist, we see the aptness in William Dean Howell's characterization of him as "the Lincoln of our literature." What attracts us in Mark Twain is not intellectual acuteness, but warmth of heart, a broad and deep human sympathy that makes a laugh with him a spiritual tonic. There is an important difference between the laugh which says, "How ridiculous these other people are," and the democratic sort which says, "What a funny thing human nature is, our own included!"

The feeling for this better kind of humor should receive every encouragement in the classroom. The day has passed when humor needs a plea in its defense. It is no longer necessary to say that fun has its great place in the making of a young life. The chief need is to rid the sense of humor of its coarser associations, to refine and sweeten it. The teacher can do much by showing how interrelated is the best humor with breadth and ardor of sympathy. The author of "Tom Sawyer" also wrote the "Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc" and was a sturdy champion of many an appeal for justice. His biography and his letters are well worth knowing.¹ They throw light on one reason why his humor is so winning.

(f) *A true democracy requires respect for differences.* People in various sections of our country are coming to know their fellow citizens of other sections better than heretofore. Under the unifying spirit of the national crisis old animosities are fast disappearing forever. But there is still need for something more, a positive and reciprocal appreciation of the southern type, for example, and of the New England, the eastern, and the western type. Here we shall find literature an incomparable help. Pupils in the North should know more than they do about the work of Poe and Lanier, of Cable and Harris, and Page and Allen, besides merely remembering that Patrick Henry, Washington, Jefferson, and Madison were Virginians. One of the finest studies of an American gentleman is "Robert E. Lee, American," by Gamaliel Bradford, a portrayal all the more deserving of our pupils' attention for being the appreciative work of a northerner.² Paul Hamilton Hayne's sonnet to

¹ Mr. Albert B. Paine, his biographer, has also published "A Boy's Life of Mark Twain."

² Literature and history teachers, north and south, should read to their classes the letter written by Robert E. Lee, upon accepting the presidency of Washington College. See Treat's Southern Writers.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is an excellent tribute in the other direction. East and West meet in Mark Twain.

Joaquin Miller's Autobiography (in the Bear Edition of his poems) gives an excellent picture of life in the West. For understanding the hard life of the middle western farmer that has led to so many misunderstood and easily ridiculed radicalisms, Hamlin Garland's "Son of the Middle Border" is recommended, and, in his "Main Traveled Roads," the two stories "Up the Cooley" and "Under the Lion's Paw."

Religious differences present hardly any grave difficulties to-day; and the great majority of our people would vote that our traditional policy of keeping our public schools unsectarian has been the best. But everything we can do is worth trying to supplement this policy by fostering in all our citizens a positive appreciation of those whose faith is different from their own. The study of "Evangeline," for example, should direct attention to Longfellow's hearty admiration for a Catholic community. A descendant of the Puritans, he showed the best kind of democracy in portraying the life of a Catholic village with such fine feeling for its beauty. His translation of Dante, his sonnets "The Divina Commedia," his "Ladder of St. Augustine," etc., are similar expressions.

America will be the better for having her widely varying children not simply tolerate differences but respect them, with an eye ever open to divergent excellences. It is notable that children of Jewish parents, particularly from Russia, where persecution has been extreme, learn from the conduct of American teachers more, perhaps, than in any other way, how utterly un-Christian is the spirit of bigotry and prejudice. The Russian child who has heard from his father and mother, or seen for himself, as some have done, how Christians in the old country celebrated Christmas and Easter by massacring Jews can thank the American public school for teaching him something better about the religion he had such reason to fear. Instead of attempting to proselytize, the teacher can make "The Vision of Sir Launfal," for instance, the occasion to interpret Christianity in ways that no Jewish parents in America can find other than helpful. The study of *The Merchant of Venice* offers another such opportunity. The teacher who has read the commentaries of Verplanck and Hudson will wish his class to see how both the Christian characters and Shylock are debased by the spirit of persecution. Antonio, the gentleman, becomes much less the gentleman by his treatment of the Jew, while the latter is goaded by his injuries to inhuman revenge. Our country is of all places the land to prize the truth in Emerson's weighty saying that you can not degrade a fellow-being without degrading yourself, and that men are respectable only as they respect.

In all these matters of difference—racial, religious, sectional, or otherwise, every effort is worth making to forestall un-American prejudices. United by a single, common love for their country, and inspired by the unifying conviction that over here men and women are to be judged upon their merits and not upon their birth, our children will offer a richer and better contribution to American life when they have been helped to cultivate the spirit of appreciation of what is different.¹

(g) *Democracy means obligation.* The quality of our collective life rises or falls with the level of the lives led by each.

For America is not the magic scenery
Washed by the sunrise and the sunset seas;
No; nor yet the prairies dark with herds,
Or land-lakes of the western grain; nor yet
Wonder cities white-towered, nor the peaks
Thrusting with metals, nor the smoky mills;
America is you and you and I.

In the first stages of reaction against feudalism, it was natural that the emphasis in democracy should have been laid upon individual rights. The need for such an insistence has by no means utterly passed. But we have learned from the experiences of our history that the correlative of individual freedom should be an emphasis at least equal if not stronger upon duty. My rights always involve your duty to respect them; but we shall be better citizens if each of us shifts the accent to read, "Your rights are my duties." A study of such works as Washington's Farewell Address, Webster's Bunker Hill Oration, Lowell's Democracy, George William Curtis's The American Doctrine of Liberty, and The Public Duty of Educated Men, ex-President Taft's Four Aspects of Civic Duty, should lead to fruitful thinking upon this vital topic. So should the discussion of problems and changed viewpoints brought about by the great war. More than ever we shall need the quality which Webster lauded in Washington, "A spotlessness of motive, a steady submission to every public and private duty, which threw far into the shade the whole crowd of vulgar great." We are learning to-day to repeat more earnestly:

So high is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man;
When Duty whispers low, "Thou must,"
The youth replies "I can."

"Duty," said Robert E. Lee, "is the sublimest word in the English language."

No longer are we content with a conception of democracy that bids us simply refrain from invading the rights of our neighbors. We

have learned that there is a common good in whose behalf we must do things more positive. As against the old watchword of "Every man for himself without interference" the new inspiring word of to-day is "Come together to serve."

Bring all your fairest gifts to deck her shrine
Who lifts our lives above mine and thine.

The common duty comes first. Democracy means the opportunity to share that duty, as voted by the people themselves. The citizen has a voice in deciding what shall constitute the collective burden, and he also has the duty, a duty for that very reason more urgent than in an autocracy, to promote the public good to the full extent of his power. Freedom is precious not so much because it permits the enjoyment of rights as because it offers us the chance to share like free men and women in the common burdens.¹

(h) *The ideal of freedom requires changes in social arrangements as well as insistence upon personal duty.* This note is perhaps the one most insistently stressed in American literature of the present day. It distinguishes the poems of such a writer as Edwin Markham from those of an earlier day like Whittier's. It implies no weakening of our sense of personal responsibility to know that working conditions and other social mechanisms must be improved. Nay, it is in the very interests of a finer personality and a greater capacity to live out the duties of citizenship that we know it does not pay to let children toil in the factories, to overwork our women, to let great masses of our people grow up illiterate and unskilled, or to herd them in ugly, insanitary, vice-breeding slums. The freedom that is most worth while is, as we have said, freedom to do one's duties. The immigrant father who wishes to bring up his children to a worthy American manhood and womanhood is not free to do so as long as he is obliged to rear them amid physical and moral filth. The conditions under which he works, and those amid which he rests, must favor, not hinder, the performing of his full duty to his family and country.

As President Wilson put the case in his *New Freedom*, a higher standard of life is needed than that—

men simply cast about to see that the day does not end disastrously with them * * *. Set the initiative of this great people absolutely free, so that the future of America will be greater than the past, * * * so that America will know as she advances from generation to generation that each brood of her sons is greater and more enlightened than that which preceded it, know that she is fulfilling the promise that she has made to mankind.

¹ For further discussion of this point, see *Moral Values in Secondary Education*, Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1917, No. 51, p. 12; also Bulletin 28, 1910, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education*.

The meaning of liberty has deepened. But it has not ceased to be a fundamental necessity for the life of the soul. And the day is at hand when it shall be realized on this consecrated soil, a New Freedom, a liberty widened and deepened to match the broadened life of man in modern America, restoring to him in very truth the control of his Government, unfettering his energies, and warming the generous impulses of his heart, a process of release, emancipation, and inspiration, full of a breath of life as sweet and wholesome as the airs that filled the sails of the caravels of Columbus and gave the promise and boast of magnificent opportunity in which America dare not fail.

This raising of the quality of personal life in each and all is the thing of importance in the "new social conscience" that is astir in our country. The fight against political dishonesty and inefficiency, against the wasting of our natural resources, against the unfair drains upon the power of women, of children, of other workers unjustly treated, is a crusade in the interests of a new and more positive freedom, the freedom to live a useful, worthy, full-statured American life.

There is much about these problems that is disturbing; and as our public schooling must be free from political partisanship, they must be handled with all fairness. It is useless, however, to try to keep our pupils from discussing the problems of the day. The spirit of reconstruction is in the air. It has been quickened by the war. Our boys and girls now imbibe it everywhere, and they discuss its implications among themselves. The school should help them to make their discussions more intelligent and more fair. If ever we think their views unwarrantably radical, let us not be alarmed; experience will teach them wherein their ideas are extreme; but the experience of adult years is scarcely likely to kindle the zeal for progress which so animates the period of youth. This is notably the stage when ideals of disinterested service make a powerful appeal. The world would never have its reformers, it has been well said, if we were all born middle-aged. The visions of the eager lad of seventeen will be sobered by his contacts with life later on; but they will hardly be created by those contacts. Let youth dream its dreams of a nobler social order. Our country itself is young and forward-looking. Of it, too, may be said to-day what Wordsworth said of an earlier day of reconstruction:

Bliss is it in that dawn to be alive,
And to be young is very heaven.

All this noble unrest of mind and soul is increasingly mirrored in the American literature of the past 20 years. Let the literature teacher recommend the writings and biographies of American leaders of thought for a better shaping of the common life. Among such we would suggest the poems of Edwin Markham; Van Dyke's "Who Follow the Flag," and "The Builders"; Moody's "Gloucester Moors"; Peabody's "The Singing Man"; selections from Lanier's "Sym-

phony"; Widdemer's "The Factories and Other Poems"; Jacob Riis's "How the Other Half Lives," and "Out of Mulberry Street"; Jane Addams's "Democracy and Social Ethics," and "Twenty Years at Hull House"; Lillian D. Wald's "The House on Henry Street"; Arthur T. Hadley's "Standards of Public Morality"; Edward D. Ross's "Sin and Society"; William D. Howell's "A Traveler from Altruria"; Booker T. Washington's "Up from Slavery," and "Working with the Hands"; Francis G. Peabody's "Education for Life" (the inspiring story of Gen. Armstrong and Hampton Institute); Henry George, jr.'s, "Life of Henry George"; Paul L. Ford's "Honorable Peter Stirling"; Frank Norris's "The Pit"; Winston Churchill's "Mr. Crewe's Career"; William H. Taft's "Four Aspects of Civic Duty"; Theodore Roosevelt's "American Ideals," and "The New Nationalism"; Woodrow Wilson's "The New Freedom"; Walter Weyl's "The New America"; Herbert Croley's "The Promise of American Life."

(i) *Our democracy will profit from understanding other countries.* We are outgrowing the habits of mind fostered by our earlier isolation. We are rapidly learning to think of our Nation as a member in a family of nations; and our land is going to be the greater for a new exchange between ourselves and the other members of it. Loving our own country first, we shall be more appreciative of what we owe to other peoples and of what we can learn from their example and friendly criticism.

Here the teaching of literature can be of marked service. It can correct the tendency to provincialism by showing, for example, the indebtedness of our writers to those of the mother country. Our literary speech has been molded by the English of the King James Bible; until our country produced its own literature it knew, besides the Bible and the Greek and Roman classics, only the literature of Great Britain. The debt should be remembered. For instance, Whittier's "Snowbound" might be compared with Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night," and Lowell's "Dandelion" with the latter's "To a Mountain Daisy." Lowell's tribute to the plowman poet in his "Incident in a Railroad Car," and Whittier's in his poem "Burns" (Holmes's and Longfellow's also), deserve to be noted. Where, if not in American schools, should "A Man's a Man for A' That" be committed to memory?

Edmund Burke's "Speech on Conciliation with the American Colonies" repays the careful study it receives in many high schools. It is good for our pupils to know the man himself, to admire him, for his fight to drive out the rotten borough system, to abolish imprisonment for debt, to prevent oppression of the natives in India by colonial administrators (as they read in Macaulay's "Warrior Hastings"); and especially for the generosity of mind that made him

study the American Colonies in order to interpret them aright to his fellow statesmen. His speech will help our pupils to understand the American spirit in the light of one line of its ancestry. Studied in connection with the words of such English historians of our Revolution as Lecky and Trevelyan, it will enable American children to see that there were Englishmen who approved our action because it was in line with the English tradition of liberty. The Colonies were lost to Great Britain because the conduct of the Tory administration toward America was un-British. The devotion of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and of South African Union to-day illustrates how well Great Britain took to heart the point in Edmund Burke's plea for the liberty which our pupils are apt to think exclusively American. His arguments against the use of force still hold good against the policy of conquest. The solid good sense in these arguments, as well as his eloquent reminder that the deepest ties among peoples, "links which light as air are strong as iron," are ties of respect and affection, should be as familiar as anything in our native literature.

A genuine pride in our own achievements need not suffer if we direct our pupils' attention in this way to what writers in other lands have done. Surely no American will care less for The Vision of Sir Launfal for being told how Victor Hugo taught much the same ideal in Les Miserables and The Hunchback of Notre Dame. It is only false pride that can not endure comparisons.

A true pride will be benefited by knowing what other people think about us. Just because America has so much to give mankind, we want to know how our gift can be improved. If our country is to become, as Daniel Webster said, "a vast and splendid monument upon which the world may gaze in admiration forever," surely she must school herself to improvement without ceasing. For this reason it is well to recommend to our boys and girls books on America by foreign observers. Bryce's American Commonwealth has justly won a place for itself. The introductory word breathes a specially admirable spirit. Letters from America, by Rupert Brooke, the poet who died in the Gallipoli campaign, criticizes some of our shortcomings, but always with kindly appreciation. So does the genial America through the Eyes of an Oriental Diplomat, by Mr. Wu Ting Fang. Other useful criticisms will be found in G. Lowes Dickinson's Appearances, and John G. Brook's collection As Others See Us.

(j) *Democracy rests upon excellence in character.* The greatest wealth of our country is the moral quality of her citizens.

The longer on this earth we live
 And weigh the various qualities of men,
 Seeing how most are fugitive
 Or fitful gifts at best of now and then.

The more we feel the high, stern-featured beauty
 Of plain devotedness to duty,
 Steadfast and still, nor paid with mortal praise,
 But finding amplest recompense
 For life's ungarlanded expense
 In work done squarely and unwasted days.

This tribute to Washington (in Lowell's *Under the Old Elm*) points a truth so simple and so obvious that youth may sometimes overlook its fundamental importance. Democracy is rooted in moral excellence. Character is at once its chief safeguard and its sublimest hope. There is need, as we have seen, for certain external reconstruction; there is need in a democracy for widespread common-sense and far-seeing intelligence and trained ability to work together. But these are only instruments. Their value lies in what they can contribute to the making of souls; for it is just this contribution to a nobler type of living that gives a nation its highest reason for being. The mission of America among the nations is to show what splendid types of human personality can be bred under the ideal of freedom. Like the Roman mother, she must exhibit as her jewels her sons and daughters.

Concern, then, for moral character is not to be regarded as something to be annexed to other features of citizenship and of school life as one might add a room or a wing to a building. It is to be the animating breath of all that the school undertakes to do for our country. The greatest wealth of the nation being moral personality, political freedom is precious as a way of increasing that wealth and elevating its quality.

Without tedious moralizing, literature lessons can bring this fact home. The more our pupils grow in the power of sustained reflection, the more we should seek to have them reflect upon the ethical principles that give grandeur to the ideal of freedom. Every admirable American life is a guaranty that our freedom is worth possessing. Every act of noble self-reliance, of integrity, of self-discipline, of bravery, of generosity, of self-denying, disinterested service, is one more step toward the truest of all freedoms, the liberation of what is best in mankind from its own unworthy entanglements. Our literature is rich in beautiful inspirations to this end. Let us make the most of them. In the service of American ideals, "thought kindling itself at the living fire of thought" has mighty tasks to push forward and magnificent resources to bring to light.