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## TEACHERSHIP.

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE WORLD LEAGUE OF CULTURE.

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WE have before us news from Chicago that the school teachers' salaries were detained. This sounds strange on the eve of the opening of the Chicago Centenary World Fair. In the *Literary Digest* for March 18, 1933 under title "The Teachers' Battle for the Schools" are given amongst many others the following most striking facts: "Education must be deflated"—so the order of the economists goes forth... "We are on the battle-line" is the cry from thousands of educators gathered at the Convention in Minneapolis of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association... "Already," Dr. Cooper declares, "thousands of children in such sections are virtually without schooling. Two hundred districts in Arkansas are able to give but sixty days' school in a year, or about two years' education in eight. And similar situations prevail in Alabama, Oklahoma and Idaho"..... "We would prefer to make personal sacrifices," states Prof. J. K. Norton of

Teachers' College, "rather than have children denied their educational birth-right. It is this loyalty that has won for teachers in many communities the admiration of parents, and that has paved the way for effective co-operation in defence of the schools"..... "What will it profit the nation if we maintain the credit of industrial corporations and deny education to America's children?" asks the report of the Committee on Lay Relations of Toledo, Ohio.

In the last issue of the New-Haven's *Teachers' Journal* there is a whole series of most remarkable information about the same plight of educational questions. In the leading editorial we read the following: "The crisis confronting public school education in New-Haven is now in such an alarming state that one does not hesitate to say that we have arrived at that point where we feel each impending decision may be the fatal one." The article concludes with the call for rigorous justice. The following article

"Human Rights *versus* Money Rights" states: "Taxpayers are groaning under the weight of the expense of Government compared to their reduced incomes." "It has become increasingly evident that what was called in the beginning 'the Depression' has now become 'the Bankers' Panic.'"

A third article of the same Journal under title "The Citizens' Conference on the Crisis in Education" is most characteristic for our present-day perturbances and gives amongst other items, "the Declaration of Policy" which affirms the importance of education for the nation, protesting against the intervention of politics in school-life and again call in attention to the necessity of proportionate salaries with regard to the cost of living. The declaration has to repeat old axioms, apparently having sufficient reason for their reiteration. Thus the fourth paragraph of the declaration states: "Education is a necessity, not a luxury, since the growth of the child cannot be halted or postponed during an economic emergency." And the thirty-third paragraph remarks quite justly: "If the State is to have during the coming generation institutions adequate to serve its needs, it must not now unwisely weaken the human foundations of those institutions."

Such significant statements were found in a stray copy of a Teachers' Journal. But even without this, we have lately read an endless list of various "necrologies" about cuts and axing of educational institutions especially. Verily not

in one country, but everywhere, as if people agreed not to think more of the future and to discontinue the growth of educational undertakings. The condition of the teaching staff, under the constant threat of sudden curtailments, has become altogether unstable and thus brings harm to the education of the youth.

Everywhere there are special Ministries of Public Education, Departments of Science and Art, and it is strange to observe, that such institutions, which it would seem are the most essential for the progress of a cultural country, are subject first of all to continuous cuts, as if they were some luxury and not the most essential public necessity, without which all other ministries and departments could not even exist. People do not dare to discuss the curtailment in salaries of many other departments, but it has become a general trend of mind to suggest the cutting of wages of teachers, which are already meagre. The teacher who as a rule has no savings, must exist in some miraculous way, and yet he must manifest full kind-heartedness, satisfaction, good-naturedness and all those qualities which are demanded first of all from a teacher. Depressed by his worries how to make ends meet, the teacher must wear the mask of endless patience and the smile of wisdom, when at the same time his family may not know how to balance their daily needs. Why is such exceptional civil heroism demanded only from the teacher? Why should we expect continuous, endless sacrifices just from those who are most of all in need?

A country which is aiming at construction and the positive solution of life problems, cannot ignore the condition of teachers. To ignore them would mean to ignore the destiny of its entire future generation. Of course the teacher who is absorbed in educational work, which requires special concentration, is the least protesting element, unless he will be compelled by some hopeless hardships. People desire that teachers should not only teach well, and should not only continuously increase their knowledge up-to-date, but also that the teachers should arouse the love of their students. Love is inseparable from reverence and the nation ought to create for the teachers an especially esteemed position. It is impossible to divide the teachers abruptly into lower and higher ones, for the synthesis of knowledge is everywhere high and one must apply a great deal of time and concentrated effort to become imbued and remain on top of the synthesis of knowledge.

The teacher is a friend of a positive creative government, because the teacher exists for the continuous constructiveness and for the affirmation of human dignity. Who else will tell the young generation of the most beautiful, of the most creative, of the most powerful, of the most heroic and of progressive cognizance? Verily, we expect from the teacher the knowledge of the highest conceptions. We expect from him endless patience, incessant labour and continuous renovation, and at the same time we do not exercise care, that these

high conditions and demands are sufficiently guaranteed.

For twenty years I was myself at the head of educational institutions. Among thousands of students and hundreds of professors and teachers, one could observe in full multiformity the complex of human interrelations. Indeed, teachership stands high, but it is also difficult. In the continuous flow of the school's elements, one has to retain a great equilibrium and must always inexhaustibly provide joy to the young spirit, which must enter life, full of real hopes and high aspirations, for what the teacher pledged himself.

The conception of teachership widely permeates the whole life, beyond school hours; how valuable if we can safeguard for our whole life in our hearts a love and reverence towards our first teachers and guides. If the student, on entering life, would afterwards realize that their teachers suffered undeservedly and were overburdened, then many regrets would occur in the name of love and friendliness, which are the foundations of education.

For the sake of these fundamentals of public life, in other words, for the sake of the foundations of Culture, one should give special attention to educational questions, as the most precious, as the most sacred. If in the best time of welfare, the nation must give best care to the ameliorations of educational problems, then during the time of material and spiritual crises, the condition of the

educators must be definitely safeguarded.

The safe-guarding of the foundations of education is the primary aim of the League of Culture. Without care for education, the very existence of the League of Culture becomes useless. One may unite in the name of knowledge, in the name of the beautiful, in the name of hearty co-operation. Therefore one must ask all members of the League, that everyone in his activity, everyone in his field, draws the heartiest attention to the plights of the problem of Education.

Let us not feel relief that after all education still exists and that the teachers live somehow. This is not sufficient. Education must thrive beautifully and teachers should be well off, as befits a progressive positive nation. If everyone according to his ability will apply thought and care to this essential problem, then I assure you, that much good will result for the benefit of a truly national necessity.

In my book "Shambhala" I paid tribute to teachers in the following passage of an essay entitled "Guru, The Teacher":

Once in Finland I sat on the shores of Lake Ladoga with a farm lad. A middle-aged man passed us by and my small companion stood up and with great reverence took off his cap.

I asked him afterwards: "Who was this man?" and with special seriousness, the boy answered: "He is a teacher."

I again asked: "Is it your teacher?"

"No," answered the boy, "he is the teacher from the neighbouring school."

"Then you know him personally?" I persisted.

"No", he answered with astonishment.

"Then why did you greet him with such reverence?"

Still more seriously, my little companion answered: "Because he is a teacher!"

Verily in this little boy, who bared his head before a teacher, is contained the healthy seed of the nation, which knows the past and knows the significance of the word "to build."

Let us close with the following lines from the book of the East "Fiery World": "A mother was telling her son about a great Saint. "Even a pinch of dust from beneath the feet is already great." It came to pass that this holy man passed through the village. The boy followed his footsteps and took a pinch of this earth, sewed it up and began to wear it around his neck. And when he was reciting his lesson at school, he always held in his hand this holy relic. At that the boy became filled with such inspiration, that his answers were always remarkable. At last the teacher, on leaving the school, praised him and asked him what it was that he always held in his hand? The boy replied: "the earth from underneath the feet of the Saint who passed through our village." The teacher added: "The earth of the Saint serves you better than any gold." A neighbour shopkeeper who was present said to himself: "What a foolish boy, who only took a pinch of this golden

earth! I shall await the Saint's coming and shall collect all the earth from underdeath his feet. Thus I shall receive the most profitable goods." And the shopkeeper sat at his threshold and waited in vain for the Saint. But the Saint never came. Covetousness is not in the nature of the Fiery World."

"Shame on the country where teachers dwell in poverty and want! Shame on those who know that their children are taught by a man in need! Not only shame on the nation, that does not take care of the teachers of its future generation, but it is a sign of ignorance. Can one entrust children to a man in depression? Can one forget what an emanation is created by sorrow? Can one be ignorant of the fact that the spirit which is depressed will not call forth enthusiasm? Can one consider tutorship an insignificant profession? Can one expect of children the enlightenment of spirit if the school is a place of humiliation and offence? Can one feel the construction during the gnashing of teeth? Can one expect the fires of the heart when the spirit is silent? Thus I say and repeat that the people who have forgotten the teacher have forgotten their future. Let us not lose an hour in order to direct one's thought towards the joy of the future. But let us take care that the teacher should be the most valuable person in the institutions of the nation. The time approaches when the spirit must be educated and derive joy from the true knowledge. The fire is at the threshold."

"One must soften the heart of the teachers, then they will abide in con-

stant cognition. The heart of children knows what is a flame and what is extinguished. Not a given lesson, but a mutual striving of the teacher with the disciple discloses a world full of wonders. To open the eyes of disciples means together with him to love the great creation. Who does not agree, that one should stand on firm ground in order to strive into the far-off distance: the marksman will confirm this. Thus let us learn to take care of everything that affirms the future. The fire is at the threshold."

"Every abuse of the Saviour, Teacher and Heroes throws into savagery and plunges into chaos. How to explain that the chaos is very close; there is no need to cross an ocean to find it. When the treasure of solemnity is lost and the pearls of the knowledge of the heart are scattered, what does remain? One can remember how people mocked at the great Sacrifice. Has not the whole world become responsible for such savagery? One may see how the latter is reflected in shallowness. There is nothing worse than shallowness. I affirm—be blessed all energies, only not to fall into the morass of dissolution. Thus let us remember all great Great Days!"

"One may imagine how beautiful may be the co-service of multitudes of people, when their hearts aspire to one ascent. We shall not say—impossible or it is rejected. From Power one may borrow and from Light one may become enlightened. Only to realize in what lies the Light and the Power. Someone already roars with laughter, but he laughs in darkness. What can be more horrible than laughter in darkness! But Light will be with him who desires it!"

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