MAKING WISE MEN BY MACHINERY.

If I might presume to tender a few words of advice to so high and mighty a personage as the president of the University of Texas, I should recommend that he carefully study the Solomonic proverb: "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." In other words, never pull your trigger until sure you're loaded; for while a fizzle causes the unskillful to laugh, it cannot but "make the judicious grieve." Every man capable of tracing effects to their efficient causes, who chanced to hear or read President George T. Winston's address before the Association of Superintendents and Principals of Public Schools, must have sighed in bitterness of soul, "Poor Old Texas!" These gentlemen, assembled for the ostensible purpose of enhancing their proficiency by the interchange of ideas, had a right to expect valuable instruction from the lips of a man who occupies the post of honor in the chief educational institute of the State; but were regaled with a cataclysm of misinformation, precipitated from an amorphous mind, which seemed to be a compromise between Milton's unimaginable chaos and that "land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness." That such an address could proceed from the president of a State University is most remarkable; that it should be received as an oracle by the men at whose feet sit the youth of Texas is simply astounding. I read the address in no unfriendly or hypercritic spirit, for none rejoice more than I in whatsoever contributes, even a little, to the luster of the Lone Star. Every laurel won by Texas in the forum or the field is worn by all her citizens; her every failure in the arena of the world is shame to all her sons. President Winston evidently appreciated the importance of the occasion but was unable to rise to it. Instead of an address at once philosophic and practical, conveying to his auditors a clear concept of duty and the best method of discharging it, he indulged in a rambling country lyceum discourse, wherein worthless conclusions were drawn by main strength and awkwardness from false premises, interlarded with glaring misstatements and seasoned with Anglomaniacal slop. It is not pleasant to think of hundreds of bright young minds being molded by a man who is a living vindication of Sheridan, long accused of libeling nature in his character of Mrs. Malaprop. "What," says Pope, "must be the priest when the monkey is a god?" And what, the taxpayers of Texas well may ask, must be the day-drudges of an educational system wherein a Winston occupies the post of honor? Where Texas found the party whom she has made president of her boasted university, I cannot imagine, but he talks like an Anglicized Yankee--one of those fellows who try to conceal the cerulean hue of their equators by wearing the British flag for a belly-band. It is but mournful consolation to reflect that the chiefs of pretentious educational institutes elsewhere have proven by their parroting that they have as little conception of the social contract and true position of the pedagogue in "the scheme of things," as has our own 'varsity president. Texas' educational system is probably up to the average, and President Winston as wise as many other pompous "gerund-grinders" who look into leather spectacles and see nothing, yet imagine that, like the adventurer in the Arabian tale, they are gazing upon all the wealth of the world; but that is no reason why we should continue to waste the public revenue on Lagado professors who would extract sunbeams from cucumbers and calcine ice into gunpowder. While nothing short of a perusal of the complete text of the oration in question can give an adequate idea of how much folly a 'varsity president can pump through his face in a given period, its salient features can be summed up in a brief paragraph:
"The schoolmaster represents the two greatest factors in modern progress--education and organization. These two factors are really one, for education is a means to organization. Power unorganized is no longer power. Organization means strength and progress; individualism means weakness and decay. The English people have risen by organized effort to the mastery of the globe. They have created the cheapest and most efficient government, combining in the highest degree individual liberty and national power. They have created the greatest store of things contributing to the welfare, happiness and refinement of humanity, and in education, literature, science and art have lifted humanity upon the highest plane of civilization. The Irish race is deficient in the faculty of organization, and will be crushed out with the Indian and Negro, by the more highly organized races. Football requires better organization than do other games, a higher order of intellect, hence its popularity with the people. The best universities may be expected to furnish the best football teams. The superior organization of the North enabled it to surpass the South in peace and crush it in war. The public schoolteacher, being the chief factor in organization, to him must be given the credit for the quick recovery of the South from the ravages of civil war. He is the chief power in things material as well as in matters intellectual. He alone can introduce new systems of thought and action in any province of human endeavor."

Having thus seined President Winston's rhetorical sea, let us examine our catch and determine what is valuable food and what mere jelly-fish. That the schoolmaster is a very important factor in the social system there can be no question. Let him have all the honor to which he is entitled; but let him not seek to appropriate that which belongs to others. The pedagogue is not the fount of wisdom: he is but the pipe--of large or small caliber as the case may be--through which the wisdom of others flows to fertilize the intellectual fields. How much, prithee, have all the public pedagogues of America--including the president of the Texas 'varsity--added to the world's stock of wisdom during the last decade? Does it begin to dawn upon President Winston that there is another very important factor in the world's progress, viz., the Newtons, Bacons, Koperniks, Watts, Edisons, Shakespeares, Burkes, Keplers, Platos, Jeffersons and others who, by patient research or the outpourings of super-gifted minds have furnished forth the pedagogue's stock-in-trade? Science and Art, Philosophy and Religion--all that contributes to man's welfare, material or spiritual, originated in obscure closets and caves, in the open fields, beneath the star-domed vault of night, and during all these ages have received chief furtherance from individual genius or application, the schools but recording the progress made, spreading abroad more or less skilfully, the sacred fire wrested from Heaven by intellectual Titans. Still the pedagogue may well be proud of his profession, for it is a privilege to think--or even think at--the thoughts of men of genius, to officiate as their messengers to mankind. Let these royal heralds flourish their birchrods in every bypath, cry "The King!" and thereby get much honor. Winston says that education and organization are really the same, because one is a means to the other. How that may be I know not. An avowal of love is usually a means to a baby; still it were a work of supererogation to put diapers on a proposal of marriage. Organization is ever education of a certain sort; but education is not always organization. Many of the world's wisest have stood, like Byron, AMONG men, but not OF them--"In a shroud of thoughts which were not their thoughts."

Oxen organized in teams may accomplish more than working single; but you cannot yoke Pegasus and a plow-horse--Bellerophon's winged mount peremptorily refuses to be "organized" and turn rectilinear furrows, but plunges through Time and Space in an orbit of its own making--often mistaken by the patient organizers for a lawless comet, its appearance a dire portent. You cannot drive Shakespeare and Charles Hoyt in double harness, nor make the mock-bird and night-hawk sing in harmony.

The public pedagogue does not go out every morning before breakfast and, with ferula for Archimedean lever and Three R's for fulcrum, prize open the gates of day. The organization of infants of every conceivable degree of intellectuality into classes, and their formal elevation through successive "grades" by means of cunningly devised educational jack-screws or block-and-tackle, does not constitute the complete dynamics of the universe, President Winston to the contrary, notwithstanding. Knowledge must exist somewhere before there be any pedagogue to impart it; and though, under the name of Truth, it hide in Ymir's Well, those whose souls are athirst therefore will assuredly find it, though denied all mechanical furtherance. Education is simply the acquirement of useful information, it matters not how nor where nor when. Deprive any man--even a 'varsity president--of all knowledge but that obtained in the schools and he were helpless as an infant abandoned in mid-ocean. He could not so much as distinguish between peas and beans, between dogs and wolves, by the descriptions furnished by naturalists. That man who has lived to learn
wisely and well has reached the Ultima Thule of terrestrial knowledge, the ne plus ultra of human understanding. More can no college professor or 'varsity president impart. If he know not this he is uneducated, though he be graduate of every university from Salamanca to the Sorbonne, and from Oxford to Austin.

Organization connotes mutual interdependence of the component parts, limitation of individualism, the circumscription of personal liberty. To a certain extent this is advantageous to man--without it civilization, human progress, were impossible; but to draw a line between wise use and abuse were a task of some difficulty. President Winston assures us that the British Government is the best in the world, yet it is a chaos compared to the organization of the Russian autocracy. Because we find beneficial that organization which makes cooperation possible, would he carry it to the extent of communism? Because concentration of capital reduces cost of production, does he approve of that organization which enables trusts to juggle prices? When organization has reached that point where one-third of our wealth-producers must stand idle because denied the privilege of producing the wherewithal to feed and clothe and house themselves, it might be well for 'varsity presidents to apply the soft pedal to their paean of praise and inquire diligently whether it be possible to get entirely too much of a good thing. Too many accept St. Paul's concession of a little wine for the stomach's sake for license to become sots.

Thomas Carlyle, who could see almost as far into a millstone as the average 'varsity president, was of the opinion that the tendency to ever more compact organization was transforming both education and religion into farces, blighting the spiritual and intellectual life of man and precipitating in the world of industry the most important and complex question with which political economists had ever been called upon to deal. That was nearly seventy years ago, when vast organization of capital had just begun--when the age of machinery, both for the grinding of corn and the inculcation of knowledge, was but nascent. Hear him growl:

"Though mechanism, wisely contrived, has done much for man, we cannot be persuaded that it has ever been the chief source of his worth or happiness. . . . We have machines for education. Instruction, that mysterious communing of Wisdom and Ignorance, is no longer an indefinable, tentative process, requiring a study of individual aptitude, and a perpetual variation of means and methods to attain the same end; but a secure, universal, straightforward business to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism, with such intellect as comes to hand. . . . Philosophy, Science, Art, Literature, all depend on machinery. No Newton, by silent meditation, now discovers the system of the world by the falling of an apple; but some quite other than Newton stands in his Museum, his Scientic Institution, and behind whole batteries of retorts, digesters and galvanic piles imperatively 'interrogates nature'--who, however, shows no haste to answer. In defect of Raphaels, and Angelos, and Mozarts, we have Royal Academies of Painting, Sculpture, Music; whereby the languishing spirit of Art may be strengthened by the more generous diet of a Public Kitchen. . . . Hence the Royal and Imperial Societies, the Bibliothques, Glypthotheques, Technotheques, which front us in all capital cities, like so many well-finished hives, to which it is expected the stray agencies of Wisdom will swarm of their own accord, and hive and make honey! . . . Men have grown mechanical in head and heart as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavor and in natural force of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combination and arrangement, for institutions, constitutions--for Mechanism of one sort or another, do they hope and struggle. . . . Science and Art have derived only partial help from the culture or manuring of institutions--often have suffered damage."

Of course Carlyle may have been mistaken; still the fact that since he uttered his warning the world has not produced one man of genius except in the department of mechanics--that intellectually the last half of the present century is to the first half as "moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine"; that religion is becoming even more materialistic, patriotism passing and poetry dying or already dead; that millionaires are multiplying while the legion of idle labor grows larger, suggests that important inferences may be drawn from this ever-increasing organization of powers spiritual and material; and, like Quintius Fixlien, I "invite the reader to draw them."

If "the English race" be indeed "rising to the mastery of the globe," there is no cause for immediate alarm, for, at his present rate of progress, it will be some ages yet before John Bull succeeds in stealing it all. Nations, like individuals, have their youth, their lusty manhood and their decline; and there is every indication that Britain has passed the meridian of her power, while Russia and America, her equals in the arena of the world, still find their shadows falling
toward the west. Persia, Assyria, Rome and Spain have aspired to the lordship of the world; and each in turn has been brought low by that insidious power that for a century has been draining the iron from the blood of England--the love of luxury, the subjection of Glory to Greed. If history be "philosophy teaching by example," the lion of Britain is senescent, if not already dead and stuffed with sawdust; but let the world look well to that savage brute known as the Russian bear. No: England is not "master of the globe," nor can she ever be; for her home territory is trifling and distant provinces are a source of weakness in war.

It were idle to discuss with a confirmed Anglomaniac the respective merits of the British and American governments. It may be that the former is "cheapest," despite the maintenance of an established church, a great army and navy and a sovereign who, with her worthless spawn, costs the taxpayers $3,145,000 per annum, while our president requires less than one-sixtieth of that sum. England does not pension the adult orphan children of men who sprained their moral character in an effort to dodge the draft, nor does Queen Victoria sell government bonds to banker syndicates on private bids; hence I will have no controversy with the learned Theban on the question of economy. The British subject may enjoy greater "individual liberty" than does the American sovereign, for aught I am prepared to prove. True, he is taxed to support a church founded by that eminent Christian Apostle Henry VIII, and whose next fidei defensor will be the present worshipful Prince of Wales; is represented in but one branch of Parliament and has no voice in the selection of his chief executive officer. If the sovereign and hereditary house of lords refuse to do his bidding, he must grin and bear it, while we can "turn the rascals out"--even if we turn a more disreputable crew of chronic gab-traps and industrial cut-throats in. He enjoys one privilege which is denied us, much to the dissatisfaction of our Anglomaniacs, that of purchasing titles of nobility; but we can acquire a life tenure of the title of Judge by arbitrating a horse-trade or officiating one term as justice of the peace, while by assiduous bootlicking we may, like Rienzi Miltiades Johnsing, obtain a lieutenant-colonelcy--even a gigadier-brindleship--on the gilded staff of some 2 x 4 governor, and disport in all the glorious pomp and circumstance of war at inaugural balls or on mimic battlefields; hence honors are easy.

. . . . . .

That the Irish race is deficient in the organizing faculty is a great discovery, and I would advise President Winston to apply for a patent. John Bull will prove himself ungrateful indeed if he neglects to pension him for having demonstrated that those Irish organizations which, for half a century have kept his public servants looking under their beds o' nights for things neither ornamental nor useful, were mere Fata Morgana, Brocken specters or disease of the imagination. Winston has evidently been misled by a mere than Boeotian ignorance blithely footing it hand-in-hand with a vivid anti-Celtic imagination. He does not know that Ireland was the seat of learning and the expounder of law, both human and divine, when the rest of Europe was a wide-weltering chaos in which shrieked the demons Ignorance and Disorder. He was oblivious of the fact that the American people--the master organizers of the age--are far more Irish than English. You can scarce scratch an American babe of the third generation without drawing Celtic blood. Strange that the only Federal regiment which did not go to pieces at the Battle of Bull Run, though occupying the hottest part of the field--was composed of these very Irishmen who are incapable of organization! McClellan, the greatest military organizer of modern times--though by no means the ablest commander--was of Celtic extraction, as was the Duke of Wellington, as are the men at the head of the British and American armies to-day.

Were President Winston better informed he would not talk so glibly of what the "English race" has done for literature. No Englishman of pure Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Saxon-Norman lineage has ever reached the front rank in the great Republic of Letters. In Art and Science, in Oratory and Music--even in War and Commerce--they have had to content themselves with walking well to the rear of the band-wagon. Shakespeare was of Welsh descent, but whether of Celtic or Cimbric stock it were difficult to determine. The Cimbri and Celts are both very ancient races. A remnant of the former is found in Wales, while the survivors of the latter are the Irish and Scotch Highlanders. Northern France and Wales have strong Celtic contingents. Byron, "Rare" Ben Jonson, Christopher North, Oliver Goldsmith, Dean Swift, Lawrence Sterne and Louis Stevenson were Celts by blood. Scott, Burns, Carlyle and Macaulay were Scots of Celtic extraction. Tom Moore, Brinsley Sheridan and Edmund Burke were Irishmen, as are Balfe and Sullivan, the musical composers. Disraeli was a Jew. The genealogy of Pope and Tennyson remain to be traced. That the original Duke of Marlborough was an Englishman by birth and breeding "goes without saying." He acted like one. No Celtic commander could have robbed his dead soldiers. In the province of belles-lettres John Bull can at least claim Alfred Austin, his
present poet-laureate, and Oscar Wilde, the dramatic decadent. Dr. Jameson is England's military lion and President George T. Winston of the Texas 'varsity her representative of learning! The English proper are but "a nation of shopkeepers," and the greatest shops are not conducted by Anglo-Saxons. England's great manufacturers are Scots, her merchant princes are Irishmen, her leading bankers are Jews and her reigning family an indifferent breed of Low Dutch. The Romans overran England, but unable to subjugate either Scotland or Ireland, abandoned "perfidious Albion," as a worthless conquest. Everybody took a turn at robbing it whenever it had anything worth carrying off, until the Norman buccaneers appropriated it bodily and reduced the Saxons to serfdom. By amalgamation with the inferior race they produced the Tudors, who gave them 'An'some 'Arry and a Virgin (?) Queen. Then the Scotch Stuarts took a turn at ruling and robbing England, and were followed by the religious bigots and witch-burners. The French ruled it awhile through their puppets and were succeeded by the Dutch, who held it in such contempt that they would not permit its language to be spoken at court. They are still milking it for more than three millions per annum, with an extra pull at the udder whenever one of the seventy-odd descendants of the Sovereign concludes to found a family. The Scotch, the Welsh and Dutch enabled England to enslave and plunder Ireland, and upon this meat John Bull, the J. Caesar of pawnbrokers, is growing great.

I much fear that President Winston studied sports under the tuition of Referee Earp, else he could have scarce given a decision to the favorite of the college campus. Football requires neither the intellect nor the perfect organization which is a sine qua non to success in our great "national game." Its chief requisites are long hair, leathery lungs and abnormally developed legs. The game owes its popularity to the average boy's predilection for the brutal, his inherent animalism. Football has for ages been a favorite game with savages, while baseball is a product of civilization. I am not decrying football--I incline to the view that an occasional rough-and-tumble scrapping match in which there is imminent danger of black eyes, and even of broken bones, is good for a boy I simply point out that as an intellectual game it not only ranks far below chess, billiards and baseball, but does not rise to a parity with pugilism. It is a mistake to assume that an intellectual divertissement must be popular with an intellectual people. The highest culture is but a film cast over a fathomless sea of savagery. The most learned of the Greeks, the most cultured of the Romans gloried in brutal games, and to-day a dog fight, a slugging match or even a college football game is relished by the Titan of intellect as keenly as by the Bowery tough.

I cannot imagine where President Winston absorbed the idea that lack of organization has been the curse of the South. It may surprise him to be told in ante-bellum days it was not only the chief repository of culture, but possessed a fair proportion of the nation's wealth. The South has ever been chiefly an agricultural country, and will so remain despite the frantic efforts of enthusiasts to subvert natural laws. Not until the resources of our soil are in great measure exhausted, or increase of population forces people from the fields, can the South become a great manufacturing country. Such is the lesson of history, which we can only ignore to our loss. Wealth accumulates at large manufacturing and trade centers as it cannot elsewhere, and naturally seeks to further its interest by organization. The concentration of forces, intellectual and industrial, on that stupendous scale which has won President Winston's admiration, is a post-bellum development both North and South. The greatest of American organizers have been Southern men. Washington and Jefferson were types of the individualism which is supposed to have been our bane; yet one organized the Continental Army which won our independence, the other organized the Federal Government. It is not true that the Southern Confederacy was crushed by superior organization. Better disciplined troops than the veterans of Lee and Jackson never faced a battery. "Hardee's Tactics," one of the most highly esteemed of military manuals, was the work of a Confederate general. The assault on the heights of Gettysburg has become historic as much because of the wonderful organization displayed by the Confederate troops as because it marked the supreme hour of a nation's agony. It was the only time in the history of this world when an assaulting column was greeted with cheers of admiration by the soldiers who stood to receive the shock. That fact alone should suffice to make an American college president proud of his country--should purge him of every atrocious taint of Anglomaniacism. Only once have the sons of men in any age or clime displayed a grander heroism than did those who hurled themselves against the heights of Gettysburg, and that when the Federals silenced their guns to cheer the dauntless courage of their foe. It is not my present purpose to refight the Civil War, and trace every effect to its efficient cause; I have simply undertaken to make good my original proposition--that President Winston is, as Thersites says of Patroclus, "a fool positive," and should, therefore, hold his peace.
The schoolteacher has doubtless played no unimportant part in the rehabilitation of the South; but he should not set up as Autocrat of the Universe on a salary of $40 a month, and burden the Asses' Bridge with the idea that he "maketh all things, and without him was nothing made that is made." His ferula may be an Aaron's rod which buds and blossoms; but it does not bear sufficient fruit to furnish a hungry world with necessary aliment. We still crave manna from Heaven and grapes from Hebron. The public pedagogue does not make the laws of trade. His province is to interpret them; and proud may he be of his labor if his proteges do not find it necessary to forget, at the very gateway of a commercial career, that he ever had a name and habitation on the earth. Nor does he frequently alarm the plodding natives by the "introduction of new systems of thought and action." Such "systems" do not spring completely panoplied from the cerebrum of our educational Jove, and stand about on one foot like a lost goose, or country lad, awaiting an introduction. New systems of thought and action are usually the growth of ages, the seed often sown by men we hear not of. When of such sudden development that they require a formal introduction, they are apt to be received with the scant courtesy of a poor relation, the introducer reviled as a crank or condemned as a heretic and crucified. Generally speaking, the professional educator confines himself pretty closely to his birch and his textbooks, being quite content to propagate, as best he may, the ideas of others. Neither the birch nor the text-book, it may be well to remark, constitutes the world's stock of wisdom, but only an incidental furtherance thereto--the key, as it were, by which the treasure is more readily come at. When the schoolmaster has put his pupil in possession of the open sesame he considers his duty done--that he has earned his provender. And perhaps he has. In this day and age it is all that is expected of him, all that he is paid for. He is not required to inculcate wisdom, which is well; for that can no man do. He is not even expected to impart much knowledge; but to put his pupil through a course of mental calisthenics, miscalled education. But even this is by no means to be despised. With mind strengthened by exercise, even in a desert, and lungs developed by football, the youth may be able to delve the harder for knowledge when happily released from the "gerund-grinder," to pray the more lustily to the immortal gods for understanding, which transmutes what were else base metal into ingots of fine gold. There was a time when more was expected of a teacher; but that was before the application of labor-saving machinery to spiritual matters; before colleges became known as places "where coals are brightened and diamonds are dimmed"--before it became customary to cast potential Homers and Hannibals, Topsies and Blind Toms into the same educational hopper, and hire some gabby-Holofernes from God knows where to manipulate the mill. It was a time when men considered qualified to teach declined to waste effort on numskulls, no matter whose brats they might be. It was a time when the fame of a great, the honor of a good and the infamy of a bad man were shared by their preceptors. Those were the days of individualism which President Winston so much deplores--the era which fashioned those men whom the world for twenty centuries has been proud to hail as masters. As the doctors have decided that all human frailties are but diseases, I do not despair of our 'varsity president. Some Theodorus may yet arise to "purge him canonically with Anticryan hellebore," and thus clear out the perverse habit of his brain and make him a man of as goodly sense as the rejuvenated Gargantua.

(The end)

William Cowper Brann's essay: The Public Pedagogue

By William Cowper Brann