

SCIENCE

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS ¹

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THE institute, like every other educational enterprise, has its individual problems and needs, but these I do not yet sufficiently understand to make a public discussion of them profitable to anybody. What I shall say, therefore, bears on technical education in general without reference to the separate needs of this or any other school.

I

Many of you who have lately become familiar with Mr. H. G. Wells's interpretation of history will realize new significance in the fact that children are born into a world that is already old. For many thousand years before our generation men were experimenting with Nature, with social, economic, political, and religious ideas and practices. Our civilization to-day is the forward-borne product of this slowly and painfully acquired experience of the race.

The whole educational process, broadly seen, is the problem of putting our young people in touch with the more outstanding results of this age-old accumulation and of giving them exercise in the most direct thought processes by which this experience and knowledge have been acquired; processes by which experience and knowledge may be enlarged and extended.

The education of boy or girl, therefore, consists in bringing them up to the present day, so that they can enter independent life as useful thinkers and doers in the world as it is. Dreams of what the world ought to be are not only stimulating but indispensable to human progress, but each generation must begin building on the world as it finds it.

Expressed otherwise, our educational effort

¹ Given by Dr. Ernest Fox Nichols on the occasion of his installation as president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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