WHAT IS UNUSUAL about the famous Thanksgiving celebration at Plymouth in 1621 is that it was a harvest festival, a gathering of family, friends, and neighbors, a time of games and feasting, and the first of its kind in America. Later generations thought it such a good idea that they used it as a model.

Governor William Bradford describes this harvest festival as follows:

"They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength, and had all things in good plenty. . . . All the summer there was no want. And now began to come in store of fowl, of which this place did abound when they came first. And besides water fowl there was a great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many."
I want to talk to you this evening about a vanishing species—the American patriot. I hope to show you what you and I have done during the last 20 years to make possible—nay, to render inevitable—this dwindling decline of a once noble breed. And, at the end, I shall propose to you a simple question: "Is this what we want?"

First, go back with me if you will in time 185 years. Our country is in a strange sort of undeclared war against the forces of despotism, then as now. A young man volunteers to go behind the enemy lines to collect information, also then as now. Instead of many thousands of dollars a year, he is being paid nothing at all, and here the parallel breaks down temporarily. But it builds up again when he is captured and tried as a spy and publicly questioned.

And then the parallels diverge sharply and completely and forever. Surrounded by the jeering foe, cut off beyond all hope of rescue, the rope already knotted around his bared throat, and the pallor of approaching death already on his cheeks, he breaks his steadfast silence. With the wind of another world cold upon his forehead, he speaks one short sentence, and his words echo down the corridors of time to us today, ringing and lighthearted and magnificent:

I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country.

His statue, with the throat still bared, stands today gazing with blind stone eyes across the green park in New York City, where I saw it not too long ago. He was a schoolmaster like some of us here tonight—God rest his soul—and he did not live to see his twenty-second birthday.

What were those blind eyes looking for a year ago, I wonder, when another young American—the end product of 185 years of public education—went on trial for his life? If the stone heart could have quickened, and the stone lips have moved, they might have spoken after this fashion:

I died, after all, for a Dream still nurtured in the womb of the Future. That Dream, watered with the unstinted blood of countless thousands over the many years that lie between, has grown to glorious life and wonderful reality—the last, best hope of men on earth. Surely this youth—with Reality to defend, not just a Dream—will better my example.

And what would the stone ears have heard across the void of Time and Space? The voice of young America after well-nigh two centuries of growth unparalleled, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, power so staggering it stuns the imagination—the voice of rock-and-roll, high-speed, carefree young America:

I didn't know what I was doing.

And—while the sinister judges smiled and nodded and nudged one another knowingly:

I know now I was risking world peace. My superiors were responsible.

Nathan Hale could have blamed George Washington, I suppose. He might even have had a chance to save his neck. Perhaps it's just as well that stone ears can't hear, nor stone eyes see, nor a stone heart beat heavily with shame for one's countrymen.

Oh, I can see what you're thinking. They're not all like that. No, thank Heaven, they're not. But this one was. So were a sickening, staggering number of our young men just 10 years ago who sold out their fellow American soldiers, and licked the boots of the brutal Chinese and North Korean invaders, and made tape recordings praising communism. So are all the phony sophisticates who clutter up our colleges, and who seem to spend every waking moment agitating against ROTC, booing congressional committees, and parading in support of Fidel Castro.

Whether we like it or not, ladies and gentlemen, this is our doing—yours and mine! Not in La Canada, thank goodness, but widely in California, in the Far West, and throughout the Nation, the great mistake was made by my profession, and by the voters and taxpayers who permitted it.
These spineless, luxury-loving spiritless creeps came right out of our classrooms. Fifteen years ago, they were in our kindergartens. They went on our field trips to the bakery, and danced around ribboned poles at our May festivals. Only about 9 years ago, they were studying something called "social living" in some of our seventh grades. They were tested and guided and motivated. They were "adjusted to their peer groups." They were taught that competition was bad, and cooperation was supremely good. They were told that the world was very shortly to become one big, happy family, with goals. What went wrong?

These last are praiseworthy goals. What went wrong?

There were two things, you see, that we didn't teach them. And oh! how they needed to learn these.

One was that most of the inhabitants of this big, bad-tempered, battling planet hate our American insides. This is hard to teach, and unpleasant to learn. It is the simple truth, nevertheless.

"Life Adjustment" Left Something Out

The other thing should have been sublimely simple for us to get across to the children entrusted to our care. It was to teach them every day in every necessary way to memorize and to believe and to live Decatur's great toast:

Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right, but our country, right or wrong.

Had they been taught to love their country with the same passion that inspired other generations of American youth, they would not now be wondering what all the fuss is about. They would know that their country was in danger, and that would be enough. It was enough in 1861, and 1917, and 1941. It's not enough today. Too many of them neither know nor care.

It's our fault, and this is what frightens me. What will history have to say of my generation of educators—the generations of the '30's, the '40's, and the '50's? We were so busy educating for "life adjustment" that we forgot to educate for survival. Worse, still, we forgot that the first duty of a nation's schools is to preserve that nation.

Words that America had treasured as a rich legacy, that had sounded like trumpet calls above the clash of arms and the fury of debate, we allowed to fade from the classrooms and the consciousness of the pupils.

Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable. . . .

We have met the enemy, and they are ours. . . .

Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute. . . .

Search for these towering phrases in vain today in too many of our schools, in the hearts and minds of too many of our children. The golden words are gone, and in their place brain-numbing projects on the Nation's second-class mail service, units on the orange-packing industry of Los Angeles County, or accounts of the trucking business on Highway 66. We must all, you see, grow up to be orange packers or mailmen or truckers or school administrators. We have no further need of Webster—or of Nathan Hales.

Our sin was greater than this, however. Patriotism feeds upon hero-worship, and we decided to abolish heroes. Even the nursery rhymes, poor innocent little things beloved by generations of children and which had come down to us from time immemorial, were pronounced too "violent" and "sordid" for the children to hear until after we had tinkered with them. The fairy tales we felt were far too crude, and so we neutralized and dehydrated Hansel and Gretel to the status of Cincinnati children on a Sunday school picnic, and Jack and the Giant-Killer to a schoolboy swatting flies. Everything that was fearful and wonderful and glamorous, we leveled off to the lowest common denominator.

Ulysses and Penelope have been replaced by Dick and Jane in the textbooks of our schools. The quest for the Golden Fleece has been crowded out by the visit of Tom and Susan to the zoo. The deeds of the heroes before Troy are now passé, and the peregrinations of the local milkman as he wends his way among the stodgy streets and littered alleys of Blah City are deemed worthy of numberless pages in our readers. The sterile culture of the Pueblo Indians looms large in our curriculum, but the knightly Crusaders are glossed over. Bobby and Betty pursue their insipid goal of a ride in the district garbage truck with good old crotchety Mr. Jones, while the deathless ride of Paul Revere goes unwept, unhonored, and unsung. It is interesting, and I think significant, that education during the past three decades has deliberately debunked the hero to make room for the jerk.

Today's hero—if there is one—is fashioned in the blasphemous image of Ourselves.

He is "Daddy" in the second-grade reader, who comes mincing home with his eternal briefcase from his meaningless day in his antiseptic office just in time to pat Jip the dog and carry blonde little Laurie into the inevitable white bungalow on his stylishly padded shoulders.

He is "Mommy" in the third grade books, always silk-stockinged and impeccable after a day spent over the electric range, with never a cross word on her carefully made-up lips and never an idea in her empty head.

Today's Heroes: Dick and Jane

He is Dick and Jane and Tom and Susan and all the insufferable nonentities who clutter up the pages of our elementary textbooks with their vapid ditherings about humdrum affairs which could never be of conceivable interest to anyone above the level of an idiot.

In my right hand I hold one of our California State third-grade readers. Two of the principal characters are Paddyfoot the Indian boy and Uncle Will the Cotton Picker. Harmless they are, and gentle—and as dull as dishwater.

In my left hand I hold a McGuffey third-grade reader, published in 1879. It contains a hair-raising description of a trip through the Himalayas to Tibet, a short story illustrating the horrors of drink, a series of fictional tales dramatizing Aesop's Fables, and several poems by Wordsworth and Whittier.

Quite a contrast.

Now please don't go home quoting Max Rafferty as advocating a return to McGuffey. Some of this quaint, old-fashioned material we would consider quite unsuitable for today's children—especially the story of the town drunk who ends a career of crime breaking big ones into little ones on the county rock pile.
But it moves. It sparkles. It interests.

The boys and girls who were raised on this fare never forgot it. Even today, some old gaffer is apt to walk up to me after one of these talks and quote McGuffey verbatim—after 60 or 70 years. Which of our present day pupils, I wonder, is going to recall after even one year how Richard Lane and nice Miss Allen the schoolteacher planted the flower bulbs in the window box for 15 pages and 2600 words in All Aboard for Storyland?

Why have we—for 25 years and more—subjected our children to this tripe? No wonder so many of them don't read very well. We haven't given them anything worth reading for almost a generation. I wouldn't read this junk myself. Would you?

In La Canada, we owe it to our fine teachers and eager youngsters to provide better intellectual fare than this.

When I think of the doors we've closed upon the children! The wonderful pantheon of youthful gods and goddesses that my generation knew and loved; the great parade of heroes who made old earth a magic place for boys and girls!

Wilfred of Ivanhoe rode stirrup to stirrup with Richard the Lionhearted, and the evil hold of Torquemada burned eternal witness to the power of youth and goodness. Laughing and shouting in the same great company rode Arthur with his Table Round, forever splintering their lances in the cause of Right. Roistering and invincible swaggers Porthos, Athos, and Aramis, with the young D'Artagnan, ever ready to draw those magic blades for truth and glory and the queen.

Remember?

The horn of Roland echoed through the pass at Roncevalles, and somehow caught and mingled in our memories with the far-off blare of Robin Hood, calling down the misty years upon his merry men of Sherwood.

Were not these fit heroes for our children?

Shining Examples of Another Age

Apart and in a happy company leaped and played the Child Immortals. Hand in hand with long-haired Alice walked Christopher Robin, bright eyes alert for talking rabbits and greedy little bears. Stydy Jim Hawkins counted his pieces of eight and chaffed with Captain Flint, while young Tom Sawyer kept a wary lookout for the menace that was Injun Joe. A battered raft floated to immortality upon the broad bosom of the Father of Waters, and Huck became the apotheosis of all boys everywhere. Meg, Jo and Beth chattered gaily to Amy, and Dorothy skipped arm in arm with the Scarecrow down the Yellow Brick Road. Remember?

When—in any age—have children had such shining exemplars?

It remained for our generation to turn its back upon the heroes of the children. For Siegfried in the lair of Fafnir, we have substituted Muk-Muk the Eskimo Boy, and we have replaced Horatius at the Bridge with Little Pedro from Argentina.

Mark this. Until Conant, most schools on all levels were teaching trivia. Today, too many—especially on the elementary level—are still doing so.

If you doubt this, don't take my word for it. Visit classroom after classroom in widely separated regions of this country, as I have done.

Watch the abler pupils grow dull and apathetic, bored and lackluster, as they yawn and watch the clock over Bill and Tom's Trip to the Farm, or Sally's Fun at the Orange Grove. Then, suddenly—as though opening an enchanted window upon a radiant pageant—give them the story of the wrath of Achilles. Let them stand with Casabianca upon the burning deck. Trek with them in spirit to the Yukon, and with glorious Buck let them answer the call of the wild. Place them upon the shot-swept shrouds of the Bonhomme Richard, and let them thrill to those words flashing like a rapier out of our past, "I have not yet begun to fight." Kneel with them behind the cotton bales at New Orleans with Andy Jackson at their side, as the redcoats begin to emerge from the Louisiana mists and the sullen guns of Lafitte begin to pound.

Watch their faces. See the eyes brighten and the spirits ruffle. See the color come, the backs straighten, the arms go up. They dream, they live, they glow. Patriotism will come easily to them now as it does to all of us who know our Nation's past—and love it.

Army and Navy Old-Fashioned?

Teach them the grand old songs. How long has it been since California children learned to sing Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean? And why was it dropped? Because someone—probably in the State Department of Education—decided that the lines which end,

The Army and Navy forever! Three cheers for the Red, White and Blue were hopelessly out of place in our brave new world of foreign aid and peaceful coexistence and collaboration.

I say that we had better thank God for the Army and Navy! And—with half the world at our throats—we had better teach our children that it is not a disgrace, but a priceless privilege, to wear our country's uniform!

The crux of the problem, of course, is this: "Do we believe it ourselves?" I am convinced with all my heart that we do. It's not the fault of teachers as individuals that our profession has been brainwashed for a quarter of a century with slogans like:

There are no eternal verities.

Everything is relative.

Meet only the felt needs.

Teach the child, not the subject.

—and—worst of all—

Nothing is worth learning for its own sake.

The results are plain for all to see: the worst of our youngsters growing up to become booted, sideburned, ducktailed, unwashed, leatherjacketed Slobs, whose favorite sport is ravaging little girls and stomping polio victims to death; the best of our youth coming into maturity for all the world like young people fresh from a dizzying roller-coaster ride, with everything blurred, with no positive standards, with everything in doubt. No wonder so many of them welsh out and squeal and turn traitor when confronted with the brutal reality of Red military force and the crafty cunning of Red psychological warfare.

We as a people have been taunted and reviled and challenged in the last few years—and months—as we thought no one would ever challenge us. A soulless Thing slavers at us today on all continents, under all the seas and out into the void of interplanetary space itself—a rotten, hateful, vicious entity. Our national

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nose has been first tweaked and then rubbed contemptuously into the dirt. The Flag for which our ancestors bled and died has been torn down and unspeakably defiled by a dozen little pipsqueak comic-opera countries emboldened by our weak-kneed spinelessness and encouraged by our sneering Enemy. I don't know when at long last the American people will rise in all the power and majesty of their great tradition to put an end to this role of international doormat which we have assumed of late, and which becomes us so poorly.

But I do know one thing. When that time comes—and it cannot be far distant—we educators had better not be caught short. We had better not be caught withholding from the Nation's children the wonderful sharp-edged, glittering sword of Patriotism. In a word, this means Indoctrination. An ugly word? I think not. But if it is ugly to teach children to revere the great Americans of the past—to cherish the traditions of our country as holy things—and to hate communism and its creatures like Hell—then I say let's be ugly, and let's revel in it.

The Alternative: Get Busy

What is the alternative? You see that all about you now, in all the headlines. Do you like it? As I said in the beginning: "Is this what we want?"

Or rather, do we want our young people informed and disciplined and alert—militant for freedom, clear-eyed to the filthy menace of communist corruption? Do we want them happy in their love of country?

If your answer is "Yes," then go home from this meeting tonight and get busy. We have not an hour to spare. It is to this that I propose we dedicate ourselves for the years to come in La Canada. If Almighty God grants us the time and the will, we may still be able to help preserve this lovely land of ours as it once was and—please God—will yet be again a Nation fit for heroes—serene in the knowledge of our past—confident and ready.

Correction

The article on the Americana Room and National Headquarters (October Magazine, p. 746) stated in error that Mrs. William Sherman Walker was State Regent of Oregon when she preserved a priceless portfolio of the signatures of heads of state in 1921. Mrs. Walker, a member of Rainier Chapter of Seattle, was State Regent of Washington from 1921-23, Organizing Secretary General of the National Society from 1923-26, and Vice President General from 1927-30.