

The Literary Digest for June 25, 1927

FRANCE EXTOLS LINDBERGH'S EDUCATION

PRAISE FOR LINDBERGH runs like a silver thread through the entire French press of the present time. A typical comment is that of *Le Progrès Civique*, of Paris, whose editor recalls a certain cartoon showing an airplane poised high above the sea. "Is it a Frenchman, an Englishman, or an American?" one spectator is asking. And the other replies: "It is a man." Taking this as his text, the editor continues: "Glory to Lindbergh, who has made us proud of being men! The whole world has felt his greatness. For the notable thing is the unanimity of the welcome given to this youth. Truly, not one false note. An admiration without reticences, without jealousy, without vulgar nationalism!"

The American system of education which helped to shape this heroic youth's character is the theme of an article by Raymond Gérard in *L'Echo des Sports*, of Paris, in which he says:

"The marvelous exploit achieved by Charles Lindbergh was due to exceptional qualities of courage and cool judgment. But one can say also that it is a product of the advantages of American education. Lindbergh, in physique and in morale, is a representative type of the younger generation of Americans.

"There is a world of difference between the shaping of minds in France and the preparation for life in America. French education is an affair of classes, of lessons, of studies, during which we pitchfork into the mind of the student the innumerable matters of school curriculums. The brain of a French high-school pupil is like a steamer trunk into which one packs a lot of widely different articles without regard to the destination of the tourist.

"American education is not at all like that. Before setting a big pile of books before the pupil, the teacher asks himself: 'Where are we going? What is the ideal to be attained?' The Greeks sought happiness through beauty. Modern nations seek to dominate by force. All right! Force is not obtained through books. For one sage we have ten men of action. Science can help, but the source of energy lies in character."

Let a nation forge souls, says M. Gérard, and success shall be its reward. He holds that the four bases of ideal character are vitality, courage, sensibility, and intelligence, and after defining the first two, he continues:

"Sensibility tempers the impetuosity of courage, it gives to a man the nobility of heart which surpasses all other virtues. Think of Lindbergh, and of how, a few minutes after his fantastic whirl of activities, when he was nearing the limit of his strength, he had only one thought: 'I want to visit the house where Nungesser lived before his last flight, and I want to go and pay homage at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.'

"Finally, intelligence. It permits the superior utilization of the three other qualities, vitality, courage, and sensibility. We no longer live in those primitive times when the victory went to the strongest and boldest. Lindbergh has all the energetic qualities, but he adds to these the technical training indispensable to the aviator. This 'Flying Fool,' as he has been called, is like *Hamlet*: he has only the appearance of insanity. The passion for sport is too deeply anchored in him for him to go and risk in one mad adventure the chance of living through others.

"He sets out for Paris in an airplane which he knows perfectly, upon which he has practised, in which he has traversed in twenty-one hours the 4,500 kilometers which separate San Diego from New York. Speed being a prime element of success in his flight, he places his seat very far back in order to reduce the resistance of the wind. He keeps his landing wheels and carries three days' provisions and a little life-boat. All these precautions show a well-poised intelligence in this Flying Fool. The union of good judgment and extreme audacity is one of the characteristic traits of the American spirit."

What clearly distinguishes American from European education, in the opinion of this discerning French critic, is something that can be summed up in three points, namely: Constant care for the health of the child and the training of his muscles; respect for his personality and the development of his particular aptitudes; encouragement of free realization of the child's tendencies, even if these are marked by some

eccentricity. Then he goes on to give this example:

"Three or four years ago the students of a university took it into their heads to construct a theater in order to act their plays there, for dramatic art is very much in favor among the young people. The ambitious scheme is organized. A special train with as many sleeping-berths as travelers, forty actors and musicians to transport every day, managers, scene shifters, etc. They play in a different city every night, thirty nights in succession, and go to banquets, receptions, and balls besides. They break the record for energy. The undergraduates come home worn out but happy. They have done something. In America, in England, they do not rest from intellectual work with the going down of the sun. They find diversion in struggling against material difficulties. The motor is always left running.

"In vacation camps the young girls amuse themselves by reenacting the life of the red Indians. They dash through the country on horseback and dance around camp-fires singing songs of the Blackfeet and Sioux.

"Lindbergh, the big blond boy with blue eyes, is the product of an education that teaches how to apply all the known sciences, how to be inventive, ingenious, able to solve enigmas. His name is henceforth engraved upon all memories. In America his flight will be commented upon in the schools and his portrait will be hung on the wall beside that of Longfellow. And why not? All the poets are not confined to literature. There is a poetry of action. Those who achieve its rhythms deserve to be placed beside the masters of rime. In our age, to achieve means even more than to sing."

