

I Am a Boxer

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Public Education Association

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I don't suppose that I am called here as an expert on education, for that would show a lack of foresight on your part and a deliberate intention to remind me of my shortcomings.

As I sat here looking around for an idea it struck me that I was called for two reasons. One was to do good to me, a poor unfortunate traveler on the world's wide ocean, by giving me a knowledge of the nature and scope of your society and letting me know that others beside myself have been of some use in the world. The other reason that I can see is that you have called me to show by way of contrast what education can accomplish if administered in the right sort of doses.

Your worthy president said that the school pictures, which have received the admiration of the world at the Paris Exposition, have been sent to Russia, and this was a compliment from that Government -- which is very surprising to me. Why, it is only an hour since I read a cablegram in the newspapers beginning "Russia Proposes to Retrench." I was not expecting such a thunderbolt, and I thought what a happy thing it will be for Russians when the retrenchment will bring home the thirty thousand Russian troops now in Manchuria, to live in peaceful pursuits. I thought this was what Germany should do also without delay, and that France and all the other nations in China should follow suit.

Why should not China be free from the foreigners, who are only making trouble on her soil? If they would only all go home, what a pleasant place China would be for the Chinese! We do not allow Chinamen to come here, and I say in all seriousness that it would be a graceful thing to let China decide who shall go there.

China never wanted foreigners any more than foreigners wanted Chinamen, and on this question I am with the Boxers every time. The Boxer is a patriot. He loves his country better than he does the countries of other people. I wish him success. The Boxer believes in driving us out of his country. I am a Boxer too, for I believe in driving him out of our country.

When I read the Russian despatch further my dream of world peace vanished. It said that the vast expense of maintaining the army had made it necessary to retrench, and

so the Government had decided that to support the army it would be necessary to withdraw the appropriation from the public schools. This is a monstrous idea to us. We believe that out of the public school grows the greatness of a nation.

It is curious to reflect how history repeats itself the world over. Why, I remember the same thing was done when I was a boy on the Mississippi River. There was a proposition in a township there to discontinue public schools because they were too expensive. An old farmer spoke up and said if they stopped the schools they would not save anything, because every time a school was closed a jail had to be built.

It's like feeding a dog on his own tail. He'll never get fat. I believe it is better to support schools than jails.

The work of your association is better and shows more wisdom than the Czar of Russia and all his people. This is not much of a compliment, but it's the best I've got in stock.