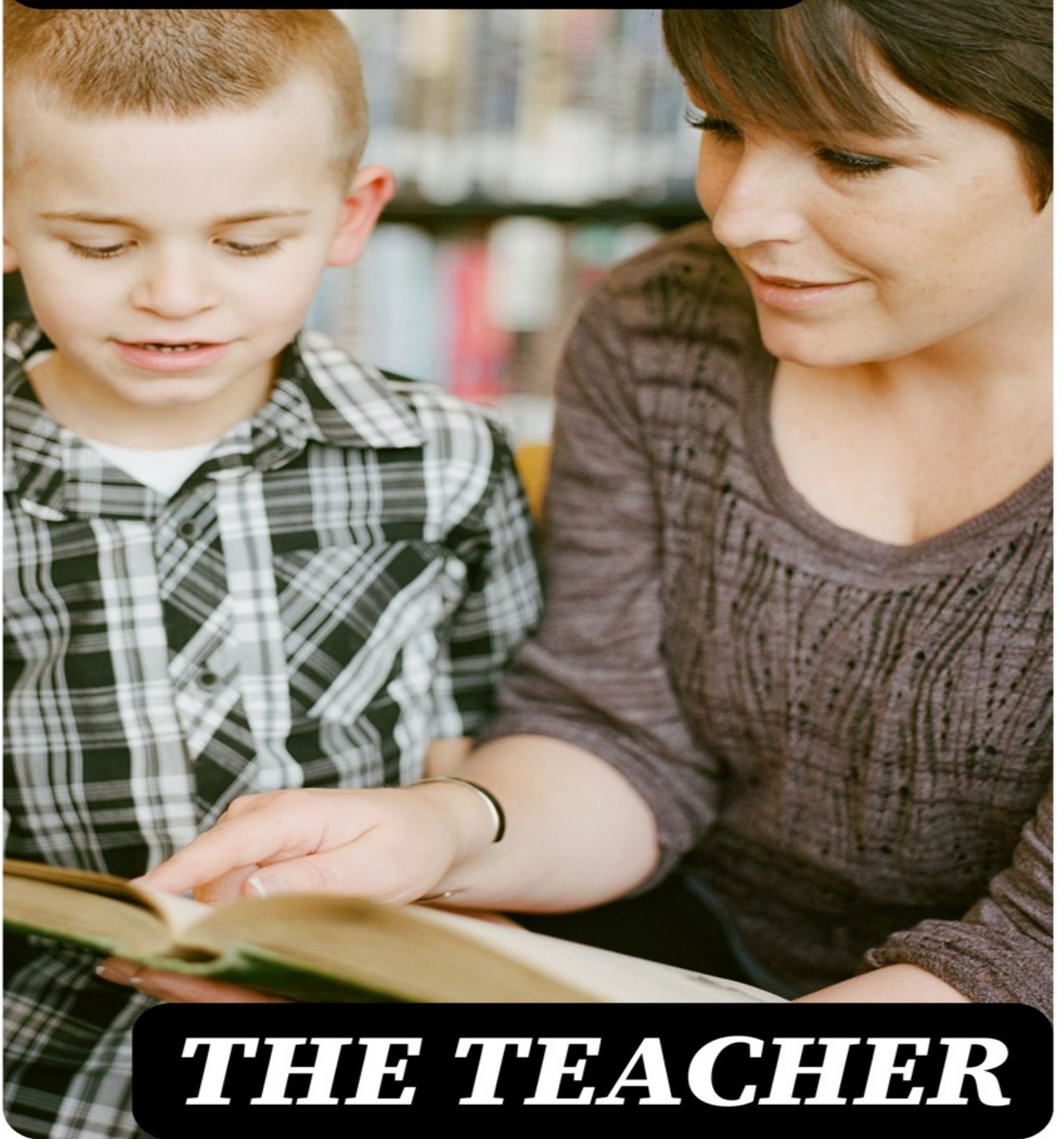


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THE TEACHER

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The Teacher

Essays and Addresses on Education

EAN 8596547314103

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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PREFACE

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The papers of this volume fall into three groups, two of the three being written by myself. From my writings on education I have selected only those which may have some claim to permanent interest, and all but two have been tested by previous publication. Those of the first group deal with questions about which we teachers, eager about our immeasurable art beyond most professional persons, never cease to wonder and debate: What is teaching? How far may it influence character? Can it be practiced on persons too busy or too poor to come to our class-rooms? To subjects of what scope should it be applied? And how shall we content ourselves with its necessary limitations? Under these diverse headings a kind of philosophy of education is outlined. The last two papers, having been given as lectures and stenographically reported, I have left in their original colloquial form. A group of papers on Harvard follows, preceded by an explanatory note, and the volume closes with a few papers by Mrs. Palmer. She and I often talked of preparing together a book on education. Now, alone, I gather up these fragments.

I

PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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THE IDEAL TEACHER

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In America, a land of idealism, the profession of teaching has become one of the greatest of human employments. In 1903-04 half a million teachers were in charge of sixteen million pupils. Stating the same facts differently, we may say that a fifth of our entire population is constantly at school; and that wherever one hundred and sixty men, women, and children are gathered, a teacher is sure to be among them.

But figures fail to express the importance of the work. If each year an equal number of persons should come in contact with as many lawyers, no such social consequences would follow. The touch of the teacher, like that of no other person, is formative. Our young people are for long periods associated with those who are expected to fashion them into men and women of an approved type. A charge so influential is committed to nobody else in the community, not even to the ministers; for though these have a more searching aim, they are directly occupied with it but one day instead of six, but one hour instead of five. Accordingly, as the tract of knowledge has widened, and the creative opportunities involved in conducting a young person over it have correspondingly become apparent, the profession of teaching has risen to a notable height of dignity and attractiveness. It has moved from a subordinate to a central place in social influence, and now undertakes much of the

work which formerly fell to the church. Each year divinity schools attract fewer students, graduate and normal schools more. On school and college instruction the community now bestows its choicest minds, its highest hopes, and its largest sums. During the year 1903-04 the United States spent for teaching not less than \$350,000,000.

Such weighty work is ill adapted for amateurs. Those who take it up for brief times and to make money usually find it unsatisfactory. Success is rare, the hours are fixed and long, there is repetition and monotony, and the teacher passes his days among inferiors. Nor are the pecuniary gains considerable. There are few prizes, and neither in school nor in college will a teacher's ordinary income carry him much above want. College teaching is falling more and more into the hands of men of independent means. The poor can hardly afford to engage in it. Private schools, it is true, often show large incomes; but they are earned by the proprietors, not the teachers. On the whole, teaching as a trade is poor and disappointing business.

When, however, it is entered as a profession, as a serious and difficult fine art, there are few employments more satisfying. All over the country thousands of men and women are following it with a passionate devotion which takes little account of the income received. A trade aims primarily at personal gain; a profession at the exercise of powers beneficial to mankind. This prime aim of the one, it is true, often properly becomes a subordinate aim of the other. Professional men may even be said to offer wares of their own—cures, conversions, court victories, learning—much as traders do, and to receive in return a kind of

reward. But the business of the lawyer, doctor, preacher, and teacher never squares itself by equivalent exchange. These men do not give so much for so much. They give in lump and they get in lump, without precise balance. The whole notion of bargain is inapplicable in a sphere where the gains of him who serves and him who is served coincide; and that is largely the case with the professions. Each of them furnishes its special opportunity for the use of powers which the possessor takes delight in exercising. Harvard College pays me for doing what I would gladly pay it for allowing me to do. No professional man, then, thinks of giving according to measure. Once engaged, he gives his best, and gives his personal interest, himself. His heart is in his work, and for this no equivalent is possible; what is accepted is in the nature of a fee, gratuity, or consideration, which enables him who receives it to maintain a certain expected mode of life. The real payment is the work itself, this and the chance to join with other members of the profession in guiding and enlarging the sphere of its activities.

The idea, sometimes advanced, that the professions might be ennobled by paying them powerfully, is fantastic. Their great attraction is their removal from sordid aims. More money should certainly be spent on several of them. Their members should be better protected against want, anxiety, neglect, and bad conditions of labor. To do his best work one needs not merely to live, but to live well. Yet in that increase of salaries which is urgently needed, care should be used not to allow the attention of the professional man to be diverted from what is important,—the outgo of

his work,—and become fixed on what is merely incidental,—his income. When a professor in one of our large universities, angered by the refusal of the president to raise his salary on his being called elsewhere, impatiently exclaimed, “Mr. President, you are banking on the devotion of us teachers, knowing that we do not willingly leave this place,” the president properly replied, “Certainly, and no college can be managed on any other principle.” Professional men are not so silly as to despise money; but after all, it is interest in their work, and not the thought of salary, which predominantly holds them.

Accordingly in this paper I address those only who are drawn to teaching by the love of it, who regard it as the most vital of the Fine Arts, who intend to give their lives to mastering its subtleties, and who are ready to meet some hardships and to put up with moderate fare if they may win its rich opportunities.

But supposing such a temper, what special qualifications will the work require? The question asked thus broadly admits no precise answer; for in reality there is no human excellence which is not useful for us teachers. No good quality can be thought of which we can afford to drop. Some day we shall discover a disturbing vacuum in the spot which it left. But I propose a more limited problem: what are those characteristics of the teacher without which he must fail, and what those which, once his, will almost certainly insure him success? Are there any such essentials, and how many? On this matter I have pondered long; for, teaching thirty-nine years in Harvard College, I have each year found out a little more fully my own incompetence. I have thus been

forced to ask myself the double question, through what lacks do I fail, and in what direction lie the roots of my small successes? Of late years I think I have hit on these roots of success and have come to believe that there are four of them,—four characteristics which every teacher must possess. Of course he may possess as many more as he likes,—indeed, the more the better. But these four appear fundamental. I will briefly name them.

First, a teacher must have an aptitude for vicariousness; and second, an already accumulated wealth; and third, an ability to invigorate life through knowledge; and fourth, a readiness to be forgotten. Having these, any teacher is secure. Lacking them, lacking even one, he is liable to serious failure. But as here stated they have a curiously cabalistic sound and show little relation to the needs of any profession. They have been stated with too much condensation, and have become unintelligible through being too exact. Let me repair the error by successively expanding them.

The teacher's art takes its rise in what I call an aptitude for vicariousness. As year by year my college boys prepare to go forth into life, some laggard is sure to come to me and say, "I want a little advice. Most of my classmates have their minds made up about what they are going to do. I am still uncertain. I rather incline to be a teacher, because I am fond of books and suspect that in any other profession I can give them but little time. Business men do not read. Lawyers only consult books. And I am by no means sure that ministers have read all the books they quote. On the whole it seems safest to choose a profession in which books will be

my daily companions. So I turn toward teaching. But before settling the matter I thought I would ask how you regard the profession." "A noble profession," I answer, "but quite unfit for you. I would advise you to become a lawyer, a car conductor, or something equally harmless. Do not turn to anything so perilous as teaching. You would ruin both it and yourself; for you are looking in exactly the wrong direction."

Such an inquirer is under a common misconception. The teacher's task is not primarily the acquisition of knowledge, but the impartation of it,—an entirely different matter. We teachers are forever taking thoughts out of our minds and putting them elsewhere. So long as we are content to keep them in our possession, we are not teachers at all. One who is interested in laying hold on wisdom is likely to become a scholar. And while no doubt it is well for a teacher to be a fair scholar,—I have known several such,—that is not the main thing. What constitutes the teacher is the passion to make scholars; and again and again it happens that the great scholar has no such passion whatever.

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But even that passion is useless without aid from imagination. At every instant of the teacher's life he must be controlled by this mighty power. Most human beings are contented with living one life and delighted if they can pass that agreeably. But this is far from enough for us teachers. We incessantly go outside ourselves and enter into the many lives about us,—lives dull, dark, and unintelligible to any but an eye like ours. And this is imagination, the sympathetic creation in ourselves of conditions which belong to others. Our profession is therefore a double-ended one. We inspect truth as it rises fresh and interesting before

our eager sight. But that is only the beginning of our task. Swiftly we then seize the lines of least intellectual resistance in alien minds and, with perpetual reference to these, follow our truth till it is safely lodged beyond ourselves. Each mind has its peculiar set of frictions. Those of our pupils can never be the same as ours. We have passed far on and know all about our subject. For us it wears an altogether different look from that which it has for beginners. It is their perplexities which we must reproduce and—as if a rose should shut and be a bud again—we must reassume in our developed and accustomed souls something of the innocence of childhood. Such is the exquisite business of the teacher, to carry himself back with all his wealth of knowledge and understand how his subject 11 should appear to the meagre mind of one glancing at it for the first time.

And what absurd blunders we make in the process! Becoming immersed in our own side of the affair, we blind ourselves and readily attribute to our pupils modes of thought which are not in the least theirs. I remember a lesson I had on this point, I who had been teaching ethics half a lifetime. My nephew, five years old, was fond of stories from the Odyssey. He would creep into bed with me in the morning and beg for them. One Sunday, after I had given him a pretty stiff bit of adventure, it occurred to me that it was an appropriate day for a moral. “Ulysses was a very brave man,” I remarked. “Yes,” he said, “and I am very brave.” I saw my opportunity and seized it. “That is true,” said I. “You have been gaining courage lately. You used to cry easily, but you don’t do that nowadays. When you want

to cry now, you think how like a baby it would be to cry, or how you would disturb mother and upset the house; and so you conclude not to cry." The little fellow seemed hopelessly puzzled. He lay silent a minute or two and then said, "Well no, Uncle, I don't do that. I just go sh-sh-sh, and I don't." There the moral crisis is stated in its simplicity; and I had been putting off on that holy little nature sophistications borrowed from my own battered life.

But while I am explaining the blunders caused by 12 self-engrossment and lack of imagination, let me show what slight adjustments will sometimes carry us past depressing difficulties. One year when I was lecturing on some intricate problems of obligation, I began to doubt whether my class was following me, and I determined that I would make them talk. So the next day I constructed an ingenious ethical case and, after stating it to the class, I said, "Supposing now the state of affairs were thus and thus, and the interests of the persons involved were such and such, how would you decide the question of right,—Mr. Jones." Poor Jones rose in confusion. "You mean," he said, "if the case were as you have stated it? Well, hm, hm, hm,—yes,—I don't think I know, sir." And he sat down. I called on one and another with the same result. A panic was upon them, and all their minds were alike empty. I went home disgusted, wondering whether they had comprehended anything I had said during the previous fortnight, and hoping I might never have such a stupid lot of students again. Suddenly it flashed upon me that it was I who was stupid. That is usually the case when a class fails; it is the teacher's fault. The next day I went back prepared to begin at the right end. I began, "Oh, Mr. Jones."

He rose, and I proceeded to state the situation as before. By the time I paused he had collected his wits, had worked off his superfluous flurry, and was ready to give me an admirable 13 answer. Indeed in a few minutes the whole class was engaged in an eager discussion. My previous error had been in not remembering that they, I, and everybody, when suddenly attacked with a big question, are not in the best condition for answering. Occupied as I was with my end of the story, the questioning end, I had not worked in that double-ended fashion which alone can bring the teacher success; in short, I was deficient in vicariousness,—in swiftly putting myself in the weak one's place and bearing his burden.

Now it is in this chief business of the artistic teacher, to labor imaginatively himself in order to diminish the labors of his slender pupil, that most of our failures occur. Instead of lamenting the imperviousness of our pupils, we had better ask ourselves more frequently whether we have neatly adjusted our teachings to the conditions of their minds. We have no right to tumble out in a mass whatever comes into our heads, leaving to that feeble folk the work of finding in it what order they may. Ours it should be to see that every beginning, middle, and end of what we say is helpfully shaped for readiest access to those less intelligent and interested than we. But this is vicariousness. *Noblesse oblige*. In this profession any one who will be great must be a nimble servant, his head full of others' needs.

Some discouraged teacher, glad to discover that 14 his past failures have been due to the absence of sympathetic imagination, may resolve that he will not commit that

blunder again. On going to his class to-morrow he will look out upon his subject with his pupils' eyes, not with his own. Let him attempt it, and his pupils will surely say to one another, "What is the matter to-day with teacher?" They will get nothing from that exercise. No, what is wanted is not a resolve, but an aptitude. The time for using vicariousness is not the time for acquiring it. Rather it is the time for dismissing all thoughts of it from the mind. On entering the classroom we should leave every consideration of method outside the door, and talk simply as interested men and women in whatever way comes most natural to us. But into that nature vicariousness should long ago have been wrought. It should be already on hand. Fortunate we if our great-grandmother supplied us with it before we were born. There are persons who, with all good will, can never be teachers. They are not made in that way. Their business it is to pry into knowledge, to engage in action, to make money, or to pursue whatever other aim their powers dictate; but they do not readily think in terms of the other person. They should not, then, be teachers.

The teacher's habit is well summed in the Apostle's rule, "Look not every man on his own things, 15 but every man also"—it is double—"on the things of others." And this habit should become as nearly as possible an instinct. Until it is rendered instinctive and passes beyond conscious direction, it will be of little worth. Let us then, as we go into society, as we walk the streets, as we sit at table, practice altruistic limberness and learn to escape from ourselves. A true teacher is always meditating his work, disciplining himself for his profession, probing the problems of his glorious art,

and seeing illustration of them everywhere. In only one place is he freed from such criticism, and that is in his classroom. Here in the moment of action he lets himself go, unhampered by theory, using the nature acquired elsewhere, and uttering as simply as possible the fulness of his mind and heart. Direct human intercourse requires instinctive aptitudes. Till altruistic vicariousness has become our second nature, we shall not deeply influence anybody.

But sympathetic imagination is not all a teacher needs. Exclusive altruism is absurd. On this point too I once got instruction from the mouths of babes and sucklings. The children of a friend of mine, children of six and four, had just gone to bed. Their mother overheard them talking when they should have been asleep. Wondering what they might need, she stepped into the entry and listened. They were discussing what they were here in the world for. 16 That is about the size of problems commonly found in infant minds. The little girl suggested that we are probably in the world to help others. "Why, no indeed, Mabel," said her big brother, "for then what would others be here for?" Precisely! If anything is only fit to give away, it is not fit for that. We must know and prize its goodness in ourselves before generosity is even possible.

Plainly, then, beside his aptitude for vicariousness, our ideal teacher will need the second qualification of an already accumulated wealth. These hungry pupils are drawing all their nourishment from us, and have we got it to give? They will be poor, if we are poor; rich if we are wealthy. We are their source of supply. Every time we cut ourselves off from nutrition, we enfeeble them. And how

frequently devoted teachers make this mistake! dedicating themselves so to the immediate needs of those about them that they themselves grow thinner each year. We all know the "teacher's face." It is meagre, worn, sacrificial, anxious, powerless. That is exactly the opposite of what it should be. The teacher should be the big bounteous being of the community. Other people may get along tolerably by holding whatever small knowledge comes their way. A moderate stock will pretty well serve their private turn. But that is not our case. Supplying a multitude, we need wealth sufficient for a multitude. We should then be clutching 17 at knowledge on every side. Nothing must escape us. It is a mistake to reject a bit of truth because it lies outside our province. Some day we shall need it. All knowledge is our province.

In preparing a lecture I find I always have to work hardest on the things I do not say. The things I am sure to say I can easily get up. They are obvious and generally accessible. But they, I find, are not enough. I must have a broad background of knowledge which does not appear in speech. I have to go over my entire subject and see how the things I am to say look in their various relations, tracing out connections which I shall not present to my class. One might ask what is the use of this? Why prepare more matter than can be used? Every successful teacher knows. I cannot teach right up to the edge of my knowledge without a fear of falling off. My pupils discover this fear, and my words are ineffective. They feel the influence of what I do not say. One cannot precisely explain it; but when I move freely across my subject as if it mattered little on what part of it I rest,

they get a sense of assured power which is compulsive and fructifying. The subject acquires consequence, their minds swell, and they are eager to enter regions of which they had not previously thought.

Even, then, to teach a small thing well we must be large. I asked a teacher what her subject was, 18 and she answered, "Arithmetic in the third grade." But where is the third grade found? In knowledge, or in the schools? Unhappily it is in the schools. But if one would be a teacher of arithmetic, it must be arithmetic she teaches and not third grade at all. We cannot accept these artificial bounds without damage. Instead of accumulated wealth they will bring us accumulated poverty, and increase it every day. Years ago at Harvard we began to discuss the establishment of a Graduate School; and I, a young instructor, steadily voted against it. My thought was this: Harvard College, in spite of what the public imagines, is a place of slender resources. Our means are inadequate for teaching even undergraduates. But graduate instruction is vastly more expensive; courses composed of half a dozen students take the time of the ablest professors. I thought we could not afford this. Why not leave graduate instruction to a university which gives itself entirely to that task? Would it not be wiser to spend ourselves on the lower ranges of learning, covering these adequately, than to try to spread ourselves over the entire field?

Doubting so, I for some time opposed the coming of a Graduate School. But a luminous remark of our great President showed me the error of my ways. In the course of debate he said one evening, "It is not primarily for the

graduates that 19 I care for this school; it is for the undergraduates. We shall never get good teaching here so long as our instructors set a limit to their subjects. When they are called on to follow these throughout, tracing them far off toward the unknown, they may become good teachers; but not before."

I went home meditating. I saw that the President was right, and that I was myself in danger of the stagnation he deprecated. I changed my vote, as did others. The Graduate School was established; and of all the influences which have contributed to raise the standard of scholarship at Harvard, both for teachers and taught, that graduate work seems to me the greatest. Every professor now must be the master of a field of knowledge, and not of a few paths running through it.

But the ideal teacher will accumulate wealth, not merely for his pupils' sake, but for his own. To be a great teacher one must be a great personality, and without ardent and individual tastes the roots of our being are not fed. For developing personal power it is well, therefore, for each teacher to cultivate interests unconnected with his official work. Let the mathematician turn to the English poets, the teacher of classics to the study of birds and flowers, and each will gain a lightness, a freedom from exhaustion, a mental hospitality, which can only be acquired in some disinterested pursuit. Such a 20 private subject becomes doubly dear because it is just our own. We pursue it as we will; we let it call out our irresponsible thoughts; and from it we ordinarily carry off a note of distinction lacking in those whose lives are too tightly organized.

To this second qualification of the teacher, however, I have been obliged to prefix a condition similar to that which was added to the first. We need not merely wealth, but an already accumulated wealth. At the moment when wealth is wanted it cannot be acquired. It should have been gathered and stored before the occasion arose. What is more pitiable than when a person who desires to be a benefactor looks in his chest and finds it empty? Special knowledge is wanted, or trained insight, or professional skill, or sound practical judgment; and the teacher who is called on has gone through no such discipline as assures these resources. I am inclined to think that women are more liable to this sort of bankruptcy than men. Their sex is more sympathetic than ours and they spend more hastily. They will drop what they are doing and run if a baby cries. Excellence requires a certain hardihood of heart, while quick responsiveness is destructive of the larger giving. He who would be greatly generous must train himself long and tenaciously, without much attention to momentary calls. The plan of the Great Teacher, by which he took thirty years for acquisition and 21 three for bestowal, is not unwise, provided that we too can say, "For their sakes I sanctify myself."

But the two qualifications of the teacher already named will not alone suffice. I have known persons who were sympathetically imaginative, and who could not be denied to possess large intellectual wealth, who still failed as teachers. One needs a third something, the power to invigorate life through learning. We do not always notice how knowledge naturally buffets. It is offensive stuff, and makes young and wholesome minds rebel. And well it may;

for when we learn anything, we are obliged to break up the world, inspect it piecemeal, and let our minds seize it bit by bit. Now about a fragment there is always something repulsive. Any one who is normally constituted must draw back in horror, feeling that what is brought him has little to do with the beautiful world he has known. Where was there ever a healthy child who did not hate the multiplication table? A boy who did not detest such abstractions as seven times eight would hardly be worth educating. By no ingenuity can we relieve knowledge of this unfortunate peculiarity. It must be taken in disjointed portions. That is the way attention is made. In consequence each of us must be to some extent a specialist, devoting himself to certain sides of the world and neglecting others quite as important. These are the conditions under which we imperfect creatures work. Our sight is not world-wide. When we give our attention to one object, by that very act we withdraw it from others. In this way our children must learn and have their expansive natures subdued to pedagogic exigencies.

Because this belittlement through the method of approach is inevitable, it is all-important that the teacher should possess a supplemental dignity, replacing the oppressive sense of pettiness with stimulating intimations of high things in store. Partly on this account a book is an imperfect instructor. Truth there, being impersonal, seems untrue, abstract, and insignificant. It needs to shine through a human being before it can exert its vital force on a young student. Quite as much for vital transmission as for intellectual elucidation, is a teacher employed. His consolidated character exhibits the gains which come from

study. He need not point them out. If he is a scholar, there will appear in him an augustness, accuracy, fulness of knowledge, a buoyant enthusiasm even in drudgery, and an unshakable confidence that others must soon see and enjoy what has enriched himself; and all this will quickly convey itself to his students and create attention in his classroom. Such kindling of interest is the great function of the teacher. People sometimes say, "I should like to teach if only pupils cared to learn." But then there would be little need of teaching. 23 Boys who have made up their minds that knowledge is worth while are pretty sure to get it, without regard to teachers. Our chief concern is with those who are unawakened. In the Sistine Chapel Michael Angelo has depicted the Almighty moving in clouds over the rugged earth where lies the newly created Adam, hardly aware of himself. The tips of the fingers touch, the Lord's and Adam's, and the huge frame loses its inertness and rears itself into action. Such may be the electrifying touch of the teacher.

But it must be confessed that not infrequently, instead of invigorating life through knowledge, we teachers reduce our classes to complete passivity. The blunder is not altogether ours, but is suggested by certain characteristics of knowledge itself: for how can a learner begin without submitting his mind, accepting facts, listening to authority, in short becoming obedient? He is called on to put aside his own notions and take what truth dictates. I have said that knowledge buffets, forcing us into an almost slavish attitude, and that this is resented by vigorous natures. In almost every school some of the most original, aggressive,

and independent boys stand low in their classes, while at the top stand “grinds,”—objects of horror to all healthy souls.

Now it is the teacher’s business to see that the onslaught of knowledge does not enfeeble. Between the two sides of knowledge, information and intelligence, he is to keep the balance true. While a boy is taking in facts, facts not allowed to be twisted by any fancy or carelessness, he is all the time to be made to feel that these facts offer him a field for critical and constructive action. If they leave him inactive, docile, and plodding, there is something wrong with the teaching. Facts are pernicious when they subjugate and do not quicken the mind that grasps them. Education should unfold us and truth together; and to enable it to do so the learner must never be allowed to sink into a mere recipient. He should be called on to think, to observe, to form his own judgments, even at the risk of error and crudity. Temporary one-sidedness and extravagance is not too high a price to pay for originality. And this development of personal vigor, emphasized in our day by the elective system and independent research, is the great aim of education. It should affect the lower ranges of study as truly as the higher. The mere contemplation of truth is always a deadening affair. Many a dull class in school and college would come to life if simply given something to do. Until the mind reacts for itself on what it receives, its education is hardly begun.

The teacher who leads it so to react may be truly called “productive,” productive of human beings. The noble word has recently become Germanized²⁵ and corrupted, and is

now hardly more than a piece of educational slang. According to the judgments of to-day a teacher may be unimaginative, pedantic, dull, and may make his students no less so; he will still deserve a crown of wild olive as a "productive" man if he neglects his classroom for the printing press. But this is to put first things second and second things first. He who is original and fecund, and knows how to beget a similar spirit in his students, will naturally wish to express himself beyond his classroom. By snatching the fragments of time which his arduous work allows, he may accomplish much worthy writing and probably increase too his worth for his college, his students, and himself. But the business of book-making is, after all, collateral with us teachers. Not for this are we employed, desirable though it is for showing the kind of mind we bear. Many of my most productive colleagues have printed little or nothing, though they have left a deep mark on the life and science of our time. I would encourage publication. It keeps the solitary student healthy, enables him to find his place among his fellows, and more distinctly to estimate the contributions he is making to his subject. But let him never neglect his proper work for that which must always have in it an element of advertising.

Too long I have delayed the fourth, the disagreeable, section of my paper. Briefly it is this: a teacher must have a readiness to be forgotten. And what is harder? We may be excellent persons, may be daily doing kindnesses, and yet not be quite willing to have those kindnesses overlooked. Many a man is ready to be generous, if by it he can win praise. The love of praise,—it is almost our last

infirmity; but there is no more baffling infirmity for the teacher. If praise and recognition are dear to him, he may as well stop work. Dear to him perhaps they must be, as a human being; but as a teacher, he is called on to rise above ordinary human conditions. Whoever has followed me thus far will perceive the reason. I have shown that a teacher does not live for himself, but for his pupil and for the truth which he imparts. His aim is to be a colorless medium through which that truth may shine on opening minds. How can he be this if he is continually interposing himself and saying, "Instead of looking at the truth, my children, look at me and see how skilfully I do my work. I thought I taught you admirably to-day. I hope you thought so too." No, the teacher must keep himself entirely out of the way, fixing young attention on the proffered knowledge and not on anything so small as the one who brings it. Only so can he be vicarious, whole-hearted in invigorating the lives committed to his charge.

Moreover, any other course is futile. We cannot tell whether those whom we are teaching have taken 27 our best points or not. Those best points, what are they? We shall count them one thing, our pupils another. We gather what seems to us of consequence and pour it out upon our classes. But if their minds are not fitted to receive it, the little creatures have excellent protective arrangements which they draw down, and all we pour is simply shed as if nothing had fallen; while again we say something so slight that we hardly notice it, but, happening to be just the nutritive element which that small life then needs, it is caught up and turned into human fibre. We cannot tell. We

work in the dark. Out upon the waters our bread is cast, and if we are wise we do not attempt to trace its return.

On this point I received capital instruction from one of my pupils. In teaching a course on English Empiricism I undertook a line of exposition which I knew was abstruse. Indeed, I doubted if many of the class could follow; but there on the front seat sat one whose bright eyes were ever upon me. It seemed worth while to teach my three or four best men, that man in particular. By the end of the term there were many grumblings. My class did not get much out of me that year. They graduated, and a couple of years later this young fellow appeared at my door to say that he could not pass through Cambridge without thanking me for his work on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Pleased to be assured that 28 my questionable methods were justified, and unwilling to drop a subject so agreeable, I asked if he could tell precisely where the value of the course lay. "Certainly," he answered. "It all centred in a single remark of Locke's. Locke said we ought to have clear and distinct ideas. I don't think I got anything else out of the course."

Well, at first I was inclined to think the fellow foolish, so to mistake a bit of commonplace for gospel truth. Why did he not listen to some of the profound things I was saying? But on reflection I saw that he was right and I wrong. That trivial saying had come to him at a critical moment as a word of power; while the deep matters which interested me, and which I had been offering him so confidently day by day, being unsuited to him, had passed him by. He had not heard them.

To such proper unthankfulness we teachers must accustom ourselves. We cannot tell what are our good deeds, and shall only plague ourselves and hinder our classes if we try to find out. Let us display our subjects as lucidly as possible, allow our pupils considerable license in apprehension, and be content ourselves to escape observation. But though what we do remains unknown, its results often awake deep affection. Few in the community receive love more abundantly than we. Wherever we go, we meet a smiling face. Throughout the world, by some good fortune, the period of learning is the period of romance. In those halcyon days of our boys and girls we have a share, and the golden lights which flood the opening years are reflected on us. Though our pupils cannot follow our efforts in their behalf, and indeed ought not,—it being our art to conceal our art,—yet they perceive that in the years when their happy expansion occurred we were their guides. To us, therefore, their blind affections cling as to few beside their parents. It is better to be loved than to be understood.

Perhaps some readers of this paper will begin to suspect that it is impossible to be a good teacher. Certainly it is. Each of the four qualifications I have named is endless. Not one of them can be fully attained. We can always be more imaginative, wealthy, stimulating, disinterested. Each year we creep a little nearer to our goal, only to find that a finished teacher is a contradiction in terms. Our reach will forever exceed our grasp. Yet what a delight in approximation! Even in our failures there is comfort, when we see that they are generally due not to technical but to

personal defects. We have been putting ourselves forward, or have taught in mechanical rather than vital fashion, or have not undertaken betimes the labor of preparation, or have declined the trouble of vicariousness.

Evidently, then, as we become better teachers we 30 also become in some sort better persons. Our beautiful art, being so largely personal, will at last be seen to connect itself with nearly all other employments. Every mother is a teacher. Every minister. The lawyer teaches the jury, the doctor his patient. The clever salesman might almost be said to use teaching in dealing with his customer, and all of us to be teachers of one another in daily intercourse. As teaching is the most universal of the professions, those are fortunate who are able to devote their lives to its enriching study.

II**ETHICAL INSTRUCTION IN THE SCHOOLS**[Table of Contents](#)

Within a few years a strong demand has arisen for ethical teaching in the schools. Teachers themselves have become interested, and wherever they are gathered the question, “What shall this teaching be?” is eagerly discussed. The educational journals are full of it. Within a year there have been published seven books on the subject. Several of them—it would be hardly an exaggeration to say all—are books of marked excellence. Seldom does so large a percentage of books in a single year, in a single country, and on a single subject reach so high a level of merit. I shall not criticise them, however, nor even engage in the popular discussion of which they form a part. That discussion concerns itself chiefly with the methods by which ethics may be taught. I wish to go behind this controversy and to raise the previous question whether ethics should be taught to boys and girls at all.

Evidently there are strong reasons why it should be. Always and everywhere it is important that men should be good. To be a good man!—it is more than half the fulfilment of life. Better to miss fame, wealth, learning, than to miss righteousness. And in America, too, we must demand not the mere trifle that men shall be good for their own sakes,

but good in order that the life of the state may be preserved. A widespread righteousness is in a republic a matter of necessity. Where all rule all, each man who falls into evil courses infects his neighbor, corrupting the law and corrupting still more its enforcement. The question of manufacturing moral men becomes, accordingly, in a democracy, urgent to a degree unknown in a country where but a few selected persons guide the state.

There is also special urgency at the present time. The ancient and accredited means of training youth in goodness are becoming, I will not say broken, but enfeebled and distrusted. Hitherto a large part of the moral instruction of mankind has been superintended by the clergy. In every civilized state the expensive machinery of the Church has been set up and placed in the hands of men of dignity, because it has been believed that by no other engine can we so effectively render people upright. I still believe this, and I am pretty confident that a good many years will pass before we shall dispense with the ennobling services of our ministers. And yet it is plain that much of the work which formerly was exclusively theirs is so no longer. Much of it is performed by books, newspapers, and facilitated human intercourse. Ministers do not now speak with their old authority; they speak merely as other men speak; and we are all asking whether in the immense readjustment of faith now going on something of their peculiar power of moral as well as of intellectual guidance may not slip away.

The home too, which has hitherto been the fundamental agency for fostering morality in the young, is just now in sore need of repair. We can no longer depend upon it alone

for moral guardianship. It must be supplemented, possibly reconstructed. New dangers to it have arisen. In the complex civilization of city life, in the huge influx of untutored foreigners, in the substitution of the apartment for the house, in the greater ease of divorce, in the larger freedom now given to children, to women, in the breaking down of class distinctions and the readier accessibility of man to man, there are perils for boy and girl which did not exist before. And while these changes in the outward form of domestic life are advancing, certain protections against moral peril which the home formerly afforded have decayed. It would be curious to ascertain in how many families of our immediate time daily prayers are used, and to compare the number with that of those in which the holy practice was common fifty years ago. It would be interesting to know how frequently parents to-day converse with their 34 children on subjects serious, pious, or personal. The hurry of modern life has swept away many uplifting intimacies. Even in families which prize them most, a few minutes only can be had each day for such fortifying things. Domestic training has shrunk, while the training of haphazard companions, the training of the streets, the training of the newspapers, have acquired a potency hitherto unknown.

It is no wonder, then, that in such a moral crisis the community turns to that agency whose power is already felt beneficently in a multitude of other directions, the school. The cry comes to us teachers, "We established you at first to make our children wiser; we want you now for a profounder service. Can you not unite moral culture with intellectual?" It may be; though discipline of the passions is