The Teacher *of* To-Morrow

... AN ADDRESS ...

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A recent meeting of the graduates of my alma mater proved to be, for me, an occasion of special interest. I hope to transfer to the present meeting something of that interest, —inasmuch as the addresses which I then heard suggested the line of my own thought for to-day. The guest of honor, —an efficient and respected professor of mathematics,—who has filled in that institution for forty years a place which he has also honored and adorned,—a man, moreover, whom all his students have regarded with gratitude and affection,—raised, in his address, a most interesting and important question.

It was not, indeed, a new question; teachers are not infrequently confronted with it; but the personality of the man seemed to give it, for the time, at least, a new and striking significance. A good deal had been said about the changes of the last half-century, both as to subject-matter and method, in the work of education. It had been suggested, for instance, that, at a date within the memory of men hardly yet at middle life, all the work offered in the average New England college was both required and could actually be performed in the course of four years. But now, on the other hand, the courses provided even in comparatively small col-

leges would require, for their completion, all the active years of a lifetime.

As is usual at such meetings, there was a considerable degree of confidence manifested that this fact, of itself, implied much progress and healthy growth. The tone of alumni meetings is commonly congratulatory,—even if not, to an impartial ear, actually boastful.

Our guest is not a man of ultra conservative, and most assuredly not of pessimistic temperament,—but his question was this: After all, do these great changes, this broadening of choices, this amplification and increase of subjects, necessarily mark real progress? Were not the men who were trained after the old manner made as strong and as forceful, and were they not as well equipped for the serious work of life as those who have been and are being educated according to the more liberal and elastic methods of our own time? Have we gained as much as we are apt to think we have gained? Do we not sometimes unduly exalt mere change as being necessarily improvement? There were giants in the earlier days; the work of the world was well done then; are we really bettering things?

Such questions as these, framed by cheerful, earnest and thoughtful men, are surely entitled to most respectful and careful attention. They are not to be lightly ignored, or parried with a jaunty air of complacent and inconsiderate attention. We are justly bound to have a reason,—and to be able to formulate it,—for our confidence in the present as better than the past, and for our faith in the future as sure to be better than the present.

For, I confess, my view is that which seems to be the view of the optimist. And, after all due allowances have been made, the assurance seems to me complete that the assumption, upon which the questions I have suggested are based, is not well founded. The doubts which they raise are well calculated, indeed, to make us pause a moment for reflection; but the reflection will not greatly shake our faith in the upward and onward progress of the human race. Of the tendencies of the race we are justified, I believe, in declaring that methods of education found in vogue among civilized and enlightened nations, are tangible and intelligent expressions.

It is always to be remembered that the perfect age is not yet in progress. The golden age is ever before, not behind, that in which we live. The truth is all God's, and it is a unit. The distinctions which we make between the sacred and the secular, the divisions into which we separate the great body of truth, the designations of this or that portion of truth by more or less accurate and apposite terms,—these are, after all, temporary, partial and superficial, even to the view of the man who can take a large survey of the matter, —how much more, then, probably, must such be the fact in the eye of the all-seeing mind.

Each successive generation conquers new fields, makes fresh discoveries, finds relations before unsuspected, adapts old processes to new purposes, wrests from nature an additional portion of her precious secrets. The general statement cannot be questioned. But its admission compels other con-

cessions, and its unavoidable sequences are even more significant than the generalization itself.

Let us consider a few illustrations from experiences, easily within our own observation, in the domain of what we call the material conditions of human life. How surely do the luxuries of one generation become the necessities of its successor. How rapidly does the purchasing power of a day's labor increase. How enormously, too, is time saved. A hundred years ago, a journey of twenty-five miles cost a laboring man a day's wages and a day's time; now, almost anywhere, in a civilized country, a fifth of the money and a tenth of the time amply suffice for the same purpose. Eight or nine hours labor per day now brings to the family of a laboring man far more, whether it be of food, of clothing, of comfort, of pleasure, of advantage in any form you can name, than did twelve or thirteen hours half a century ago. Through this relatively increased remuneration of labor, it is made possible, in our own midst, without hardship in any respect, to require children to attend school throughout the year, who, not so very many years ago, were compelled, at unreasonable hours and to an extent that was absolutely barbarous, to labor in ill-ventilated and otherwise unwholesome factories, in order to ward off actual starvation. Nay, families in very humble circumstances to-day enjoy a multitude of comforts which kings could not have had at any price a century ago. Sewing-machines, convenient and comparatively inexpensive, light and heat, musical instruments—dozens and dozens of similar conveniences and appliances,—are a mere matter of course, well-nigh universal, in every civilized country,—most

of which are the contribution of the century now closing. Where the areas of civilization are widened, these things speedily follow; and, as the degree of civilization is raised, their use is extended and increased.

Now the higher is always conditioned upon the lower, speaking in a large sense, because the spiritual is conditioned upon the physical, an improvement in physical conditions makes the way clear and plain for spiritual growth, and the history of the world shows that the spiritual growth actually follows. There are ups and downs in the path, and the tendency is sometimes temporarily checked and impeded; but, in the long run and upon the whole, the path is upward.

I have spoken of the undoubted improvement in physical conditions and of its immediate and remote effects. If we turn our attention to the spiritual realm exclusively, we find an analogy that is very striking and complete. The secrets by the possession of which a few men grow rich and powerful presently become the property of all, and no man, however crafty and powerful, can, for any long time, either monopolize the forces or chain the word of God. The heirs of all the ages we are,—not merely in some mystical and poetic sense, but in plain, literal, every-day fact. Each generation thus begins, not anew, but where its predecessor left off. The revelations vouchsafed to Moses, and to Isaiah, and to Jesus Christ, are yours and mine. The insight of Shakespeare, the frenzy of Dante, the imagery of St. John, the wisdom of Solomon, the shrewdness of Franklin, the fancy of Hawthorne, the self-abnegation of Lincoln, are, indeed, for all.

So human life, in its details, and especially in its sum, is a

thing of constant and perpetual growth. I mean human life, in the sense of the continuity of movement by which successive generations are knit together. The same thing is true of the changes which have brought the material universe into its present condition. To him who is willing to see it, the purpose of God, in preparing the earth to be the home of man, as revealed in geology, and the working out of his spiritual leadership, as shown in history,—according to Emerson's conception of history,—run bright and unbroken, like a golden thread in a soiled and tangled skein.

But in each phase of this double purpose, there is a process,—a series of connected and dependent events,—and it is not too much to say that for every nation, for every race and for every man, there is a part in the process.

The true position for him to take who believes that every present is better than its past, but who would also do justice to that past, is thus made evident. And its application to a right estimate of present and past methods of education will easily follow as a matter of course. Life is vastly more complex than it was even a generation ago. The needs of the present are both different from and more numerous than the needs of our fathers. The man who has reached middle life can easily illustrate the statement by concrete examples. The marvellous electrical building at Chicago in 1893 was more impressive than a whole treatise upon this topic to him who remembered that it represented what the world had achieved in that line in the short period of seventeen years,—for at Philadelphia in 1876, not one of its real wonders was even suggested. Wonders are constantly changing to common-

places before our very eyes and apparently impossible tasks become mere matters of course. So the needs of different eras may indeed vary, but, upon the whole, they are sure to grow.

What we call education is the resultant of many forces. The man who was intelligent and prepared yesterday may stand dazed and helpless to-day,—like Rip Van Winkle at his awakening,—if he has chanced to sleep, or even to nod a little. It is more than a process of change that we are witnessing,—it is a process of development, by which life is made more complex, by which the needs of men are increased and the means of satisfying them are multiplied, by which a mighty work of adaptation is performed. And it is just as natural, as necessary and as inevitable in this department of human activity as in the domain of industry or of literature.

The agencies to be employed in promoting this process of education must, therefore, vary to some extent from time to time. They were not produced, completed, and handed over to us, for everlasting use, unchanged and unchangeable, at any period of the world's history. Industry might as well expect to thrive by perpetuating the conditions required by the stage-coach and the hand-loom, as education to do its perfect work upon the hypothesis that its conditions and agencies were fixed irrevocably when Cicero ceased to write Latin and Euclid completed his geometry.

The men of old wrought valiantly; the best, and—for that time—appropriate agencies of education were wisely and efficiently employed; the means of fifty years ago trained the youth for life in the world as it was fifty years ago; but the

process of development has not yet ceased and it does no yet show signs of coming to an end.

Wisdom was with the past; it was not concluded and sealed. It was stored up in the records of man's experience and its torch was passed along. The sacred fire was bright; men saw it, loved and obeyed,—but, when they lighted their own, the source of all light still remained, and, through their candor, their labor and their sacrifices, it has been transferred anew from one generation to another,—the same light, indeed,—but yet, how different,—as the powers and appliances for detecting and recognizing it have constantly increased.

The achievements of the century now closing will not complete the book and finish the series. The wisdom which was preserved for us will not die with us. We hope that our successors will find the inheritance somewhat increased; they too, will make changes and additions; every generation must hold its inheritance as a trust, to be manifolded by the using.

We can render the future no greater service than to detect the right tendencies and the abiding forces of our own times,—the tendencies and the forces which are to be carried over into the future,—and add to them such impetus as we may be able to give. We shall thus make a direct contribution to the eternal life of the future. The detection of such forces is a task not alone useful, but interesting and fascinating as well. But in no department of the field is the study more interesting or more useful than in the domain of education.

So it may be well for us to pause a moment,—ere the old century bids us farewell,—and take a forward view. It may temper our pride and exultation in present achievements,—

sometimes too arrogant and thoughtless,—to reflect that this is only one stage in the progress of the race; that other heights are beyond and above us; what is more natural than that we, being teachers and profoundly impressed with the importance and the power of the educational processes for which our work stands, should ask how and in what respects the teacher of to-morrow is to differ from us; what his peculiar characteristics are to be; what larger part he is to bear in the world's activity.

Such problems are receiving attention as never before. The very nature of education is under vigorous, sometimes fierce, discussion. It is a time of transition, of unrest, of constant and rapid change. The important disclosures of biological research have had much to do with this condition of things. The teachers of to-morrow will find facts conclusively established as to the capacities and powers of the mind entirely different from those with which teachers now in middle life entered upon their work. The vast and revolutionary change in the content of the psychology with which I daily deal in class work,—as compared with what I learned in my own student days,—is the source of my most serious thought in my duty as an instructor of normal students. The field, moreover, is, by no means, wholly investigated, and in no department of human learning are there more numerous or more important questions still awaiting answers.

But, leaving on one side the matters in which there is doubt as to details, or hesitation as to treatment, let us try to get hold of certain tendencies which seem to deal with fundamentals and rest upon solid bases. There are some of

these so strong and so rational that I expect the teacher of to-morrow will be profoundly affected by them. Two of them, and only two, I shall at this time discuss. Each has its intellectual and its emotional aspect; but in one of them the former element seems to be the important feature, and in the other the latter.

In the first place, then, I think the teacher of the future will be governed by a greater loyalty to truth,—and that this state of things will exist because the future will make it easier for men to be loyal to the truth. The instrumentalities which bring the nations of the world into more intimate relations, through the promotion of communication, of travel and of transportation, will do much to secure this end. When the business of the world is gathered into a single system, when many citizens of every nation are related by ties of blood, of benevolence and of financial interest, with many citizens of every other nation, so that, in each, many centers respond to a harm suffered by another in the remotest portions of the earth, you have a mighty force sure to be felt in behalf of international friendliness and comity. There can be no question but that such forces are already powerful in compelling the nations of Christendom to keep the peace towards each other; when the forces of civilization shall have prevailed,—as they are sure to prevail,—in China, in Africa, in the islands of the sea, the extent and the strength of this influence will be mightily enlarged. For all these interests, —of business as well as of benevolence, of civilization as well as of Christianity,—ultimately depend, however individual exceptions may seem to contradict the statement, upon the

success of men in adapting themselves to their full environment, and that is simply another phrase for obedience, or loyalty, to the truth.

The increasing fellowship of men breaks down bigotry and narrowness of all sorts and kinds. Bigotry and narrowness have done much to keep the truth out of men's lives. How difficult, for instance, it always is for the descendants of religious sects which once persecuted each other to the death to agree upon mere questions of fact relating to the earlier times. But intimate association reduces bigotry and intolerance, and the reduction of bigotry and intolerance prepares the way for charity and fairness of judgment respecting either the present or the past.

The influence of the public schools in our own country is distinctly a factor along this line, inasmuch and to such extent, as they bring into their membership the children of all classes of our people. I expect to see this inclusion less and less incomplete as time goes on. Thus the teacher of the future will have a broader field of usefulness, and in that fact will find it easier and easier to see the elements of goodness and usefulness in every kind and condition of men.

But this result will not come merely as regards the personalities of those with whom the teachers will associate and as to the interests which immediately touch them. Minds will also be made broader and more hospitable to all branches and forms of truth. I have said that our classifications of truth, and our characterizations of it, are incomplete and transitory. Truth is a unit; it all comes from one source; every item is related closely or remotely to every other item,

—and it is all sacred. The teacher of the future will recognize more and more completely the significance and the consequences of this statement. When that recognition shall have been made, it will have a profound effect, not only upon men personally, but also upon the motive and the method with which they will do their work. The things taught will cease to be of paramount importance; it will be their relations to each other, and, most of all, to the child, that will be important.

Such a revolution is already foreshadowed. Geography, for example, was formerly taught as a "description of the earth's surface." Now we study the earth as the home of man, and geography is an account of the materials, forces and processes by which God has provided, modified and adapted it for its use. History was a mere chronological grouping of events, with chief stress upon war and bloodshed,—even now, in some manner, children not infrequently get the idea that a nation at peace has no history. But a beginning has been made, under the study of history, of the spiritual forces and influences, often much more important and abiding than those of conflict and carnage, which have moulded and transformed national life. It is occasionally seen that the cotton-gin was a greater factor in our own history than the battle of New Orleans, and that the laying of the Atlantic cable far transcended the Franco-Prussian war. So, too, even with arithmetic, in whose name more time has been wasted, and more happy child-life clouded, than it is pleasant to contemplate,—even with arithmetic, there are signs of brighter days. Along all these lines we are making progress in bring-

ing about methods of treatment which will tend to make it pleasant and easy for a child to come into harmony with truth and thus the way is being paved by which he may be led into a sincere love of the truth.

Other illustrations might easily be given, did time permit. We look, for instance, to the future, with a confident hope, that then will more and more be seen and more and more utilized the power for good which resides in the ability to recognize the elements and the forms of beauty,—which are the blossoms of truth,—in the appreciation of literature, adapted to the age and the experience of children in each and every school, to the end that they may thus be brought into sympathy with the aspirations of men, and be moved, according to their various powers, to help redeem those aspirations.

But the hints already given, meager as they have been, must suffice.

The second conspicuous promise of the future demands attention. It is, as it seems to me, fundamental in all plans for improvement. There are many indications that more teachers than ever before are awake to its importance, and the promise for the coming years is very great. But, as yet, not even teachers themselves have entirely ceased to put in the very center of their conception of themselves as teachers, the element of mastership, of irresponsible and absolute control, as their right, and of perfect, immediate and unquestioning obedience on the part of their pupils, as a duty. Abstractly, much, perhaps, may be said for this view of the teacher's office; but it does seem to me, that, when teachers find themselves constantly dwelling upon their rights and

their pupil's duties, something is radically wrong in the spirit with which they approach their work. Theoretically, their position may appear to be sound, when an issue is made in a specific case. But practically, and in a high sense, the real fault is too often in the attitude which the teacher takes. The schools are for the children ; they do not belong to the teachers ; they are maintained for the former and not for the latter. The teachers should come to their duties, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and should count it not only a high privilege but a sacred duty to render the service which the children need. Are there teachers anywhere in service, in any grade of school, from the lowest to the highest, who are not touched with this feeling ? who think of a school as their private property and of themselves as the owners ? who simply hear the lessons which the best of their pupils would learn without them, and who feel no special obligation and have no special ability to inspire the average pupil, the unambitious pupil, the indifferent pupil, and to protect such against the mistakes of omission and of commission from which few are always exempt, from the kindergarten to the college ? If there are such,—who, by reason of a lack of tact and sympathy, by reason of ill-health, by reason of great anxieties, or from any other cause, so fail,—the children have a right to be protected from them. The teacher of to-morrow will realize, better than we always do that he ought to be judged by the effect or the non-effect of his leadership upon the great mass of his pupils, and not simply by the achievements of a few, who, being of superior ability, or having special fondness or ambition for study, or being otherwise

unusually well favored, feel little need of instruction, and would do their work almost as well in solitude as in school. It is the teacher who is able to reclaim the one disposed to stray from the best path who is the great teacher; it is the best school where the public sentiment is surely on the side of good order and of high aims, under the leadership which Arnold showed to be possible.

In other words, the best results of teaching are those which we must classify as moral. And, as morality in solitude implies substantially a contradiction in terms, the training which one receives in morality must be given and received when one is in the midst of his fellows. And the public school, from the inclusiveness of its membership, comes nearer to being a type of the great world in which the child is to live than any other set of conditions which he meets during his childhood. The teacher, who is able to enlist upon the side of high-toned conduct and of cheerful and fruitful industry the public opinion and the social spirit of his pupils, need have small fear for them or for himself in subsequent years.

More and more, as it seems to me, are the requirements which these reflections suggest to be made of our teachers. A harm cannot be done to one side or phase of our natures without injuring the whole; the balance, at least, is disturbed, if no other injury results. The influence of mind upon mind is, indeed, a subtle force; almost completely it defies analysis or explanation. Very few of us have not been fortunate enough to have fallen, at some time, under the instruction of a teacher of wholesome and generous personality, of hearty and vigorous nature, whom to obey was a genuine pleasure

and privilege, whose slightest wish won our cheerful compliance, whose "good morning" it was almost a benediction to hear. He won our loyalty and set our feet in a safe and pleasant path. He rejoiced with us in our little successes; he strove to dissuade us from the petty thoughts and ignoble acts to which all are more or less tempted. He may not have been the most "efficient" teacher we ever knew; some other may have been able to drive us over more pages of Vergil or through more problems in arithmetic than he,—but, whether he be living or dead to-day, our gratitude and our affection go out to him at every recollection of those pleasant days, to us his memory is as that of the just and his abiding influence is a savor of life unto life. There have been such teachers in all times and under all systems; but the world is recognizing their value more and more, and people are discovering that, whether the kindergarten in its present form goes or stays, the spirit for which it stands is needed in every kind and in every grade of school.

The teacher of to-morrow,—let me say in conclusion,—will not lose an accomplishment or a quality which the best teachers enjoy to-day. There will be no sharp line drawn between our going and his coming. But he will be loyal to truth in a higher degree than we have been able to attain; he will be the friend and the lover of his children. And, as the schools of the past have done their work according to their best light in the midst of the conditions they were called to meet, so the schools of the future will train their pupils for the broader life of that era, with their eyes towards the light and their hearts towards the skies.