

schools of this country are in the hands of teachers poorly paid, who are placed there by school-committee men wholly incompetent to judge of their fitness. It lies within the observation of every reader of this paragraph that many of these so-called teachers are ignorant girls and young men scantily educated, whose knowledge is bounded by the text-books which they follow with their pupils. They are incapable of teaching, they can only hear the lessons which they cannot illuminate, and they cannot inspire their scholars with love of learning, or even with curiosity about the world. For this state of things the public is to blame. No good results can be expected when the ignorant teach the ignorant. The error lies in the popular fallacy that almost anybody can teach children.

This is what we mean by saying that we are trying to make our educational pyramid stand on its apex. The truth is that the best talent, the widest knowledge, the utmost skill, are needed in the primary school. The prime object of the school is to awaken the mind of the child. Many pupils go through the primaries, through the secondary schools, and possibly through college, without having their minds awakened, without having their enthusiasm aroused to the same eager interest in the school studies that they manifest in football, for instance.

Once the mind is awakened and guided to explore the knowledge of the world, the most difficult task of the educator is accomplished. The pupil is inspired with a desire to know, and instructed how to find out things for himself. This inspiration and this guidance can only come from teachers who have knowledge and the skill of imparting it in a marked degree. The unawakened mind requires more external power to arouse it than to keep it going in well-marked grooves. This is understood in asylums for deaf-mutes and for idiots. In those the very ablest teachers take the beginners in intelligence. We shall begin to handle this problem of education intelligently only when we recognize the truth that for teachers of the primary schools, down to the infant classes, we must have men and women of the first qualifications, of broad knowledge and liberal culture and character, and we must pay them as high a price for their services as we pay teachers in the secondary schools, at least.

The conference on history recommends that it be taught for eight consecutive years. But history is a knowledge of human life, and its unfolding really begins in the kindergarten. History is a unit. No portion of it, even the limited history of a state or county, can be well taught by a person who has not a