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hand, if I should address you on some topic having no special application to your profession and work, I feared that my remarks might be less helpful to you, as teachers, than if they had greater fitness. For I cannot but feel that in speaking to this association, I am speaking to a representative audience—I am speaking through you to the pupils you instruct. And if I could only succeed in saying anything to inspire your zeal, or to prompt you to cherish nobler and juster conceptions of the great work of training and furnishing immortal beings for the duties and emergencies of life, I would thus be reaching beyond you to the vast army of youthful minds whom it is your privilege to lead to the inexhaustible fountain of knowledge. But, believing that because you are teachers, you are not the less men and women, with hearts that respond to all that concerns humanity, I purpose leaving professional themes for those of ampler experience than mine, to occupy your attention with a few observations on some of "the tendencies of the times in which we live," in order that from the study of this subject we may derive some practical lessons for the better direction of our own lives. While it is our privilege to study the lessons of history—to learn from the success and failure of those who have gone before us—and to gather inspiration to action from the contemplation of the future, it is especially our duty to take careful note of the present—to endeavour rightly to understand the circumstances, favourable and unfavourable, which surround us on this great battle-field, where we must either win the wreaths of an imperishable fame or suffer irretrievable defeat. As the mariner, who steers his venturous barque across the ocean, makes himself thoroughly acquainted, not only with the reefs and shoals that lie along his way, but also with the prevailing winds and currents, so it is our duty to study those tides and currents of human life—those forces that operate in society, helping or hindering men, as they steer on to the goal of life.

We should not do our work blindly and mechanically, following rules, the reasonableness or truth of which we have never seen, but with an intelligent appreciation of the difficulties to be overcome, and the best methods and agencies by which success may be gained. The times in which we live are difficult either to comprehend or describe. So complex, so contradictory, so rich in good and evil, so bright with hope and so dark with discouragement, that they exceed comprehension, and transcend description.

One class of persons regard the present as the world's golden age, and render a homage, little short of worship, to the progress of the nineteenth century. Another class wail out their sorrowful