

## \* Special Papers. \*

## THE DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF TEACHERS.\*

WE are members of the noblest of all professions. Not the lawyer, nor the physician, nor even the clergyman himself is entrusted with a grander or a more responsible calling than the teacher. Not one of them can exert so tremendous an influence on the life and welfare of his fellow-beings as a teacher who is fully alive to his responsibility and his privileges. Having full charge of children for six hours of the day for five days in the week, we have perhaps more of their waking hours in which to exercise our influence upon them than even the parent himself; and therefore it is of supreme importance that our influence shall be such as to make them useful and high-minded citizens of this glorious land.

Our duty is of a three-fold nature. We are required to develop the intellectual faculties of our pupils; we are required to develop their moral and social nature; and we are also required to foster their physical growth and their strength of body. These are truly important and responsible duties.

To be successful in cultivating the intellectual side of our pupils' nature, it is imperative that our own intellects be properly cultivated, and that we be perfectly familiar with all the subjects we are expected to teach. A firm grasp of everything he is expected to lay before his pupils secures for the teacher the confidence of his pupils, and gives him confidence in himself; it will guard him against feeding his pupils with intellectual food too strong for their digestion; and it will assist him in teaching coherently and thoroughly. Without this qualification, he must ever move with trembling or with stumbling steps. And even if the teacher has this firm, sure grasp of his subjects, he must not allow his mind to become a stagnant pool, but must keep perpetually feeding it from the fountains of knowledge. No true teacher will rest satisfied with knowing simply what he is required to teach; he will desire to know vastly more than he can ever expect to impart to his pupils. He must be possessed of the studious spirit if he wishes ever to inspire his pupils with that spirit.

To cultivate the child's mind, the teacher must also have an acquaintance with the workings of the child-mind. To secure this acquaintance he must be a student of psychology, a subject which, of late years, has thrown great light on the science of teaching. With the aid and under the guidance of psychology, the teacher is enabled to place the subjects of study before his pupils according to rational and intelligent methods; and the true teacher will give deep, earnest thought to the invention of good methods. I would not attempt to dissuade any teacher from adopting the methods invented by others, if they are better than his own, but I submit that good methods of his own invention are likely to be of more service to himself and his pupils than methods adopted at second hand. Moreover, the search for the

best methods, and the intelligent criticism of his own methods beget the spirit of thoughtfulness, a spirit invaluable to the teacher.

In the second place, we are required to cultivate the moral and social side of our pupil's nature. Who can begin to estimate the importance of this part of our duty? It stands second to none of the duties we are called upon to discharge. The building up of character,—what can be a grander task? What opportunities we have of inculcating kindness, forbearance and truth—truth in our pupils to themselves, to their fellows, and to their God! How proud we may be if we can send out boys and girls, possessed of a chivalrous spirit of honor! We must teach them cleanliness, too, moral as well as personal; and I know of no surer impulse towards moral cleanliness, than a healthy love for cleanliness of person and of surroundings. Nor must we neglect to teach them respect for old age, and reverence for sacred things. The greater part indeed of this teaching must be done unconsciously by the teacher, his own possession of these qualities making its silent impress upon his pupils. Above all things, do not neglect in your pupils the formation of good habits. Set before them high ideals, and let your own life teach them to live up to those ideals. Be not anxious to send forth into the world *great* men and women, but strive with all your might to send forth men and women who are *good*. Then you may expect the greatest of all earthly rewards, an inward peace and satisfaction born of duty faithfully discharged.

In the third place, the teacher is required to care for the physical well-being of his pupils. The ancient Greeks, who attained a pitch of excellence in education which we may well admire, divided education into two equally important classes, music and gymnastics. Under the head of music they included everything that related to the training of the mind, and under the head of gymnastics, all that had reference to the training of the body. And they produced a race of men since unequalled in intellectual or in physical strength. We too often forget that, for the mind to do the best work it is capable of doing, it must be contained in a strong and healthy body. Our success as teachers being judged, as it generally is judged, by the number of candidates we pass at examinations, we frequently, in the struggle to pass as many pupils as possible, forget that the playground is a necessary adjunct of the school-room, and that the best results in the school-room are not only consistent with, but even dependent on, the greatest enthusiasm in the playground. The ideal teacher will surely be found to be that one who is always to be seen at the proper time upon the playground, and who there, as in the school-room is the leader and director of his pupils.

But there are still other duties for the teacher, and other qualities that he must possess. Many children have a deep-rooted repugnance to the school-room, and must be attracted thither by all the arts the teacher can command. The school-room must be made pleasant. Its appearance must be made attractive. Its walls should be adorned with pictures and ornaments, its

widows with flowers, to give it a pleasing, home-like appearance. And if the ornaments and pictures are contributed by the pupils themselves, the charm and attractiveness of the school-room will be doubly enhanced. Few things are so helpful to the teacher as the co-operation of his pupils in this kind of work; few things so valuable in inculcating a love of the beautiful.

The school-room should also be made pleasant by the teacher's own presence. What is a more delightful sight than a cheerful teacher moving among pupils who have caught his spirit of cheerfulness? Depression of mind and despondency of spirit will at times come over you, but they must be repressed, and you must ever present to your pupils the beauty of a cheerful spirit. There are occasions, indeed, when you must of necessity be stern and severe, but these occasions, unless they occur too frequently, will serve but to set in relief the habitual pleasantness of your nature.

Closely allied with this quality of mind is the quality of sympathy, a quality indispensable to the successful teacher. Is it possible to over-estimate the value of this moving force? What teacher has not himself felt inspired with new energy by a word of sympathy and encouragement from parent or trustee? It is the same with children. They find innumerable discouragements and difficulties in the path of knowledge; but the discouragements and difficulties vanish at a sympathetic word from the teacher, their eyes gleam with new hope, new energy, and the task that was apparently impossible, it becomes now a pleasure to accomplish.

Another indispensable quality in the teacher's character is energy. Whatever you undertake to do, do it with all your might, and leave it not until it is thoroughly done. Labor was imposed on us, not as a curse, but as a supreme blessing; and the more energetically we labor, the more do we realize the blessing of labor. What satisfaction a teacher feels after a day in which he has been more than usually energetic! Energy is a quality that everyone can possess, and which, when possessed, will accomplish everything. Mountains of difficulty become mere molehills before the strenuous efforts of the energetic teacher. Energy is a quality that increases with use; the more energetic you are, the more do you desire to be energetic, and the more repugnant to you do lethargy and indolence become. Energy is a quality that is contagious; the energetic teacher has energetic pupils; and rapid, thorough progress is made in that school-room in which the teacher's energy pervades and inspires all the work of the school-room.

Energy engenders enthusiasm, and makes the school-room what the school-room should be,—a hive of industry. How the pupils hang on the lips of an enthusiastic teacher! How they put all their soul into their work, and how they delight to work when they are aroused by such a teacher! Enthusiasm is the secret of all success. All great inventions, all great reforms have been accomplished by enthusiasts. And with what better mental equipment can you send out your pupils into the active, busy world, than the habit of doing with all their might

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