

called "the opening exercises;" but I have abiding and enriching memories of the Christian forbearance, solicitude, sympathy, gentleness, pure-mindedness, righteousness,—those incorporated beatitudes—of my teachers. They preached to me every day out of the Bibles of their lives. This was the kind of religious teaching which my schoolmates and I could carry into the play-ground, into the holiday excursion, into the long vacation, and finally into the great arena of life. If there had been anything formal or didactic about our religious instruction at school, I am sure it would have been lost upon us. The power of this preaching lay in its indirectness. It was dew and sun-beam, not wheel and spindle. It melted into character, rather than was woven in.

This conception of the homiletic function of the teacher, it seems to me, adds new dignity and worth and joy to the profession of teaching. The instructor of youth is not a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water. He is not chained down to the more or less mechanical process of conveying instruction. There are larger possibilities for him. The spiritual as well as mental development of his pupils demands the best that is in him.

I always feel, when I go into a school-room, as if I were entering a garden of human flowers;—childhood develops so after the manner of a flower! Here are these active, vigorous bodies, store houses of energy and health. They are the roots of the plant. Then these busy, inquisitive, accumulative minds, they are the woody substance, the stem of the plant, growing slowly, but surely and compactly. Then there are the souls—the sweet and precious blossoms of this garden of children. How differently these blossoms grow from the roots or the stems of God's wonderful human plant! It is rather a leaping and bursting into existence, than a steady, slow development, it takes a rose-bush years to grow, but a rose may open in an hour. So with a soul. You cannot tell the hour, the moment when it will reach its determining-point and take form and color for life. All depends upon the moral and spiritual atmosphere in which it finds itself unfolding. And how large a part of this atmosphere the school-room supplies! From eight years upward, on an average, the child spends the most significant part of his daily life in school, and the teacher's influence becomes the great morally-determining factor of its character. How is this matured soul influencing this spiritual beginner? How is this earliest and most trusted of pastors preaching to this little school-room parishioner?