

MANUAL TRAINING AND OBJECTIVE EDUCATION.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE OTTAWA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

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WHILE introducing this subject for your discussion I do not feel free to advocate Manual Training in any exclusive or restricted sense of the term, but would confine myself to urging a more general application of its underlying principles than we find at present in our public school system.

The literal meaning of the term is hand-training, and as the hand is the great symbol of doing and a prominent medium in the work of humanity, manual training may appropriately stand for the practical and the useful and the objective in education.

In offering a line of criticism on the status of education in our elementary schools, I would like to say by way of preface that I view the present condition of our system in no spirit of complaint or depreciation. During the past twenty years and particularly within the last decade our progress on the whole has been steady and substantial, yet, having cause to rejoice, there is no reason to rest satisfied, no reason to settle down into an inert state of self-complacency. It will surely be a black day for Ontario when those who labor in her educational fields have no criticism to offer, or no improvements to suggest.

From the standpoint of those who have faith in manual training, our public school education is too subjective. The currency of the school is words. The teacher makes his presentations to the pupils almost entirely through words. The reproductions of the pupils are also embodied in words. Now we all know very well that words are simply the wings or the vehicle of thought. They are of

much use in transmitting thought. But the business of education is not so much with the transmission of thought as with the begetting of thought. Thoughts arise primarily from the contact of the mind with the things or matter of the surrounding world. Our system then is too artificial if it continually places the teacher or his words between the mind of the pupil and the world of objects.

Of course in a sense words are the *symbols* of thought, so too are things. Why use the former exclusively? What if every book and slate and blackboard were suddenly banished from the schools! Could not the processes of education go on? Perhaps we would then set about establishing a better basis for education.

Manual training would urge the objective side as complementary to our present subjective aspects of teaching. Its plea is that we should bring our pupils into a vital contact with things, for every object in the world will pay its tribute to the human mind. A piece of ice, for instance, is a wonderful embodiment of the Creator's thought; this table too is an interesting presentation of man's thought. But what meaning do you and I ordinarily take out of such a thing. In the school-workshop such a piece of furniture would probably represent the labor of half a dozen different persons: the measuring, the sawing, the planing, the turning, the fitting, the finishing, etc. Division of labor, but unity of purpose. Independent effort, but interdependent achievement. All striving together for a common end. Here, too is silently taught a beautiful les-