

these principles recognized by the text-books? We open a geography, and in the very first sentence we find a definition—a generalization; and so it goes on, page at a time. The child learns all this—learns the words, and works his jaws in repeating them, and they mean nothing whatever to him—happily Providence has ordained that he may forget them easily. Before he can reach those definitions understandingly, a long process must be gone through, but the book gives the definition first. I went into a school one day and put the question—“Children, did you ever see a peninsula? No, they had never seen one—seemed to think it unreasonable to ask them, as if one ought to be about a hundred years old to see such a wonderful sight—and yet four-fifths of them were born on the beautiful peninsula where the school-house stood.

So directors are paying their money for the teaching of mere empty words, that pretend to describe things, when we ought to show our children the things themselves. We teach in this way simply because it is the traditional method—like the man who carried his grain in one end of the bag and a stone in the other to balance it, because his father and grandfather had done it, and what was good enough for them was good enough for him, and he “guessed he knew his own business, and nobody should teach him to carry grain to mill.”

Another principle: *The mind grows by its own activity, and in no other way.* We can only assist; we cannot make it grow. How do we recognize this fact in our schools? I remember when I was a young teacher how I used to explain everything and how I explained most what I knew least. I used to explain divisions of fractions very lucidly when I didn't understand it—and I never did understand it until I learned with actual things. All this explanation is simply depriving the child of his chances to grow. The best expression of mental activity is when the child says “Don't do that for me—let me do it.” The more we pour in, the weaker they become. What we want is to develop power—yet we do their work while they sit helpless. Would you train an athlete by lifting all his burdens for him, and then send him forth to win the race? Why do the same thing for the child's mind? You now understand why I say that the only true arithmetic would be one that should have neither rule, explanation nor definition in it.

The thing that is near is the thing to teach. You sometimes hear a teacher complaining that she can do little or nothing because she has no apparatus. This is another of the chains of the old education. Have we not pebbles, and shells, and leaves, and flowers, and free skies? If there is absolutely no apparatus, save the ordinary country surroundings, these are enough for the true teacher. The good teacher is the one who appreciates the value and feels the power of the near; for out of the seen the unseen must come. To be sure, some will say, “We are opposed to this—these now-fangled ways are all bosh.” Yet they ride in the cars and have the electric light before their doors; they are progressive in that line of applied science; but they fail to perceive that the science of teaching applied would produce commensurate results. They say, “Those things are practical, but these educational theories are visionary.” Yet the things of which we are most ignorant, as regards the teaching in our schools, are, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the clothes we wear—in short, that which touches us most closely on every side. The true teacher, the one who is trying to learn to teach, uses these things; and the thought of God in nature becomes the thought of the child—and the revelation of God in nature works out through the child a true civilization.

Work can be made attractive. For great success, the worker must love his work; it must not be drudgery to him. Give the child real things, and he will love to work, and you will not need the rattan and the ferule, nor the compulsory truant law, nor yet undue stimulus of emulation. I do not believe in compelling children to go to school, unless you have something good and pleasant there for them; and if you have that, the attraction makes compulsion unnecessary. I have to deal with some of the poorest children to be found anywhere; yet in the very slums of ignorance and poverty and superstition they made me welcome; the children are all our friends because they know we bring them good. And this is the glory of our work that we are trying to make of these children, notwithstanding such surroundings, men who will be an honor to the republic—voters who cannot be bought for two dollars apiece.

And we are doing it! I tell you, teachers, that real teaching eliminates the bad boys and girls—they are good. Under such teaching, goodness takes the place of vice—all good teaching de-

velops moral character. On the other hand, all bad teaching has an element of immorality in it; we have seen that it unfits for work, and idleness means vice. I believe that the teaching of the lowest primary schools, if well done, is the highest work on earth.

And now, teachers, shall we not begin to do well, and apply these principles to our work? If we and our successors would do this, in a century there would be a revolution in the intellectual and moral world greater and more beneficent than the physical one of which we have spoken. Shall we not do it? The work cannot be done quickly, but we can do our share in laying the foundations of a glorious future.

What are the chief obstacles in the way of reform? I believe that there is no class more earnest and faithful than teachers; and from what I have seen in your state, I am not sure but Pennsylvania teachers lead the van; but my clients are the children, and through them the future of the Republic, and in their interest I must speak the whole truth—and the truth is, teachers, that the greatest obstacle is in us. By our clinging to tradition, and our self-conceit, we too often bar knowledge out of our minds. We should pray against the tendency to hold on to worn out devices, and for humility to feel that life is too short to learn all about teaching. If you would go into the schools next Monday with such a spirit, work from fact to theory, and from theory back to practice, what growth would follow! But too often our attitude toward knowledge is wrong—we think we know, when we don't.

Sometimes the superintendent is an obstacle. When he comes to examine he must have just so much—it is all measured off—he comes, asks the regular questions, they are answered, and he goes away, and it is all right. Now any examination that does not test real teaching, or does not help the teacher with the children, is worse than none. I know how difficult it is to find men and women fit to supervise schools; they must know how to teach—how to show the teacher what to do—how to put the standard within reach of honest work, but beyond that of stuffing or cramming.

Directors often stand in the way of progress—they, too, think they know when they don't. My friend C. F. Adams, a man of fair education and pretty good family, made quite a discovery when he found himself unfit to supervise schools—many never find it out. I have known directors who had once taught two or three months, and knew all about it. They are the kind that come in every now and then to examine the schools, they always ask the same questions, and after the first time they are always answered; and when the superintendent comes round, and thinks the teacher below the mark, he says: “Oh, no! why, the pupils answer every question I ask them!” Such people may know a good deal about business, but when they can diagnose and prescribe for a case of typhoid fever without special education, then I would trust them to examine and grade teachers—and not before. We had some bitter experience of this kind when the civil authorities undertook to manage the war. There is only one sensible way for directors to treat this matter; find a man or woman who knows the business, give him the teachers he wants and the means he needs—and if he don't get results, turn him out, and find one who will get them.

But sometimes it seems as if the schools were made for the teachers, and not for the children—and we find all the places filled by the directors' “sisters, and their cousins and their aunts.” These same gentlemen, if they wanted a superintendent for a factory, would send to Europe, if necessary, to get a competent man; but when it is a question of trusting to somebody the development of our children, the selection is made because some young girl finds it convenient to make five or six dollars a week.

The people themselves stand in the way, then they fail to elect proper persons as superintendents and directors, and carry their offices into politics. Now, if you must have corrupt congressmen, and legislators, and governors yet awhile, I suppose we can't hinder you; but, for heaven's sake, keep the interest of our little children from contact with dirty politics! When you help to elect unfit school officers you vote against your own children, and help to perpetuate evil for generations.

And now, teachers, I must leave you, but my last word is, pray and work, that you may understand the great art of teaching; have courage to apply all you know, being always ready to learn better; take advice; profit by criticism; say what you think. Magnify your office. I am a teacher to-day for the same reason that I was a soldier twenty years back—because I believe that the problem of the education of the people is the greatest problem of the time. Learn all you can, and teach it to the little ones, and you and they will be happy.