

## AN ABLE ADDRESS.

## "THE RELATIONS AND DUTIES OF A TEACHER TO HIMSELF."

DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR P. J. LEITCH,  
ON JANUARY 24TH, BEFORE THE ASSO-  
CIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS, AT  
THE COMMERCIAL ACADEMY, MONTREAL.

Our readers will be pleased to read the following able and highly instructive address, delivered by Professor P. J. Leitch of the Commercial Academy, on the 24th January instant:—

Honorable Superintendent, Rev. Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Since I to-night have the honor of addressing my fellow-teachers and many other gentlemen who, by their very presence on the occasion of this meeting, manifest the great interest they take in the cause of education, it is but natural that I should select for my subject something intimately connected with teaching, and there is nothing more intimately connected with teaching than the teacher himself. I therefore propose to treat the relation which the teacher holds to his pupils, to the community or state, and himself as man, in the briefest manner possible, as to do full justice to the subject would require volumes. But before touching this threefold relation it is necessary that we should come to a clear understanding of what a teacher is: any one who imparts knowledge in regard to any matter—mechanical, scientific, artistic, or whatever it may be, is called by the pupil his teacher. When, however, we speak of a body of teachers the word teacher takes a higher meaning; it becomes identical with educator. And what is education? It is the harmonious development of all inborn faculties, with a view of raising the pupil to that nobility of character that brightness of intellect, that firmness of determination as will not only benefit him for the battle of life, but enable him to be a useful member of and an honor to the commonwealth that claims him as its own.

In former times it was considered sufficient, if the teacher managed to make his pupils familiar with the great R's—Reading, Riting and Rithmetic,—and when a boy could read well, write a good legible hand (which a very high education had to turn into illegible), and knew the multiplication table, the teacher was considered a faithful servant who had conscientiously fulfilled all his duties to his pupil. To-day the relation between pupil and teacher is a higher one. I do not mean that in developing the mental faculties of the child the teacher has a more arduous or a more difficult task in being obliged to instruct in geography, grammar, history, natural sciences, and may be many other things. While it is true that by instilling into the youthful mind of the pupil all the different kinds of knowledge, he becomes a greater benefactor of the child than he would be were he to confine himself to the former rudiments, still he is now more than ever a mental trainer; he considers himself bound to develop not only the intellect. It is the whole nature he wants to bring to greater perfection, at least put the child on the path leading to the more exalted position of ideal manhood. It is the heart, it is the will, that claim development in childhood, in youth. The mere mental culture does not make people better. Those who may feel inclined to contradict this statement take too narrow a view of vice and crime. Intellectual advancement may keep people from gross so-called low crimes, since the higher social position in life opened by learning, as a rule, places a natural barrier against what would shock society, and since learning multiplies the means of earning a livelihood. There are, however, crimes that revolt just as much against divine and social order as theft, burglary, drunkenness and the whole category of atrocities naturally connected with the slums of low life. There are refined vices, which in intensity of malice and productiveness of shame and misery are equal to, nay, worse, than the vices of the uncivilized; hence the development of the intellect must be accompanied by a growth of moral sensitiveness and a solidifying of moral principles. The first training of the child's heart belongs to the mother, to her the planting of moral principles—but to the teacher falls the responsible lot of developing and strengthening the young

sprouts of the seed sown by a Christian mother's loving words and example. From the time of dawning reason to the verge of young manhood, the boy is left, we may say, the whole day to the teacher's care, and he it is who, to a great extent, forms the child's character; his influence is so great, that we easily judge the polite ways of the teacher, if we get an opportunity of observing and studying the manners of his pupils.

This would be all that I consider necessary about the relation of the teacher to his pupils, did this intimacy not also necessitate a relation of the pupils to the teacher. Being with him every day; seeing the interest he takes in their welfare, being treated by him kindly and justly, they appreciate and love him, and thus their mutual relation, I say it from actual experience, goes beyond that outlined by duty. The teacher becomes as it were a father to them, and frequently as they grow up remains their adviser, they make him their confidant in their joys and hopes as well as in their sorrows and troubles. When we once have understood the relation between teacher and pupils, when we have realized that the teacher is one of the greatest benefactors of each rising generation, we can readily determine what position to assign him among the promoters of the stability, safety and happiness of the nation. Since the general education is the teacher's work we have but to consider the influence which the intellectual and moral development of the masses has on the welfare of the state, to be convinced that his mission is of such importance that there is none more honorable.

Abstractly speaking, it might appear that general education—civilization—does not assist man in the pursuit of happiness: With civilization our wants increase, wants which cannot all be satisfied, and it is obvious that the more wants remain unsatisfied the lower the degree of happiness must be. It might seem that the instilling of Christian principles, the love of God and our neighbor, the ennobling and endearing prospect of an eternal happiness, which makes passing troubles appear light, might be sufficient, while the natural simplicity of life remained undisturbed of modern progress. I say *abstractly speaking*. But as the great German poet Goethe says, theory is all grey in contradistinction to the living green of nature. We must then take the real status, the de facto condition of things—the world as it is,—and doing this there is no fear of contradiction to the statement:—that a nation which now neglects the mental and moral development or instruction of the masses is as regards safety and happiness in a pitiful condition. In the great struggle, of existence, where the fittest survive such a nation must perish.

There is no doubt there have been great nations in which intellectual culture was the boon of a few. We admire the ruins of the works they accomplished and doubt whether we in our age of advanced progress could equal, or, I might say, duplicate them. But what was the happiness of the people under such conditions? They were slaves of the great, bondsmen under inhuman taskmasters. They saw luxury without being able themselves to enjoy any comfort. The empires of which they were the down-trodden subjects have crumbled into oblivion because the masses were ignorant. What was Greece compared to Persia at the time of Xerxes? A handful of people without any great resources. But the Greeks were an educated nation—the freemen all were intellectually developed, while the masses of the Persians were ignorant, and therefore, and only therefore, did Greece flourish on the ruins of the oriental empires. It is education that inspires with love of fatherland. The intelligent soldier is not even in our day, where powder and dynamite and electricity play such a terribly prominent part in warfare, a mere piece of mechanism. Has not China as good men of war, as good torpedo boats, as good cannons and rifles as the Japanese? Are not the armies conducted by men of high military education? Why then is the march of this materially small nation one continual triumph? Because the masses of Japan are educated, they fight, each man, with that spirit of liberty and pride, which is foreign to people kept in ignorance.

When the masses are deprived of education the number of intelligent men must necessarily remain limited. It is only people, who either themselves have enjoyed the benefits of good solid instruction, or who are surrounded by people

that on account of good education prosper better than they do themselves,—it is only such as these that are willing to make any sacrifice to have their children advance in the learning of the day.

What would become of our manufacturing interests, our trade and commerce, if the nations surrounding us were our superiors in the knowledge of the arts and sciences? And yet material prosperity is only an insignificant blessing compared with that enjoyment of life which is made possible only by education; the richness of thought, the abundance of ideas—the noble sentiments. Plenty of food and a comfortable shelter, that is also what the animal wants. In the primitive state of nomadic life there may have been less want of this than in the civilized state. But what else is such a life but vegetating! Man is a spiritual being. Does it not almost sound like profanity to put an enjoyable ideal on a level with a new, bright idea! And what incentive would there be for the work of artists, if the people were left in a rude state of thought. Take literature, painting, sculpture, out of life—and what remains?

If then the development of the intellectual faculties and the higher sentiments in the masses is necessary for the safety and the stability of the government and the material, mental and moral prosperity of a country, those men who have no other ambition but to cultivate these faculties and sentiments rank second to nobody as regards both honorable and meritorious service to the nation.

For a task of such paramount importance as we have seen it to be, not every person is qualified. While some teachers succeed, others fail—fail to the almost irreparable detriment of the pupils, and consequently an extensive loss to the community. Success, then, depends, to a great degree, on the person who teaches. It goes without saying that a teacher must understand what he has to teach. We make sure of this by submitting a candidate to an examination. But the conclusion drawn from the result of such examination, is very often erroneous. To say he passed a number one examination, therefore, he is a first-class teacher, is a wrong syllogism; facts prove it. The class of teachers who hold second grade diplomas very often show greater progress in general development than those provided with first-class certificates. There is more required in a teacher than the mere perfect knowledge he has of the branch he teaches. He must, in the first place, possess the faculty of imparting his knowledge to them; this faculty we call his vocation. The faculty of instructing must be born in the person, just as well as a talent for music, sculpture, etc. And if anyone not possessing this faculty under takes to teach, he must fail—he is an intruder. Therefore, it is a pity if teachers born for teaching, having a vocation resign the profession.

As a rule we will find that people like to do, and that they do well, those things for which they have a natural gift. In teaching, however, we must bear in mind the difficulties of making pupils understand is often great enough to discourage an ordinary will. It, therefore, requires conscience, a keen sense of the great responsibility of the work to brace a man up to try and try again without losing patience.

A teacher must be an ambitious man. It is the pride of the mechanic—more so of the artist—to perfect his work in such manner that not only no fault can be found with it, but that it will elicit sincere praise and admiration. The material that the teacher works on is the intellect, the heart and the will of the pupil. What development will they attain when the teacher's highest ambition is drawing his salary? The development of the intellect can be accomplished by teaching. The formation of the character of the pupils is not accomplished by words only, it requires the example of the teacher. He, therefore, must be a man of strong will, of order, just and charitable, prudent and circumspect. He must be possessed of a thorough knowledge of human nature so as to know when to show kindness and when to be severe.

Teachers possessing these faculties are to be classed amongst the most estimable citizens: It is to be regretted that many who by nature are educators step out of their positions when experience has enhanced their natural fitness. In former times there was an excuse for it, because a talented, clever man could not be satisfied with such a paltry salary as was

formerly paid. In fact, not knowing how to make ends meet, he could not fulfill his duties with that cheerfulness, with that ease of mind, which is absolutely necessary for mental work. A teacher's thoughts must be in his work. Nowadays society—the state, is commencing to realize the true value of education, and we have reason to hope that in the race for perfect education Canada shall not be out-distanced by any nation on earth. Permit me to use the phrase of an American turfman and say in this respect, with all the ardor of soul by which we should be animated: We will take no body's dust. In fact, Canada is already ahead of the public schools of France, of Italy, of the United States and of other countries, by recognizing religion as the only and most powerful factor in solid moral education, that will guard us against all the dangers of socialism, nihilism, anarchy and all the other evils undermining society, which spring from an irreligious system of training.

"May it please Your Grace, Rev. Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me in connection with this, and in conclusion, to repeat a few lines—part of an address in rhyme, which some time ago I had the honor of presenting to one who, in the same spirit which animates you, has ever most zealously labored for the dissemination of truly Christian principles in teaching. I hardly need mention his name, you already anticipate it—the honored U. E. Archambault, Director-General of the Catholic Schools in this city.

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

'Tis by Christian education  
That the spirit of a nation  
Will develop animation,  
And grow strong;  
Can there be a better vantage,  
Where the law divine is spoken,  
Than to seldom see it broken  
By a wrong?

We note a country's waning  
By its lack of moral training,  
While its scoffers are disdaining  
The true God;  
What's the human now sophistic  
With a doctrine atheistic,  
In the mirror of the mystic,  
But a clod.

Sure the hand of desolation  
Will impel the subjugation  
Of the sordid population,  
Who proclaim—  
That death is no transition,  
It but ends our lowly mission—  
To no higher acquisition  
Should we aim.

'Tis thus in history's pages,  
Through the current of the ages,  
Lands in brightest stages  
Have declined,  
Their maidens' honor faded,  
Their sons became degraded,  
In depths of vice they waded  
And declined.

The ship of state is stable  
When 'tis moored by heaven's cable,  
And the pilot is thus able  
To repose;  
But reject God's erudition,  
Hunt the pastors from the mission  
What a demon ebullition  
Will disclose!

Carnage, blood and plunder,  
Would tear the world asunder,  
The hosts of Hades could wonder  
At the sight,  
Foul anarchy and treason  
Would usurp the throne of reason,  
And the curse of every season  
Would be light.

Dread chaos and disorder  
Would desecrate each border,  
'Till heaven's great Recorder  
Would let fall  
These plagues of declamation,  
That awaken contemplation,  
By the marks of devastation  
That appal.

Then—the brow of heaven clearing,  
The sun of peace appearing,  
Old earth again is nearing  
Her ally;  
For piety and learning,  
The whole world's praise once earning,  
Her spirit now is yearning  
With a sigh.

Oh, man! Whate'er your station,  
Shun the demon agitation  
For a godless education  
In your age;  
Promote the queen of science,  
Give to her rules compliance,  
She is the true reliance  
Of the sage.

Works recent or mosaic,  
Either lofty or prosaic,  
Whether taught by priest or laic,  
Are sublime.  
If she guards them with her aegis  
'Gainst the warfare Satan wages  
To obscure her brilliant pages  
With his slime.

True, the Christian educator  
Is a potent mediator,  
And the real emancipator  
Of his race;  
His name shall live in story,  
Be he juvenile or hoary,  
And the kingdom of God's glory  
Is his place.

Among those present were: Archbishop Fabre, Hon. Gedeon Ouimet, Canon Bruchet, Rev. Fathers Leclerc, Adour, Verreault, Larocque, Lesage and Godin, Dr. Brennan, Dr. Desrocher, U. E. Archambault, Dr. Leprohon, C. J. Maguon, F. A. Boileau, Hon. Joseph Royal, Inspector Stenson, Inspector Lavergne.