

Teaching Versus Preaching.

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Too frequently our teaching degenerates into preaching. Even the best teachers err in this respect. After the lesson has been explained, they think it necessary to emphasize the moral. This they do in a serious talk, instead of trusting to the suggestion of the story. At this point an observant teacher notices the boys slip away from him. The less troublesome compose themselves in resignation and think of something else; the more energetic grow restless and play tricks on their neighbors. The teacher persists out of a strict sense of duty, although he feels that he is only beating the air. These times of failure are remembered by both teacher and scholars as the unpleasant experiences.

Why do even the best teachers fail here? Is it not because they cease teaching and begin lecturing? Poor teachers who do all the talking, never get control of the attention of their scholars. What they say may be excellent. They themselves may be most worthy persons, yet their very virtues repel the children. Their words of wisdom are called goody-goody talk, and are denied entrance to the youthful mind. The failure is due to the attitude of the would-be teacher to the scholars. The right attitude is more important than method, more important than almost anything else. If the teacher be intelligent, and if he consciously or unconsciously adopt the right attitude of mind, the proper methods will present themselves sooner or later.

The lecturer and the teacher adopt very different attitudes to those whom they instruct. The lecturer talks to an audience—to listeners. He proceeds upon the assumption that those before him are waiting to receive the valuable information that he is to give them. He pours out his learning and they take it in. His work is to diffuse, pour out, useful knowledge. The audience before him is in a receptive mood, is willing, nay eager, to drink in his words of wisdom. Consequently, he tries to present his ideas in the clearest manner possible. His subject is well thought out, clearly reasoned, even to the minutest detail, and is presented as a complete whole. A lecture, like a photograph, should be clear, distinct, and complete.

The teacher's task is quite different. His object is to direct and, if need be, to stimulate the activity of the boy. If, for the present, we neglect moral and physical education, and confine ourselves to the boy's acquaintance with the world in which he lives, we might say that the aim of the teacher is to awaken the boy's curiosity and to guide him in his attempts to satisfy it. The teacher proceeds upon the assumption that the boy is not

a receptacle to be filled, but an activity to be directed. Consequently, his thoughts do not centre about the book to be explained, but about the boy to be taught. He studies the boy's interests, in order to find out the best way to awaken his curiosity about the lesson. He questions him, in order to awaken that curiosity and to lead it by suggestion where it may find satisfaction. He avoids telling him what he could easily find out, for he knows the boy delights in finding out things for himself. The teacher uses the book or the lesson as a tool. Consequently, he tries to adapt the book to the boy, not the boy to the book.

The course of the lesson is very different from that of the lecture. The latter proceeds in an orderly, systematic fashion from start to finish. The lesson, on the other hand, follows the twistings of the boy's mind. The teacher keeps in mind the idea which he wishes the boy to grasp, but he does not feel bound to follow one track to reach his object. He adapts himself to the peculiarities of the boy. It is a rare thing for two boys to reach the same result in exactly the same way. When they do, the lecturer has overcome the teacher and sacrificed some of the boy's interest and the power which he develops in finding things out for himself. The teacher's dependence on the turnings of the mind of the boy forces him to leave many things abruptly and to remain content with an increased interest and the gleam of intelligence that indicates that the boy has grasped the essential thing.

Since, then, the interest of the good teacher centres in the boy, it becomes a matter of great importance for him to study the workings of the boy's mind. He should be as much interested in the ways the boy's mind works as the physician is in his body. The physician studies the body to discover what causes its diseases, how to avoid, and how to cure them. The teacher's concern is not limited to the mind's ills; he wishes to shape it as it grows.

Thring begins one of the chapters in his "Theory and Practice of Teaching" (one of the most suggestive books on education), with a graphic description of the teaching that does not educate. "It is useless pumping into a kettle with the lid on. Pump, pump, pump. The pump handle goes vigorously, the water pours, a virtuous glow of righteous satisfaction beams on the countenance of the pumper; but the kettle remains empty; and will remain empty till the end of time, barring a drop or two which finds its way in unwittingly through the spout." Thring adds: "This is no unfair picture of what is going on in the school-world to a great extent. The whole theory and practice amount to nothing more than a pouring out of knowledge on to the heads underneath."—*The Teacher's Monthly*.