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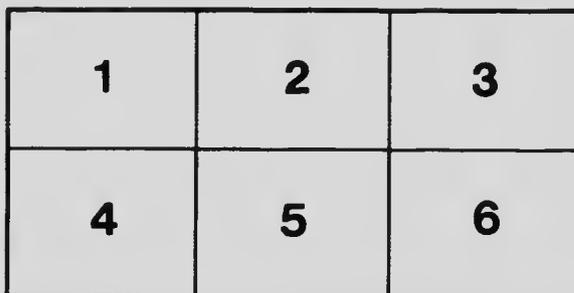
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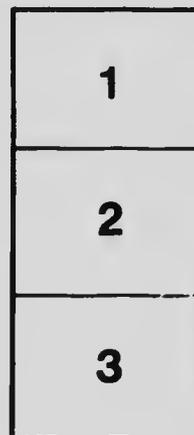
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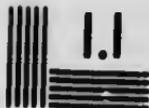
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SOME TENDENCIES IN EDUCATION

L. E. EMBREE, M.A., LL.D.

President's Address, delivered before the Ontario Educational Association,
April 21st, 1908.



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Some Tendencies in Education

L. E. Embree, M.A., LL.D.

In that early period of the world's history when the man did the hunting, fishing, and fighting, made the implements and weapons, and provided shelter for the family, while the woman cooked the food, made the clothing, and did the work of a common drudge for her lord and master, we have, no doubt, the earliest instance of the division of labor. We have no data from which to determine how soon thereafter in the history of the race we had that other instance, when parents, who were too ignorant, or too busy, or too indifferent to attend to all their parental duties, were obliged to share with some one else the duty of instructing their boys how to adjust themselves to the requirements of the simple life. If we should imagine some brute-man, or giant of the earth, in the prehistoric age, finding himself wholly occupied with hunting food, securing skins for clothing, and providing means of defence, while his wife was busy turning the skins around and about, or upside down, or inside out, as the changing fashion of those days might dictate, and decking her person with gewgaws for afternoon bridge-parties or other prehistoric social functions, so that they had no time for child study or training, and had to call in the aid of a teacher, they must have discussed with him what subjects were to be taught. Ever since that first discussion, the question, "What shall we teach?" has been with us as persistently as those other questions of absorbing interest, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" and the last word on all these questions will be said about the same time.

It is unnecessary, however, to revert to prehistoric times, or even to a remote period in the history of educational development, to find instances of changing opinions, from one decade to another, as to the subjects that should be taught, as to what extent and in

what manner they should be taught, and as to the objects to be kept in view in the teaching. Some of us are old enough to recall the time when the teacher's chief duty was to see that the pupil acquired the knowledge placed before him in books, and the *dux* of the school was the pupil who was most skilled in repeating glibly and with parrot-like imitation the words of the book. I shall probably strike a reminiscent chord in some of you when I say that I can repeat to-day lists of adverbs and prepositions that I had to learn from Lennie's Grammar half a century ago. Those were the days, too, when the taws or the stout twigs of the formidable birch-tree were freely used as the chief persuader "along the flowery path of knowledge," when the teacher, "severe and stern to view," used to fling his leathern taws, like a ball, against the head of some "boding trembler" with an accuracy of aim that would do credit to the popular educational experts of our day, whose work, as described in the highly figurative language of our choice literary favorites, is to "twirl the leather across the plate." It would be superfluous to tell how the taws were carried to the master, and it would be painful to describe the interview that followed, except to remark that the whole course of procedure revealed a firm belief in the truth of the golden maxim that Ichabod Crane conscientiously bore in mind.

But let us be just, and be sparing of the ridicule that we are too apt, in our assumption of superior wisdom, to deal out to the teachers and the methods of those days; for, along with the useless lumber of adverbs and prepositions, and the too frequent use of the taws as a counter-irritant, there was a thoroughness in the mastery of the few books available, and the development of a self-reliance and a resourcefulness not surpassed in the broadening and more varied educational life of these later years. The habit of learning by heart accounts for the fact that boys and girls of those days could repeat such Biblical selections as the twenty-third Psalm, Isaiah's vision of the Messiah and His Kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount, and Paul's eulogy of love, and had such a general knowledge of the contents of the Bible as would put to shame the pupils and many of the teachers of the present day, whose knowledge of Biblical History and Literature has been gained chiefly from the scrappy lesson-leaves of the modern Sunday-School.

"The old order changeth," but the law of educational progress conforms to that which governs in other lines of human activity, and there is danger of the pendulum swinging, if it has not already swung, to the opposite extreme. From the abuse of text-books as a chief instrument of education, we have gone to the extreme of affecting to despise the use of text-books. Every child is now to be regarded as the maker as well as the solver of the problems that confront him. If school life is to be the microcosm of the larger life on which the child is preparing to enter, this so-called natural method that we are asked to follow in the schools is at the best sort of preparation for the work of a world where we are called upon to face problems that we have not the privilege of shaping to suit our own inclinations. Through the overworking of the inductive process in education the child is expected to rely upon his own little hatchet to carve out his own little path through the unknown, although there may lie near at hand broad avenues through which great discoverers blazed their way and were followed by explorers who "scorned delights and lived laborious days" to broaden and make more pleasant the pathways for others. Our methods of education must always afford opportunity and give encouragement to the men and women of genius who are to become the pioneers of thought, but, for the great majority, it will ever be true that they must follow in the footsteps of the pioneers, happy if they can only take some part in removing the obstacles that are ever and anon thrown in the path of progress.

Lack of knowledge of the Bible is not the only weakness that has resulted from the neglect of memorizing. Our boys and girls show the same appalling ignorance of the gems of thought in our literature that should be memorized, with more or less appreciation of their content, at a period when the memory faculty is most active. We are not likely to remedy this unless we adopt the plan, now so generally recommended, of substituting the reading of a longer poem instead of a number of shorter poems in our Public School and junior High School classes. I do not object to the use of complete works instead of selections in prose, although many passages in prose could be selected that are suggestive and instructive, and complete enough in themselves; but we should discriminate between prose and poetry in this regard. A short poem is as complete an expression of the poet's thought as a long one, and generally lends itself better to one of the most important

of the study of poetry, namely, the memorizing of those passages that should be part of everybody's equipment. Take the poems of Longfellow, for example, and compare in this respect *Evangeline* with several of his shorter poems. Without any disparagement of *Evangeline* as a "tale of enduring affection," there are not more than a score or two of lines that any one should ask a child to commit to memory, not more than you would find in many a one of his shorter poems. While we may be doing right to discard prose selections, we should retain, for our junior pupils especially, books containing a number of shorter poems by several authors, many of which would be suitable for memorizing in whole or in part.

Some of us can recall the time when subjects that are now considered necessary in a complete course of study were seeking admission into our schools and colleges, and the early records of this Association throw some curious side-lights upon the conditions that then existed. From the reported proceedings of the year 1865, we find that the Grammar School funds were apportioned on the basis of the average attendance of pupils taking Classics, and in the same year a resolution was placed on record to the effect that the programme of studies should be extended to include therein the higher Mathematics, English Literature, and more of the Natural Sciences. So slowly did these new views gain acceptance that, twenty years afterwards, a distinguished professor of the University of Toronto, objected in the Senate to the enlargement of the course in English on the ground that as all the other subjects were taught in the English language there was no necessity for recognizing it as a distinct subject of study. At the meeting of 1865 it was also proposed that Greek and Latin be made optional subjects for girls after they had completed the first and second classes of the prescribed course of study for High Schools. I have not looked up the High School course of study of that date, but I infer from the language of the resolution that both Latin and Greek were then compulsory subjects. "The whirligig of Time brings in his revenges;" Greek has long since ceased to be compulsory, and even Latin has ceased to be compulsory as a High School subject, and we know not how soon its claims as a compulsory matriculation subject may be successfully disputed. Newer subjects that were considered upstarts not many years ago have pressed their way to recognition in every stage of educational work, from the Kindergarten, the Domestic Science, and the

Manual Arts of the Public Schools; and they are finding lodgement within the precincts of our Colleges, so long sacred to Classics and Culture. Imagine the consternation with which some of the University professors who played off the stage a quarter of a century ago would glance through the pages of the last University calendars. To say nothing of the division of courses, and of the new courses, such as Political Economy, which were then seeking recognition, they would find others that would then have been laughed out of court, such as Household Science, Forestry, Commerce, Gymnastics. They would have considered the formation of a course in the linguistics of the base-ball field and the polite literature of the sporting column as the next most natural step. And why not? If education is preparation for life it is surely proper to recognize those great arts that now attract so much public attention and produce artists whose incomes mount up beyond the dreams of avarice of the professors of the Universities that are not on the Carnegie foundation.

The introduction of many of these newer subjects, which some are pleased to regard as constituting a new education, is due to a change in the point of view as to what education really means. Even when giving instruction from text-books formed the main feature of much of school work there was in the background of the teacher's consciousness an impression, which by many a teacher was translated into action, that such instruction was not the be-all and end-all of their work, that mental growth and the formation of character were higher interests that should demand the attention of every teacher. But a change of view as to the subjects of instruction came when the child's education began to be considered not merely in relation to his own development as an individual, but also with reference to his fitness for work in connection with others in society, when, in short, education came to be regarded as a means of fitting men and women for social service. The old subjects of instruction that had dominated the schools so long were declared to be wanting when tested by the measure of practical utility, because here and there were found scholarly men, graduates of Universities, gold medalists, who were not practical, not adaptable in business, and their lack of business capacity was attributed to the unpractical kind of education they had received. Yet the teachers and the teaching of the old subjects turned out men who did things, and did them well, and it would be as reasonable to

conclude that they were successful because of the inspiration they had received from their training in the schools and colleges. Looking at the question from both sides, we may arrive at the conclusion reached by the author of "Letters from a Self-made Merchant to his Son," that "a College doesn't make fools; it develops them. It doesn't make bright men; it develops them;" and that "anything that teaches a boy to think and to think quickly, pays; anything that teaches a boy to get an answer before the other fellow gets through biting his pencil, pays." At any rate this seems to be the view now held by leaders in the business world, among whom college-bred men are becoming more and more in demand.

It is now generally agreed that all subjects of instruction must be judged by the results they accomplish towards fitting men and women to share in the promotion and enjoyment of all that is best, truest, most elevating in society; and no subject or method that is not inconsistent with this view of education may be considered unsuitable for the schools. It must not be overlooked that instruction in this or that subject must still be the means through which the higher aims of education are attained. To be the child's mentor and guide in the process of acquiring knowledge must be the direct aim of the teacher. The strength of the mental and moral fibre the child gains in the process, and the sort of character he develops, must be an incident of the teaching, and dependent upon the methods of instruction and the personality of the teacher.

Those who have faith to believe that from the changing views as to subjects and methods of instruction substantial progress must follow, will accept the practical trend of modern education as a progressive stage. But, with the assurance of superiority that marks the ardent advocates of a new gospel, practical subjects are being pressed upon public attention with an insistence which tends to produce the impression that the chief, if not the only aim of education is to teach boys and girls how to get on in the world. A man who is to enjoy and help forward what is best in society must possess a manhood that is of infinitely greater value than his occupation, and if he is not so educated that every faculty of his being is profitably employed for himself or others, he is not properly educated at all. How a man employs his leisure, if he has a fair proportion of it, when his business, his occupation, or his professional work does not press upon him, affords a fair criterion

of what a man really is. I do not refer, of course, to those people, too numerous, I fear, who seldom find time to relax, except to enjoy the sweet doing-nothing, and whose conception of Heaven would naturally be a place where one can have a long, restful, refreshing sleep. I believe that if the leisure time of the workers of the world were properly spent there would be a marked change for the better in criminal statistics. It is important, therefore, and all the more necessary to counteract in this age the dwarfing influence of intense specialization in the trades and occupations, that the studies that make for culture, whose value cannot be measured by their money-making power, should still have a large place in all departments of education.

One department of educational work, the Kindergarten, has pressed its way to general recognition, and its success in this regard is partly due, no doubt, to the irresistible eloquence of many of its apostles. I am aware how dangerous it is to question its claims, so it is with some fear and trembling I ask if the results of a decade or more of kindergarten work in Ontario have fully justified the claims that, through the harmonious development of all the child's powers in the kindergarten, the child shows a superior intelligence in its subsequent course, observes more quickly and accurately, seizes upon ideas more readily, expresses itself more naturally, and is more amenable to discipline. The kindergarten, like other educational methods, must submit to examination, and be judged by what it has accomplished, and be prepared to make changes in its ways of working, when the right results are not obtained, lest, in the words of a recent writer, "it become dangerous by becoming mechanical." Some time ago, I made an inquiry among the first form pupils of the Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute in this city for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent the claims of the kindergarten appear to be justified. Of the 186 pupils present when I made the inquiry, 112 had taken the kindergarten course, and 74 had not taken it. At an early stage in the inquiry I thought I had made the discovery that the kindergarten girls and the non-kindergarten boys had the advantage, but when the inquiry was completed I came to the conclusion that no appreciable difference in the elements of character I have just mentioned could be noticed between those who had, and those who had not, taken the kindergarten course. When I am told that the nervous energy of the kindergarten teacher cannot stand the strain of more

than half a day's work with 25 children, while a teacher of a primary class, with nearly twice that number of children, can teach the whole day, I am forced to the conclusion that there is something wrong somewhere. The conditions that exhaust the nervous energy of the teacher must also produce some reflex influence upon the nervous system of the children. I am afraid that the methods employed to co-ordinate the play-instinct of the child and to bring out the expression of the child's self-activity now require too much activity on the part of the teacher, for, whether the fault begins with the kindergarten or not, and I am inclined to believe that it does, I am convinced that throughout the child's school course too much is done for him by the teacher, and, "to shame the boast that we are wiser than our sires," he comes to the end of his course possessed of no more self-reliance, self-initiative, or self-control than was possessed by the children of the pre-kindergarten period. Yet the kindergarten will have justified its existence if it should accomplish no more than to search out the children of the dark places in our cities, where their surroundings are physically and morally unclean, and for a few hours each day brighten their lives and reveal to them something of a nobler purpose in life that will lift their souls "to a purer air and a broader view;" and if, too, the sound principles upon which the kindergarten is based may be made to leaven and influence the methods of instruction carried on throughout the schools.

Both the kindergarten and the manual arts are now much in evidence in the frequent displays of the results of the work of both these departments of instruction. The mother who approved of the kindergarten because her child was taught there to make pretty baskets missed the true object of the child's training. Exhibitions of the finished product of the manual training room are equally apt to produce wrong notions as to the main objects of such training. They also tend to produce a distorted perspective as to relative values. Place a fancy box made by a manual training pupil by the side of a translation of half a dozen of the odes of Horace, and the box-maker would win the applause of the many. Yet, unterrified by President Stanley Hall's recent fulmination against the dead languages, which he describes as "so terribly dead they are not even ghosts of ghosts, shadows of shadows, intangible, evanescent, unreal, ghastly, ghostly tongues," I gather myself from under the ruins caused by the crash of his thunder-

bolts, and, peeping out from among the tombs, I venture to confess that I am ghostly enough to believe that there is more intellectual discipline in translating the odes than in making the box.

Closely connected with, if not consequent upon, the addition of subjects to the curricula of the schools and colleges, has come the movement for more intense specialization. The recognition of a class of specialists in our High Schools has not proved to be an unmixed blessing. It has had a tendency to narrow the teacher's interest in his pupils and cause him to look upon the teaching of his subject as the all important thing, without regard to other subjects of study, and often without regard to that all-round development which constitutes real education. The intense scholarship of the specialist is, of course, necessary in the colleges, and even there the evil effects are seen in the elimination, at too early a stage, of nearly every subject that does not belong to the student's special course. Until the end of the second year the college course should be a broad, general one. This is especially necessary in the case of those who intend to become teachers. In many cases the college graduate has but little more knowledge of any subject outside his specialty than he had when he matriculated. Such a narrow course is very unsatisfactory, and badly adapted for those who are preparing to teach in our secondary schools. In the new Department of Education provision is made for prospective teachers in our secondary schools to study education both as a science and as an art, and to enable them by observation and practice to get an insight into the best methods of teaching the several subjects. But this will not suffice to make efficient teachers, unless a broader college training is required of them than is now provided in any of the honor courses, which are bound to attract the more ambitious students.

The general condemnation of examinations is another case of the pendulum swinging to the opposite extreme. There have been examinations of a kind that cannot be too strongly condemned; but examinations of the right kind conducted under proper conditions are an important factor in education, as a means of stimulating the pupil, of training his judgment, and of helping him to classify and correlate his knowledge. They are a means of self-discipline, and a healthy boy or girl who cannot answer on paper some question based on the subjects he or she has been studying, must be lacking in some fibre which the bracing effects of an examination

will help to supply. Because instances are quoted of alleged injurious effects of examinations upon persons of highly sensitive organizations, or persons not in good health, they have been denounced as destructive to the nerves of children; whereas, if a strict enquiry were made, it would be found that most of the cases of nervousness that lay claim to our sympathy are merely excuses for ignorance of the subject. Until we can discover an X-ray process which will enable us to read mental impressions, I am afraid that we cannot dispense with examinations; and even if that time should come, we ought, in the interests of the persons examined, to retain them as a preparation for the duties of a life where men and women are continually undergoing the test of examinations. I am aware that examinations are by no means a perfect test of the student's knowledge, and cannot be in any respect a test of much that true education must mean; but I believe they may be so conducted as to afford a fair criterion of the amount of knowledge the student has acquired, which, after all, must furnish the basis for all education.

In a recent article by Ossian Larrg, on the rewards teachers receive, he says, "The missionary spirit, the teaching instinct, the love of children, the desire to help others, the faith that through the education of the young they are helping to make the world brighter and sweeter—these are the real *stimuli* that supply our schools with good teachers." It will be observed that among the "*stimuli*" enumerated no mention is made of financial rewards, which, poor at all times, have not kept pace with the increasing wealth of the country, or with the rewards offered for services less exacting, in other occupations. The low salaries offered, and the readiness of trustees to accept mere boys and girls with characters still unformed, and with so little appreciation of professional ethics that they did not hesitate to underbid teachers of wider experience, have had the effect of forcing many of the older teachers out of the profession. In these days of the apotheosis of youth we find a tendency to restrict the period during which a teacher is supposed to be capable of doing effective work. At an age when a lawyer's judgment has just matured sufficiently to entitle him to consideration for a judgeship, or at an age when a doctor's experience qualifies him to change from a visiting to a consulting physician, the teacher would be set aside as too old for effective service. I have no doubt that in many such cases teachers

are themselves responsible for this view of the period of their usefulness. What marks a man's age at any rate? Some men are born old, some achieve age, and some have age thrust upon them, and in this, as in most other cases, it is the middle class in which the choice spirits are found—those whose services continue to be most effective for the longest time. A man's age should not be measured by years, but by the active interest he takes in affairs, by his responsiveness to new ideas, and by his readiness to adapt himself to changing conditions. When a teacher can no longer satisfy these tests, and is about to vegetate, may I be pardoned for repeating the stale jests, "Let him be oslerized; let him be appointed to the Senate of Canada." I do not know of any occupation or profession in which experience counts for so little as in the teaching profession. The experienced doctor or lawyer is preferred to the beginner because of his experience, and commands fees that come to the young practitioner only in dreams; but the apprentice teacher may outbid the master-workman and secure his place, and the salary of the experienced teacher is seldom double that paid to the beginner. These things ought not so to be. There should be an effort made to have School Boards throughout the Province adopt the principle of allowing to teachers of experience entering their services a fair increase over the initial salary paid to beginners.

Partly to low salaries and partly to other causes that have made teaching unattractive to men, must be attributed the rapid increase in the number of women who have become teachers. There was not, I believe, one woman teaching in the rural schools of the county where I taught forty years ago. Now nearly eighty per cent. of the teachers in that county are women, and that is about the proportion of men teachers in the Public Schools of the Province. Of late years there seems to be a tendency to have more men teachers, especially over the older boys in the higher classes, and that, too, without any disparagement of the women who are, indisputably, the best for boys as well as girls during that period when a boy likes to be petted, and put to bed, and tucked up by his mother. But when a boy feels himself no longer a child, and resents being a mother's pet, and wants to imitate his father's ways, even to the tilt of his hat, and sometimes, unfortunately, even to the tilt of his cigar, he should be largely under the instruction and control of men teachers. But I may be told that what is sauce for

the gander, in this case, is also sauce for the goose, and that the logical conclusion is, that the girls, on arriving at the corresponding period of life, should be largely under the instruction and control of women. I accept the conclusion, and I do so, notwithstanding the fact that in all my experience I have taught in none but mixed schools, and have never had any serious cases of discipline, and have seldom been obliged even to administer a rebuke because of any breach of discipline arising from the mingling of boys and girls in the same class-rooms. On that ground, therefore, I have no cause of objection to co-education. But in spite of all that may be urged in favor of co-education in advanced classes, I am being driven more and more to the conviction that we have been making a mistake in forcing upon our girls the same course of study that we consider most suitable to fit our boys for their life-work. The introduction of Domestic Science and Domestic Art into our schools is, I believe, only one indication of a growing feeling in the community that the advanced courses of study for our boys and girls should be differentiated to suit their different temperaments and the different purposes for which they are being educated. The training of girls for commercial or industrial pursuits should be secondary and incidental to a few, and not even the main object of their education; for it is as true to-day that "woman is not undeveloped man but diverse," as it was at the time when Tennyson's prince won his suffragette princess within the walls of that violated sanctuary over the entrance of which was written the unavailing threat, "Let no man enter in on pain of death."

I have indicated some of the tendencies in our education and I enter a plea for moderation. While we welcome new ideas that require us to revise our methods and to formulate new standards, let us hold fast to that which is good in the old. The whole truth is not to be found in the creed or theories of any one man or set of men. Truth is many-sided and reveals itself in many ways, "lest one good custom should corrupt the world." The mile-stones that mark the path of the world's progress mark also the burial places of theories, which, at their origin, were acclaimed by their advocates as possessing in themselves the power to renovate society. These theories did not wholly die, but an important part of them evaded the funeral rites, and, added to the general stock of human knowledge, have been influencing the thought and actions of succeeding generations. It is our duty to approach the investigation

of new theories of education in the spirit of seekers after truth, and with a desire to place in the front rank the things that have the highest value; and if each one of us, in his own way seeking to discover and exalt what is best, can add anything to the sum of human knowledge and human happiness, we also may be able to say, "*Non omnis moriar.*"

