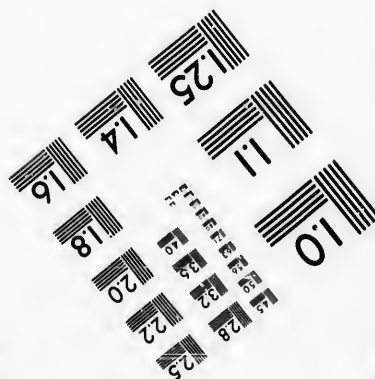
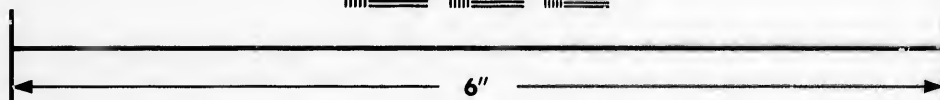
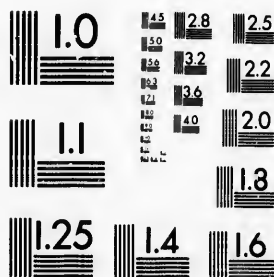


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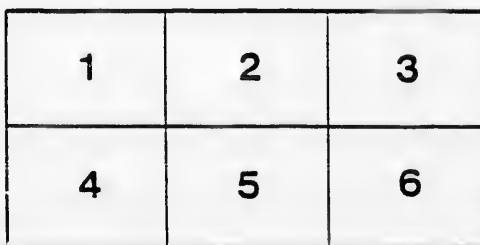
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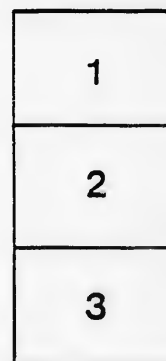
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1880

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THE TEACHER IN THE STUDY
AND
IN THE CLASS ROOM.

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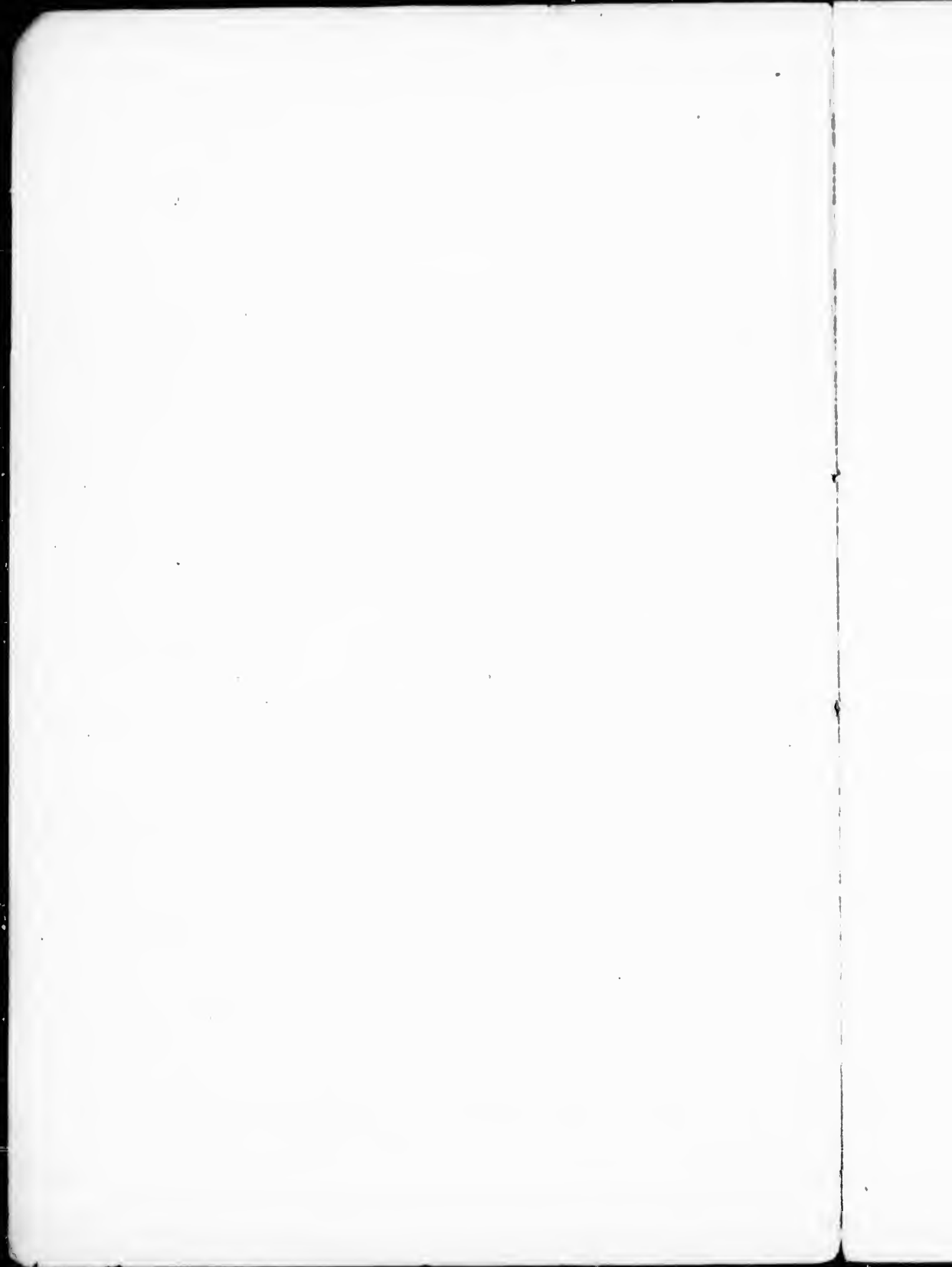
BY THE

REV. D. H. MACVICAR, LL.D.,
PRINCIPAL PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, MONTREAL,
PRESIDENT OF THE TEACHERS' PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION.

MONTREAL:

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1880.



THE TEACHER IN THE STUDY AND IN THE CLASS ROOM.

BY THE REV. D. H. MACVICAR, LL.D., PRINCIPAL PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE, MONTREAL,

President of the Teachers' Provincial Association.

I do not propose to read a formal essay or lecture, but only to talk a little about the teacher in the study and in the class room.

It may occur to some to ask, why speak of the teacher's work in the study? We can understand how the lawyer, the doctor and the divine may have very much to do in the study, very many dull and difficult volumes to read; but the teacher—has he not received his diploma from a learned Board of Examiners or fully equipped Normal School? Is he not licensed to teach, and is this not enough? Or is he not B.A., M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S., or LL.D., or something of that sort? What more can be desired? If more is called for, is he not from Glasgow, or Edinburgh, or Oxford, or Cambridge, and not from the Eastern Townships? And who can resist the potency of these names when pronounced with proper euphony among plain colonial people! True, but may we not venture to think that Boards, and Normal Schools, and admirable institutions in Britain and Canada do not certify men and women to be released from mental toil and private study the moment they receive their parchments. They grant no license for indolence, even after the highest academic honors and distinctions have been gained. Besides, our age is wonderfully practical. It refuses to value a person by the number of letters appended to his name, or the place from which he hails, and persists in estimating his worth by his real attainments, his personal character, and what he can do.

Granting, therefore, that a man is duly certified as qualified to teach, I am prepared still to lay out for him a considerable programme of professional work which requires to be overtaken in the study. Let me mention a few items.

First.—The whole science of teaching demands his attention. If he is not a born teacher—for there are such—he requires to devote himself with all the more earnestness to this science, which is now speedily rising into the position of importance and influence which it deserves. Essays and volumes in illustration of its principles and methods are being issued by the ablest minds of our day, and the true teacher cannot afford to remain ignorant of these. It is ruinous conceit on the part of any man to ignore the experience and observation of others. Happily for the interests of education teachers are becoming more and more observers of facts connected with their own profession. They are beginning to organize in different countries for this purpose, and their observations are being recorded and rendered available for comparison and further investigation. The materials are thus being collected from which, by and by, the principles and rules of the science of teaching may be accurately formulated. But a very great work is yet to be over-

taken in this direction. The true methods of the cultivation of the senses, and of physical education generally, are yet open for discussion and discovery. The natural order of the development of the mental faculties is to be more fully and accurately ascertained. We have yet to learn many things as to the sort of training which is appropriate, and the extent to which it should be carried at different stages of physical and mental growth. How are we to do justice to the crush of subjects now pressing for attention, and yet save pupils from literal martyrdom? Do we discriminate with sufficient clearness and constancy between *education* and the mere common-place work of *giving information*, or cramming the pupil's head with facts? And do we not deal with his head almost exclusively and to the neglect of his moral nature? The whole field of Ethics in relation to school work has yet to be much more fully considered. The very mention of the subject at present in certain quarters excites feelings of alarm, and the thought of introducing the Bible in any sense as a text-book is deemed almost a crime, as if the teaching of God's truth would be certain to do mischief. And yet it cannot be denied that something is required in our schools and educational establishments to elevate the standard of truthfulness and common honesty among the people. Without expatiating further in this connection, I venture to think that the earnest, progressive teacher may find in what has been suggested themes to occupy his spare hours in the study.

Second.—He should in the study fill his own mind with the lessons of the day. Why so? Is he not master of all these subjects? They are simple and easy to him—only geography, grammar, arithmetic, &c., and the pupils are profoundly ignorant of them. Grant it. All the more need that he should kindle in his own mind a flame of enthusiasm over these very lessons. Here is the secret of his power to a great extent—enthusiasm—and the moment he fails in this respect his teaching power is diminished or gone. Let the teacher feel little or no interest in his lessons, and the pupil is sure to be of the same mind with him. Let the teacher be in a listless, yawning, indifferent, lifeless state, and it will be so with his pupil. Am I right? Is it not so? Let the teacher, on the other hand, be enthusiastic, energetic, full of life—his whole soul thrown into the lesson, however small and simple that lesson may be—and then the pupil is thrown into a similar mental state, and is really taught. Half an hour of such teaching is worth a week or month of dull, drowsy trifling with the child. And the reason is obvious. It depends upon a well-known principle of our nature, viz.: that we produce in others, with more or less vividness, the mental condition which is dominant in ourselves. By this means one man moves and rules a multitude. For example, let a cry of agony burst from the lips of any one among us at this moment, and we are all instantly thrown into a somewhat similar state. Let a shout of joy, a merry peal of laughter ring out from the lips of some one, and we all laugh with him. He carries us all to some extent into his own dominant mental state. We can undoubtedly propagate our own thoughts and feelings among others. We reproduce in them what is in ourselves; and our power of teaching is regulated very much by our ability to do so with rapidity and vividness. You are all familiar with this principle and have acted upon it in the school-room. I have observed its influence acting both favourably and unfavourably. A few months ago I entered a school hundreds of miles from here, and saw at once that the dull, sleepy, sickly, gloomy state of the teacher's mind spread itself

over all the pupils. It seemed as if they had been buried, and had risen from the dead in their grave clothes. Their aspect was sepulchral, their tones were sepulchral, and they appeared incapable of being roused to activity, and I could not help feeling that the parents paid the master to ruin their education. He asked me to address the pupils, but I felt that he had far more need of being addressed himself, and being plainly told to bestir himself, and to throw life and energy into his responsible task.

But it may be said that some persons are naturally or constitutionally incapable of enthusiasm. If so, they are very seriously disqualified to teach, even if they should be dungeons of learning and walking encyclopedias of all sorts of knowledge. Dr. J. G. Holland divides preachers into two classes: the poetic and the non-poetic, or those of keen and quick sympathies and those who are dull and impassive. The former he approves; the latter he condemns. He would silence or depose every non-poetic preacher. If a man is non-poetic he may plough, or fell trees, or attend to some prosaic business, but let him not presume to preach! And so I say of teachers. If a man or woman can get up absolutely *no enthusiasm* over the lesson to be taught, let him and let her not presume to teach. Success in the classroom depends very much upon the personal weight of the teacher, and this again upon the confidence which his pupils repose in him, and he can only secure their full confidence and admiration by showing no weakness, embarrassment, uncertainty, or want of moral earnestness in his lessons. For these purposes it is obvious that he must devote some time to preparation in the study.

Third.—The teacher requires to devote time in the study to the consideration of the peculiarities of his pupils. I know that through want of this it is too common to treat them all alike; but this is manifestly absurd—as unreasonable as to treat all plants alike and to hope that they may survive such treatment and grow up to maturity and fruitfulness. On the contrary, the temperament, the habits, the idiosyncrasies, and even the surroundings of each pupil should be studied and understood. I know that the child is often pronounced a dunce who cannot be successfully taught in the same way precisely as every other child in a class of thirty or forty, while in truth the one who thinks so is the dunce, and not the child. The fact is that we have dunce-making establishments in the form of class-rooms and whole schools through lack of the enthusiasm of which I have spoken and the want of diligent and philosophic study of the pupils by those who teach them. I know that the great panacea in many instances for what are called dullness, stupidity, and want of success on the part of the pupils is to give them home work and to send word to their parents that they must see that it is done. As if, forsooth, teachers were simply employed to appear in their places at stated hours and see that the work of teaching is well done at home, especially in the case of pupils who need more teaching and more skilful teaching than others. Now, instead of this comfortable method of laying burdens upon pupils and parents, and turning the latter into unpaid school masters, what I propose is a little more home work for the teacher in studying his pupils and his methods of dealing with them.

Fourth.—The teacher in the study should prepare special illustrations of his lessons. It is true, as I have already said, that he may know the lesson, that it may be thoroughly plain to himself, but can he make it plain to others? We often understand ourselves, or at least

think we do, when no one else understands us. There is a wide difference between understanding a subject yourself and making others comprehend it. It is for the latter purpose that illustrations are demanded. They serve three special ends in the teacher's work, viz.: to make truth *plain, impressive and memorable*. Hence the truth to be taught must be carefully selected and defined, and then illustration should be used to exhibit it with additional clearness and force, and to fix it permanently in the pupil's memory. The truth is the gem, the illustration is the setting of wrought gold, by which it is held up to view. The most perfect instances of this sort are furnished in the lessons of the Great Teacher of Judea. When asked, for example, the then difficult question of international law, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" you remember his illustration. He said, "Show me a penny; whose image and superscription hath it?" They answered and said, Caesar's. And he said unto them, Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." How simple, and beautiful, and effective. When a lesson is thus made plain, it is necessarily impressive and memorable; it is, in fact, properly taught, and becomes the enduring mental property of the pupil, because he has been brought into very much the same mental state in relation to that subject as the teacher himself.

Let me advise that illustrations should be addressed as far as possible to the eye. I strongly believe in object teaching, and have no sympathy with the notion that it is good to make subjects tangled, obscure and incomprehensible to the pupil, that he may waste his time and strength amid clouds and fog. The eye is our best bodily organ; it corrects and enlarges the knowledge we get through our other senses. For example, I read much about London and Paris before I visited them. I knew their general features in this way, but when I looked at them with my own eyes my knowledge was corrected and enlarged. Not only so, but the eye affords the best facilities for imparting knowledge speedily and accurately. Try, for example, to give a child five years old correct notions of a lion. You may do so in three ways, *First*, you may describe the lion in words—you may speak of his mane, his tail, his square head, his small ears, and his terrible roar. This is one way, and the most ineffective way of teaching. *Second*, you may appeal to the eye—you may show the child a picture of the lion, and join your speech to this picture, and now you have ten-fold more success in giving a true and abiding conception of the lion than by your first method. But *third*, and best of all, you may take the child by the hand and bring him to the lion's cage and let him stand and look in through the iron bars with his own eyes, and let him hear the terrific roar with his own ears, and he has a truer conception of a lion in a few moments than you can give him in a hundred descriptions, and the certainty is that your home will be full of roaring lions for weeks and months to come.

You see the application of this in every department of teaching. Appeal to the eye whenever you can do so. But skill and success in this respect imply diligent home preparation. So much for the work of the teacher in the study. If he is to guide, instruct and inspire students he must continue to be a student himself. If he is to prescribe home work to others he must have the same rule for himself. But let us look at him now

IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

Here his general maxim should be not to *teach too much nor too little*.

Both are evils to be avoided. By teaching too much, we may relieve the pupil of burdens which it may be good for him to bear, by bearing which his mental health and development may be promoted; or we may crowd upon his mind more information than he can assimilate and thus inflict grievous injury. On the other hand, by teaching too little we may leave the pupil to struggle with difficulties which should be at once removed, or we may waste his time by not sufficiently occupying his energies. To escape both these evils, I recommend the teacher:

1. To begin by questioning the pupil. This will serve two very essential purposes. (a) To find out the extent of his knowledge and hence where ignorance begins. At this point the work of teaching begins. It consists not in going over what the pupil knows already, and has thoroughly mastered; this is mere recitation and not teaching. To send the pupil home from school at night with a prescribed task; to enjoin him to commit it to memory and to hear him repeat it in the morning may be very useful and very indispensable; but it is not teaching in the true sense of the term, much less the highest function of the teacher. (b) Questions show to empty the pupil of conceit. Nothing is so hostile to knowledge as the thought that we know a subject of which we are profoundly ignorant. While a pupil remains inflated with a feeling of self-sufficiency, he can achieve little success in teaching him. Empty him of vanity, and you may do this by questioning him of his ignorance—and then he is in a receptive state and enlightened by your lessons.

2. In order to success in the class-room, the teacher should make sure that he has the undivided attention of all his pupils. This is most essential. But, what is attention? For my present purpose it may be defined as the opposite of distraction. But, what is distraction? It is the state of mind produced by attempting to attend to several things at once. It consists in an improper distribution of mental force. This occurs, for example, when the pupil attempts to count the buttons on his coat, to manage his pea-shooter and his gum to torment his neighbor, and to follow the master's lesson all at the same time. How is such a state of things as this to be prevented? and how is attention to be secured? I answer:

First.—By establishing the proper local relation between teacher and pupils, and between the pupils themselves; in securing this, you will require to introduce the principle of isolation among pupils. Separate those between whom there is a deep sympathy in mischief. Break up centres of inattention by scattering them. A boy may be inattentive and a bad boy at the one end of a bench, because his surroundings favor this sort of conduct, and as sober and attentive as a judge at the other end of it, because he has different associates. Hence you should arrange your class properly before beginning the lesson.

Second.—The teacher should secure attention by the use of the eye. It is quite possible to look at pupils silently till they come to perfect order, and begin to think you see into their pockets and into all their little premeditated plans and tricks by which they propose to disturb your work; but to do this your eyes must be open and not fixed on the text-book, or note-book in which you have recorded the lesson of the hour. That lesson, if you expect to make it the mental property of every pupil, should be so thoroughly written in your brain that you are free to use your eyes for the discipline of the class, free to move about in the room for the same purpose.

Third.—The teacher should secure attention by the use of the voice. It is an instrument of marvellous power. It can express, and soothe, and rouse all the passions of the soul—pity, joy, sorrow, indignation, &c. Its great variety of tones—soft, loud, sharp, abrupt, should all be used in giving instruction, and, at the same time, securing attention. It may be that the want of a musical and skilful use of the voice accounts for more than a little of the irritation and disorder that often prevail in class-rooms.

Fourth.—The teacher may secure attention by questions. They possess a wonderful educating power and should be freely used on this account; but they are also a most effective instrument of discipline. You may shoot them vigorously and repeatedly at the inattentive and disorderly pupil until he becomes the best behaved member of your class. He cannot but behave if you look him in the face and proceed energetically, with this mode of chastisement; and the rest will be attentive because of their natural rivalry to surpass the one who is being questioned, and their secret delight in seeing him thus punished and his ignorance exposed.

Fifth.—Attention may be secured by the use of illustrations. These should be thrown in at the right time, when they are needed for this purpose and for the other purposes already named. Hence they should be prepared by diligent work in the study, and be thoroughly in hand, ready for use at any moment.

Sixth.—Attention may be secured by recapitulation of what has been taught. Let the pupil undertake this work, and thus oblige him to give back all that you have given him. This is wise in any case, even when you have no disorder to subdue; because he is not sufficiently taught until he can render a satisfactory account of what you have done. Select the inattentive pupil for this work, and, on the principle of isolation already referred to, place him on the platform. His success will make him attentive and self-reliant, and his failure will make him attentive and humble; in either case he will become a wiser and better boy. But the teacher himself may give a recapitulation at any point and thus secure attention, and, at the same time, make plain what may have otherwise been left in a state of obscurity.

Seventh.—Try change of position and of work to secure attention. Why should pupils and teachers always sit or always stand at recitations? Why destroy the comfort and freedom of both by small useless rules in this respect? When bad thoughts begin to rise in their minds, and bad gases accumulate in the room, why should they not be allowed to rise and shout and sing God save the Queen, or give three cheers to our rulers? It might help these dignitaries in their complicated duties. Or why not let them run out and breathe the fresh air of heaven and escape the slow poisoning process under which they so often suffer?

Here are my seven methods of securing attention and of getting pupils into a teachable mental attitude. You will notice that I exclude rewards for good behavior; shut out all forms of "bribery and corruption;" that I exclude flogging which used to be esteemed a "short and easy method" of settling all difficulties, and was made the ready substitute for lack of skill, and tact, and energy, and fresh air, and, I had almost said, common sense in the school-room. I exclude all puerile coaxing and begging pupils to behave with propriety. Such a method is sure to encourage insubordination and to destroy the teacher's influence. Let him, in one word, thoroughly deserve attention, and he is quite certain to receive it.

Mr. President, there are many other points touching the teacher in the class-room, upon which I should like to touch, did time permit, but I content myself by mentioning one thing more in closing, what has already been hinted at, viz., the need of far clearer and fuller moral culture than is usually undertaken, the need of making moral training an essential factor in public education. How this is to be accomplished is a question which we have no time to discuss, and which is not easily answered. We may attempt the task with or without a text book, but success in it must depend very largely upon the personal example and activity of the teacher.

What I am concerned just now to emphasize is not the method of doing the work, but the crying need of its being done. It is one of the great wants of our country. And I cannot do better at this moment than repeat in substance what I said lately on this matter, before the teachers of Ontario. It seems manifest that what we need in order to greater national strength and progress, are certain things in the moral category. Shall I say a higher sense of honor among all classes, including our public men, and a supreme regard for truthfulness? It is easily seen that defects in these respects must touch and deteriorate our national life at every point; they will influence domestic relations and public transactions, affect our buying and selling, the entire trade or traffic of the country; they must taint our judicial processes and pervert the decision of the courts; they will pervade our daily literature and render almost worthless and even pernicious the utterances of our press. And is it not a lamentable fact, as recently declared by a leading statesman, that, in order to get an approximately correct view of the doings and utterances of any public man, you must read the accounts given by the papers which favor him and the papers which oppose him, and even then you may fail to reach the truth?

Now, it is in the power of our schools and institutions of learning to brand with deserved infamy this detestable vice of lying, and to stamp with suitable opprobrium it, if not out of existence, at least by calling it by its right name and making it bear its proper burden of dishonor and disgrace, and by holding up before our youth a right standard of truthfulness and integrity. This is what is needed to purify our commerce and bring back business to a safe and healthy state, and the only sort of "National Policy" that can ensure permanent prosperity. We suffer much from, and we hear a great deal about, hard times, but we are slow to take in the thought that hard dealings must bring on hard times in the most productive and highly favored countries under heaven. If men will have double prices for their goods and force their clerks to lie in selling them; if they will push on trade by unlawful competition, and buy and sell on credit with no rational prospects of meeting their engagements; if young men will rush into business and set up domestic establishments, the very first year equalling, if not surpassing in extravagance those of persons who have made their fortunes; if wealthy men, eager to become more so, will found superfluous banks, and then press hard upon one another, while encouraging reckless adventurers; if men will make up their minds to over-reach and cheat and lie in business, there is no difficulty in seeing how hard times must inevitably overtake them. And the remedy is to be sought in persistent, universal, thorough moral culture. The vices hinted at are not, in so far as they affect us, to be cured in a few years. They grow slowly and they die hard. Great, tall, rank plants of iniquity do not grow up like Jonah's gourd in a single night. Giant swindlers undergo a long and hard process of

education, in secret and in public, and when a multitude of them infest a country it may require a generation or even more to drive them out, and there must be many a crash and exposure in business and in public life before they take their leave. It is manifest that the true way of dealing with these evils is to teach, and speak, and preach, and work against them. They will not disappear by being left alone. Silence respecting them is criminal. Froude, the historian, justly complains that, during thirty years of church-going, he never heard a sermon on common honesty, on those primitive commandments, "Thou shalt not lie," and "Thou shalt not steal." Perhaps his experience is not unique. Judging from the number of rogues still at large it cannot be so. But we need more than sermons on these questions. We need to permeate our whole educational system with ethical training. We need ten thousand daily lessons in our school-rooms and in our homes on the elements of morals, and morals based upon the truth of God and not upon pagan philosophy, lessons on the principles of truth, and right, and law, and purity, and frugality, and self-control, and general government. These are the principles with which to pervade our whole system of education and our whole country. Let reverence for truth and right reign supreme, and then

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power ;
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncalled for) but to live by law,
 Acting the law we live by, without fear ;
 And because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom, in scorn of consequences."



