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WHAT IS TEACHING?

In the first place, teaching is not simply telling. A class may be told a thing twenty times over, and yet not know it. Talking to a class is not necessarily teaching. I have known many teachers who were brimful of information, and were good talkers, and who discoursed to their classes with ready utterance a large part of the time allowed to instruction; yet an examination of their classes showed little advancement in knowledge.

There are several time-honored metaphors on this subject, which need to be received with some grains of allowance, if we would get an exact idea of what teaching is. Chiseling the rude marble into the finished statue; giving the impression of the seal upon the soft wax; pouring water into an empty vessel; all these comparisons lack one essential element of likeness. The mind is, indeed, in one sense, empty, and needs to be filled. It is yielding, and needs to be impressed. It is rude, and needs polishing. But it is not, like the marble, the wax, or the vessel, a passive recipient of external influences. It is itself a living power. It is acted upon only by stirring up its own activities. The operative upon mind, unlike the operative upon matter, must have the active, voluntary cooperation of that upon which he works. The teacher is doing his work, only so far as he gets work from the scholar. The very essence and root of the work are in the scholar, not in the teacher. No one, in fact, in an important sense, is taught at all, except so far as he is self-taught. The teacher may be useful, as an auxiliary, in causing this action on the part of the scholar. But the one, indispensable, vital thing in all learning, is in the scholar himself. The old Romans, in their word education (*educere*, to draw out,) seem to have come nearer to the true idea than any other people have done. The teacher is to draw out the resources of the pupil. Yet even this word comes short of the exact truth. The teacher must put in, as well as draw out. No process of mere pumping will draw out from a child's mind knowledge which is not there. All the power of the Socratic method, could it be applied by Socrates himself, would be unavailing to draw from a child's mind, by mere questioning, a knowledge, for instance, of chemical affinity, of the solar system, of the temperature of the Gulf Stream, of the doctrine of the resurrection.

What, then, is teaching?

Teaching is causing any one to know. Now no one can be made to know a thing but by the act of his own powers. His own senses, his own memory, his own powers of reason, perception, and judgment, must be exercised. The function of the teacher is to bring about this exercise of the pupil's faculties. The means to do this are infinite in variety. They should be varied according to the wants and the character of the individual to be taught. One needs to be told a thing; he learns most readily by the ear. Another needs to use his eyes; he must see a thing, either in the

book or in nature. But neither eye nor ear, nor any other sense or faculty, will avail to the acquisition of knowledge, unless the power of attention is cultivated. Attention, then, is the first act or power of the mind that must be aroused. It is the very foundation of all progress in knowledge, and the means of awakening it constitute the first step in the educational art.

When, by any means, positive knowledge, facts, are once in possession of the mind, something must next be done to prevent their slipping away. You may tell a class the history of a certain event; or you may give them a description of a certain place or person; or you may let them read it; and you may secure such a degree of attention that, at the time of the reading or the description, they shall have a fair, intelligible comprehension of what has been described or read. The facts are, for the time, actually in the possession of the mind. Now, if the mind was, according to the old notion, merely a vessel to be filled, the process would be complete. But mind is not an empty vessel. It is a living essence, with powers and processes of its own. And experience shows us, that in the case of a class of undisciplined pupils, facts, even when fairly placed in the possession of the mind, often remain there about as long as the shadow of a passing cloud remains upon the landscape, and make about as much impression.

The teacher must seek, then, not only to get knowledge into the mind, but to fix it there. In other words, the power of the memory must be strengthened. Teaching, then, most truly, and in every stage of it, is a strictly cooperative process. You cannot cause any one to know, by merely pouring out stores of knowledge in his hearing, any more than you can make his body grow by spreading the contents of your market-basket at his feet. You must rouse his power of attention, that he may lay hold of, and receive, and make his own, the knowledge you offer him. You must awaken and strengthen the power of memory within him, that he may retain what he receives, and thus grow in knowledge, as the body by a like process grows in strength and muscle. In other words, learning, so far as the mind of the learner is concerned, is a growth; and teaching, so far as the teacher is concerned, is doing whatever is necessary to cause that growth.

Let us proceed a step farther in this matter.

One of the ancients observes that a lamp loses none of its own light by allowing another lamp to be lit from it. He uses the illustration to enforce the duty of liberality in imparting our knowledge to others. Knowledge, he says, unlike other treasures, is not diminished by giving.

The illustration fails to express the whole truth. This imparting of knowledge to others not only does not impoverish the donor, but it actually increases his riches. By teaching we learn. A man grows in knowledge by the very act of communicating it.

The reason for this is obvious. In order to communicate to the mind of another a thought which is in our own mind, we must give to the thought definite shape and form. We must handle it, and pack it up for safe conveyance. Thus the mere act of giving a thought expression in words, fixes it more deeply in our own minds. Not only so; we can, in fact, very rarely be said to be in full possession of a thought ourselves, until by the tongue or pen we have communicated it to somebody else. The expression of it, in some form, seems necessary to give it, even in our own minds, a definite shape and a lasting impression.

Some teachers seem to be ambitious to do a great deal of talking. The measure of their success, in their own eyes, is their ability to keep a continued stream of talk for the greater part of the hour. This is, of course, better than the embarrassing silence sometimes seen, where neither teacher nor scholar has anything to say. But at the best, it is only the pouring into the exhausted receiver enacted over again. We can never be reminded too often, that there is no teaching except so far as there is active cooperation on the part of the learner. The mind receiving must reproduce and give back what it gets. This is the indispensable condition of making any knowledge really our own. The very best teaching I have ever seen, has been where the teacher said comparatively little. The teacher was of course brimful of the subject. He could give the needed information at exactly the right point, and in the right quantity. But for every word given by the teacher, there were many words of answering reproduction on the part of the scholars. Youthful minds under such tutelage grow apace.

It is a high and difficult achievement in the educational art, to get young persons to bring forth their thoughts freely for examination and correction. A pleasant countenance and a gentle manner, inviting and inspiring confidence, have something to do with the matter. But, whatever the means for accomplishing this end, the end itself is indispensable. The scholar's tongue must be unloosed as well as the teacher's. The scholar's thoughts must be broached as well as the teacher's. Indeed, the statement needs very little qualification or abatement, that a scholar has learned nothing from us except what he has expressed to us again in words. The teacher who is accustomed to harangue his scholars with a continuous stream of words, no matter how full of weighty meaning his words may be, is yet deceiving himself, if he thinks that his scholars are materially benefited by his intellectual activity, unless it is so guided as to awaken and exercise theirs. If, after a suitable period, he will honestly examine his scholars on the subjects on which he has been so productive, he will find that he has been only pouring water into a sieve. Teaching can never be this one-sided process. Of all the things that we attempt, it is the one

most essentially and necessarily cooperative process. There must be the joint action of the teacher's mind and the scholar's mind. A teacher teaches at all, only so far as he causes this coactive energy of the pupil's mind.—*The Teacher.*

THE CURE FOR GOSSIP.

Dr. Holland, in *Scribner's* gives us the following: What is the cure for gossip? Simply, culture. There is a great deal of gossip that has no malignity in it. Good-natured people talk about their neighbors because, and only because, they have nothing else to talk about. As we write, there comes to us the picture of a family of young ladies. We have seen them at home, we have met them in galleries of art, we have caught glimpses of them going from a bookstore, or a library, with a fresh volume in their hands. When we meet them, they are full of what they have seen and read. They are brimming with questions. One topic of conversation is dropped only to give place to another, in which they are interested. We have left them, after a delightful hour, stimulated and refreshed; and during the whole hour not a neighbor's garment was soiled by so much as a touch. They had something to talk about. They knew something, and wanted to know more. They could listen as well as they could talk. To speak freely of a neighbor's doings and belongings would have seemed an impertinence to them, and, of course, an impropriety. They had no temptation to gossip, because the doings of their neighbors formed a subject very much less interesting than those which grew out of their knowledge and their culture.

And this tells the whole story. The confirmed gossip is always either malicious or ignorant. The one variety needs a change of heart and the other a change of pasture. Gossip is always a personal confession either of malice or imbecility, and the young should not only shun it, but by the most thorough culture relieve themselves from all temptation to indulge in it. It is a low, frivolous, and too often a dirty business. There are country neighborhoods in which it rages like a pest. Churches are split in pieces by it. Neighbors are made enemies by it for life. In many persons it degenerates into a chronic disease, which is practically incurable. Let the young cure it while they may.

AN ENGLISH EARL'S ADVICE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS.

In an address which he recently delivered at Liverpool College, Lord Derby told the students there were three great maxims of study—first, that mental labor never hurts anybody unless taken in great excess; second, that those who cannot spare time for physical exercise will soon have to spare it for illness; third, that morning work is infinitely better than night work. There has never been a time in the history of the world when an appreciation of these truths was more important than it is now.

PUSH.

When Cousin Will was at home for vacation, the boys always expected plenty of fun. The last frolic before he went back to his studies was a long tramp after hazelnuts. As they were hurrying along in high glee, they came upon a discouraged-looking man and a discouraged-looking cart. The cart was standing before an orchard. The man was trying to pull it up hill to his own house. The boys did not wait to be invited, but ran to help with a good will. "Push! push!" was the cry.

The man brightened up; the cart trundled along as fast as rheumatism would allow it, and in five minutes they all stood panting at the top of the hill.

"Obliged to ye," said the man; "you just wait a minute,"—and he hurried into the house, while two or three pink-aproned children peeped out of the door.

"Now, boys," said Cousin Will, "this is a small thing; but I wish we could all take a motto out of it, and keep it for life." "Push!" it is just the word for a grand, clear morning.

"If any body is in trouble, and you see it, don't stand back; push!"

"If there is any good doing in any place where you happen to be, push!"

"Whenever there's a kind thing, a Christian thing, a happy thing, a pleasant thing, whether it is your own or not, whether it is at home or in town, at church or in school, just help with all your might; push!"

At that moment the farmer came out with a dish of his wife's best doughnuts, and a dish of his own best apples: and that was the end of the little sermon on Push.—*Ex.*

NOT BORN TO GOOD LUCK.

A correspondent, in bewailing his misfortune, says: "But I was not born to good luck, and so, I suppose, I must put up with the bad luck which has followed me all my life."

In the ordinary course of life, there is no such thing as luck. Indeed, it is a matter of absolute fact and demonstrates that great enduring success, as well as average prosperity, comes from the exercise of good judgment, backed up by industry, economy, patience, and self-denial. Moreover, experience has abundantly shown that, in the long run, nothing does a man any real, substantial good, for which he does not, in some way, pay a fair price. What is called luck is usually a mere running in debt to fortune, and the greater the seeming luck, the heavier the real incumbrance. To whom much is given much is required; and the eternal requisition is inexorable, and must be met.

Unhappy the man who has had a fortune left him—dropped down upon him, as it were from the skies—which he does not know how to use so as to get any real advantage out of it—How often, in such a case, his "good luck," as he calls it, is only "a heritage of woe," and ultimately proves to be his own and his general ruin.