

AND THE SCHOOL

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THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL

TO MY WIFE, EMMA RIDLEY COLEGROVE, FORMERLY PROFESSOR
OF HISTORY IN THE IOWA STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE,
WHOSE HELP AND SYMPATHY HAVE BEEN MY CONSTANT EN-
COURAGEMENT, THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

EVERY human being ought to aspire to become something, to be somebody, to do some useful work, to earn an honest living.

It is taken for granted that the readers of this book are either teachers, or those who aspire to become such. For those who assume that teachers are born, not made, or believe themselves to be teachers "by the grace of God" through some process of pedagogical predestination, this book has no message. These pages are written for those who desire to become good teachers and always *better* teachers. Youth is no crime, and inexperience is no disgrace; but youth that does not aspire, and age that has not learned from experience are both a disgrace and a crime.

All instruction involves both learning and teaching, and there are three elements that always enter into these processes: (1) The subject-matter to be taught; (2) the consciousness and self-activity of the pupil; (3) the preparation and personality of the teacher.

To be a real teacher one must make preparation along three main lines. Teachers must know what they teach, how to teach, and whom they teach. Scholarship, professional training, and a knowledge of children are, therefore, essential to success as a teacher. "In place of the

former demand," says Roark, "that the teacher should know only the three R's, there has grown up the more rational one that he should know the three M's—Matter, Method, Mind."

The teacher's work is many-sided. Under the conditions that prevail in American schools, he must perform the functions of organizer, instructor, trainer, ruler, and manager. This book attempts to give a systematic outline of the teacher's work along these lines.

The aim of the book is not technical, but practical. It is the outgrowth of many years of study, observation, and experience. And during these years there has grown up in the mind of the author the supreme conviction that the teacher is the life of the school. Every other educational problem can be reduced to this question of the fitness of the teacher. Our entire educational system breaks down if teachers, when brought face to face with pupils in the school, fail to inspire, to teach, and to train them. How best to prepare themselves to become more efficient teachers is the problem that faces thousands of earnest, honest young people to-day. That these pages may assist them in making such preparation is my sincere desire.

C. P. C.

IOWA STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE,
CEDAR FALLS, IOWA, *May, 1916.*

INTRODUCTION

THERE is a practical side to the teaching of children that requires knowledge of the child to be taught, of the subject matter to be acquired, and of the management and methods best to employ. The solution of the problems that arise in daily experience demands a thorough acquaintance with what has been found most effective and desirable. The experience of leading educators, combined with their opinions regarding policies and plans, is therefore of special value to those who desire to grow into greater effectiveness in professional life. There is much to be said about teaching and teachers that has not found its place in either history, philosophy, or literature, and the development of systems and of the practical means of economizing time and effort will continue for years to come. The last word concerning the great work of public education, through elementary and secondary schools, will not be said until American educational problems have all been solved, and that time will come only when democracy has completed its mission and mankind is fully civilized and enlightened. There are interpretations to be made of what the great thinkers of the past have said, while adaptations of their conclusions must be secured to render the truth effective for the service of the teacher. The necessity for actual teachers, who have won success in the fields of public school work, to become interpreters of this truth in order

that the truth may become useful to the rank and file is self-evident. They owe it to those who daily face the children of the common people in the common school in order that more perfect knowledge may lighten the burden necessity makes imperative and real when instructing and training them in the way of civilization.

These great phases of education as found in the philosophy, science, and art of teaching are presented in this work in such a way that helpfulness, good spirit, and personal character are brought to the front as essentials to success in the vocation, while at the same time the realities and the necessities of school instruction are so emphasized and explained that quality and quantity are both given place and prominence.

Education is shown to be a gradual process of growth in certain elements that are cumulative in their nature and definite in their existence. The reader constantly confronts the fact that the teacher has a personal work to do, and that there is no substitute for good health, good scholarship, good character, or good training. Efficiency is a logical consequence of endeavor and of fidelity to the principles of sincerity and truth. Success is a result that can be insured by acquiring the qualities essential to the teaching vocation, and the teaching of children is so important and has such immense possibilities that no person should dare to undertake it without having made a preparation that the time and the means at hand give in such abundance.

No teacher of teachers is more fully represented in his book than is the author of these pages. He has been

through the experiences he suggests, he is an exemplar of his philosophy of work, he has given all he has in order to attain to the high standard of capability he has reached, while he comprehends in full the problems each beginner has to solve. His sympathy is marked in the atmosphere he throws about the sentiments here expressed; his ideals of life are portrayed in the choice standards here developed; and his conception of the greatness of the teacher's work is apparent on every page. To the young teacher this message will be the way of life; to the worried, tired teacher these sentiments will point a way of obtaining rest and relief; while to the enthusiastic, experienced teacher these words will be a constant reminder to keep near to the children and depend more upon the daily practice than upon sublime theory.

HOMER H. SEERLEY,
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PART I

THE MAKING OF A TEACHER

CHAPTER I

SCHOLARSHIP AS A FACTOR IN SUCCESS

Becoming a Teacher.—One Friday a student in my class in school management stopped at the desk and said: "I shall not be in the class Monday. I am going home to teach." She told me that she had never taught, but that there were not teachers enough to fill the schools in her county, and so the county superintendent had asked her to take a school for the winter term.

Friday this young woman was a student—a learner. She took an examination Saturday, and received a certificate. The following Monday she entered the school-room to assume the duties of a teacher.

Now, there is no magic in the word certificate, nor in the word teacher, nor in the work of teaching to transform in a day or two a weak, uncultured, inexperienced young man or woman into a strong, learned, and capable teacher. It is evident that whatever faults and weaknesses, whatever ignorance and lack of self-control a person may have as a student Friday will go with him into the school-room when he enters it Monday morning as a teacher. No process

has ever been discovered by which one may suddenly acquire the qualifications of a real teacher. Knowledge is a plant of slow growth. Good habits are the result of long and persistent right-doing. No teacher acquires professional skill by accident. Hard study and experience are always necessary to become skilled in any work or trade or art. It is possible to cram for examination, but no one can cram for character.

The Responsibility of the Teacher.—"I am sick of hearing about the responsibility of the teacher," is quite a common remark even among old teachers, especially those who have never been accused of being good teachers.

If older teachers can speak thus of their profession, it is not surprising that young teachers should not take a very serious view of their responsibility. To many of them it will seem that writers on education greatly exaggerate the responsibility of the teacher. But the fact is that life everywhere is full of responsibility. If we take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth we cannot escape personal responsibility. We cannot sneer it down, nor laugh it down, nor always treat it as a joke. Every farmer, every merchant, every banker must face responsibility. No mother is free from it; no father can ignore it. The physician who is ignorant, or careless, or lacks a sense of personal obligation to his work may easily ruin the health or destroy the life of his patient. The railroad engineer holds the lives of hundreds in his hands.

Sixty years ago David Page wrote: "By taking the position of the teacher, all the responsibility of the relation is voluntarily assumed. And it is a responsibility from which one cannot escape. Even though he may have thoughtlessly entered upon the relation of teacher, with-

out a single thought of its obligations; or though, when reminded of them, he may laugh at the thought and disclaim all idea of being thus seriously held to a fearful account, yet still the responsibility is on him—a responsibility he can never shake off as long as the human soul is immortal and men are accountable for such consequences of their acts as are capable of being foreseen.”

Qualities that Win Success.—Now suppose we admit that the responsibility of the teacher is no greater than that of workers in other similar fields, the fact still remains that this responsibility is very real and very great. And is it not clear that the teacher's preparation and power must be correspondingly great? While ignorance and incompetency stand helpless before responsibility, knowledge and power rise with confidence and joy to meet the duties of the hour, however great they may be. Practically the same qualifications that make one successful in other callings will win success in teaching. Thorough knowledge of the work to be done, attention to business, self-control, honesty, courtesy, and a willingness to do more than is absolutely required of one—these are the qualities that win respect and command success everywhere.

Nearly one hundred thousand young people who are students now will be teachers in our American public schools one year from now. If, as students, they have been accurate, industrious, systematic, and zealous for truth, they will take these qualities with them into their school-rooms as teachers. If they have acquired habits of keen observation, order, firmness, dependability, tact, cheerfulness, and dignity, these same habits will be a part of their equipment for their work. The process of becoming a real teacher is the acquirement of these qualities and habits.

Importance of Scholarship.—The first essential qualification of the teacher is scholarship, not so much for what it is as for what it stands. A simple cross is not much in itself, only a bit of wood, or silver, or gold; but it stands for much. As a symbol, it is full of meaning and of power. So it is with scholarship. It stands for ability well directed, for zealous and continuous effort, for daily tasks faithfully performed, and for self-denial in a hundred different ways.

However much we may insist upon professional training, common-sense, and the spirit of the teacher as essential qualifications for the work of teaching, these three things are perfectly obvious:

(1) Successful professional training must rest upon the foundation of accurate and adequate scholarship. The more methods and devices a smatterer acquires the more dangerous he becomes.

(2) No person of common-sense will invite failure by attempting to do a work for which he has made no preparation.

(3) By the "spirit of the teacher" we, of course, mean the right spirit. We mean interest in the school and the pupils, definite plans, honesty of purpose, enthusiasm, appreciation of the value of our work, freedom from sham and hypocrisy; and these things demand scholarship in the teacher. Mr. White says: "Even the smallest pupil in school has wit enough to know that no one should attempt to teach what he does not know." To know well what he attempts to teach is the first essential qualification of the teacher. This is so evidently true that the government of every civilized state requires those who teach in its public schools to pass an examination in the essential branches of study.

Any primary or elementary teacher who, because of

her ignorance, is constantly making mistakes in spelling, grammar, history, and geography, who must keep her book open in the class, and is compelled to dodge questions which she ought to be able to answer, justly deserves the contempt of her pupils.

Meaning of Scholarship.—Some one has said that scholarship is a thorough and fresh knowledge of the subjects taught. This definition is not broad enough, for efficient scholarship includes much more than a knowledge of subject-matter or facts. *How* we know is as important as *what* we know. Real scholarship discovers the relation of facts, interprets them, compares them, classifies them according to their fundamental connections. Scholarship means discipline as well as knowledge, for knowledge acquired in a loose, illogical manner will always be confused and unreliable. Only a well-trained teacher can acquire intellectual control of the pupil's mind, give right direction to his growing powers, awaken his inner life, and arouse his highest aspirations for learning. The teacher must know much more than he teaches. He must know not only the lesson he teaches but the book he teaches and the subject he teaches—know its relations to other subjects and to life.

Scholarship means love of truth for truth's sake; and if the teacher has not a sincere love of truth, how shall he teach his pupils to value "wisdom above rubies"? Scholarship means power to think; and if the teacher is not a thinker, how shall he train others to think?

How Scholarship Aids the Teacher.—Many young people, under the conditions that have prevailed in our American schools, have entered upon the work of teaching with very meagre scholarship. Some of them have made successful teachers, because they possessed good natural