

# Theory and Practice in Education.

In the process of education we find two great parts — one treating of material, and the other of immaterial things. Immaterial things are studied by means of the mind alone, while material things are most successfully studied by means of the mind in connection with the five senses. Now it is with these material things that the great mass of mankind are constantly working. Agriculture, manufacture and commerce are but different methods of treating tangible things; and it is natural, therefore, in order to satisfy material wants, that the first step towards education should be to become acquainted with the common things of the world — to understand our relation to them, and their relation to each other. To form this acquaintance, what is necessary? Is it enough that students should study about things? Certainly not, for with

material things, as with members of a community, in order to form a thorough acquaintance it is necessary to associate with them. Education as begun by nature fully illustrates this. After a child has begun to notice things, it next wants to get hold of them. Tell it as often as you will that a hot stove will burn the hand if touched, no natural-born American babe is satisfied with the theory until it has proved it for itself. This method should be followed by all students, old and young. No one should be satisfied with a theory; but should insist on handling the substances about which he is studying, and if he gets burnt in the process, he will remember it all the better.

Great educators too strongly imply that a diligent use of the mind is all that is necessary to make an education a success. This seems necessary because the mass of laborers use their brains so sparingly; but another effect is produced. It causes

many young students to believe that fortunes are easily made by a simple use of the mind. Now brains, to be sure are in great demand in the industries of the world, but they are useless in supplying satisfying material wants, unless properly applied to material things. Mere study about things can never cause production. To produce, prepare or distribute requires something more than thought. It requires the assistance of the hand, either to produce or to construct something that will produce. To understand all the principles of music, does not make a musician: nor will a knowledge of right make an honest man. To know and to tell others is usually easier than to do. Everyone knows better than he does, but others will forever measure his knowledge by his actions. What is needed is to get those who are constantly theorizing, to apply what they know, and those who are making failures by trying to apply the theories of others, to learn something for themselves. At present there is too

great a separation between brain laborers and hand laborers. The one class has the theory, but the other is getting all the practice. The educator keeps calling to the farmer to put more brains into his work; and the farmer modestly replies, "That's the theory but please come and show us how it is done."

But many men of large brains and deep thought, who can boast of the number of languages they can speak, or carry on long discussions about the theories of creation, criticise a practical education saying its sole object is to provide for the wants of the body, man's animal nature. Education, they say, has a higher object, that it should be more exalting, should elevate the mind, fill the heart, and make man more like his maker. To be sure it should, but the wants of the body must first be satisfied. To be sure education should fill the heart, but this is impossible so long as the stomach is craving to be filled. When we know that nine tenths of the people of our country are working long and hard to

scantly supply bodily wants, and need the aid which education alone can give; who has a right to live off the produce of the land, and pronounce a practical education common or nucleau. Whenever education is made a means of enabling some to enjoy the highest privileges while they are being supported through the manual toil of those they look down upon, it must fail of its object. When so used, as it too frequently is, it serves only to separate mankind into two great factions — the enlightened, well-dressed consumer, and the ignorant, suffering producer. In order to produce its best results, education must be made a means whereby the mass of laborers can more easily supply their bodily wants, in order that they may have time for self culture. In this way society as a unit will be elevated, and all who will may enjoy the privileges of a higher education.

Colleges are often justly criticised for educating youths above the station which they are expected to occu

py in after life. The criticism is just however, not because of too much education, but because it has been wrongly distributed. Higher education is a glorious thing, but only so when it rests upon the foundation of a practical knowledge of common things. If it has not such a foundation, the structure is top-heavy, and sure to fall, unless unfairly supported through the manual toil of others. Increasing wants are emblematic of progress, but unless one can, by his own efforts, satisfy his increasing wants, he must live at the expense of others. Schools then, it may be said, are promoters of crime whenever they educate scholars up to wants and appetites, and do not put within their hands a means of satisfying such wants and appetites.

This educating of scholars, above the common labors of life, giving to them an idea of self importance, is what makes graduates in general an object of jealousy and contempt. Laborers often look upon a graduate as one who is trying to get his living off the labor

of others; as one who is seeking, through the recommendation of a diploma, a position with a large salary and little work. Men of business say. "O! he is a student. I don't want him. He don't know nothing except what is in his grammar. His knowledge is mere theory. Give me a live energetic fellow with good common sense, and he's worth a dozen graduates." They do not stop to think whether the live energetic fellow might not make even a better business man if given a college education. It is expecting too much of a college to suppose that every one of its graduates has more general knowledge than the very best individual that may be found among those who never attended school. It is not right to discard schools because some have attended and failed to benefit themselves thereby, while others have educated themselves in the practical school of the world. Scholars are not made by schools. To find something profitable to study is not difficult. Nature furnishes such gratuitously to all. But to

find some one who will study profitably is not so easy. He who anxiously applies what knowledge he has, is benefited by attending school by being given more that he may apply; but he who can not apply what he has has no need for more.

The true education, then, must unite the practical and the ideal. Practice is to follow thought and prove its worth. Mere theorizing unassociated with motive force is like making resolutions never to be carried into effect. Nature meant that the two should work together. Every man is given a head and a pair of hands — the one for thought, and the other for its application. Without thought his labor must be of the lowest type, and without application his thoughts are without value; but with sound thought practically applied man's power is without limit.

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