

## ABOUT TEACHER TRAINING

WE SEE what a great part is played by schools in our modern civilization. We see the need that schools be places of real education. We want them to be places where young people can get certain needed knowledge, and more than this can get a certain power in the way of thinking accurately and judging rightly. To get these results we see how much hangs on the ability and equipment of the teacher. Hence it is, and well it is, that we are hearing so much about the problem of Teacher Training.

Plenty of people can remember the time when teaching was hardly thought of as a profession. Young men and women and older men and women took it up to make a living or to earn an extra penny when nothing better seemed at hand. A plan of professional preparation, as for law or medicine, was nowhere in the landscape or even on the horizon.

One may have a doubt whether the profession of teaching can ever be, in a technical way, quite on a par with law and medicine. For while the thing we call personality cuts a figure in whatever one does, it is in teaching that personality cuts deepest. So much is this the case that one may doubt about our thinking of teaching along quite the same line as we do of other professions. *It is in our favor that we do not have to be so professional as other professions.* For the more a "professor" of anything can continue to be just a human being, the better. All of us know personally numbers of fine teachers who have not had professional training. There is no use in denying this; it is a fact. And it is a fact quite apart from the way any one would call a doctor or a lawyer fine in his work who has not had the regular professional training. It is different in the teaching pro-

fession, and even those of us who most wish to magnify our profession must acknowledge the difference.

And yet this of course is true: teaching has become a profession. As such it demands technical preparation. But this can easily be overdone. It can easily fall into the fault of killing originality and making molds. And when it runs too glibly into psychology, it is getting on dubious ground. There are writers on the subject of teacher training who speak as if some problems in psychology were settled which are not. There are questions in psychology that have been positively settled in a dozen different ways in the last thirty years, like problems in philosophy, and the same problems will probably be settled in another dozen different ways within the coming thirty years. But aside from such cock-sureness in psychology, there is a body of principles founded on experiment, experience and practice, with which every candidate for the profession of teaching ought to be familiar. There is undoubtedly a solid reason for a certain amount of strictly professional training. And good teachers with gifted personalities who have not had the special training would be the first to recognize help from such training.

So it has come about that we are provided with normal schools, college departments of education and teachers' colleges galore, all directed toward professional preparation. To so great an extent has the purely professional side been emphasized that we have for some time been on the edge of the danger of losing sight of the scholastic requirements of a well equipped teacher. The professional movement has been perfectly natural. It has been a natural, if excessive, rebound from the days when nobody questioned that anybody could teach school!

Evidences are thick around us that the rebound was excessive. There are many teachers today who have had the profes-

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sional training and yet have a very thin knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. This lack of scholarship, lack of full and accurate knowledge of subject-matter, has of course a harmful effect. The pupils are influenced by the looseness and superficiality of the work. They get used to being shallow and inaccurate. Not once, but many times, one hears professional and business men complain that it seems almost impossible to find high-school graduates who have the spirit of thoroughness and accuracy. There must be some truth in the charge. Those who actually examine pupils are more often than not surprised at the lack of accurate knowledge which they find. This is due to the lack in the teacher, and the lack in the teacher arises from the fact that we have been laying emphasis too much on the professional technique and neglecting the weightier matters. Happily there is beginning to be a reaction against this excess. We are beginning to hear more about subject-matter and scholarship.

When today we use the expression Teacher Training, nine out of ten of us think of the professional training rather than of the education that ought to precede and accompany the professional training. It is for this reason that even professors of education, certainly some of them, have come to dislike the term Teacher Training. If somebody could hit on a better word, or combination of words, it would be a welcome change. We need a name that savors not only of the process of professional training but of the spirit of scholarship. But even keeping the misleading name, we have come to the point where we ought to understand, very distinctly, that teacher training implies thorough and accurate knowledge and, more important still, the solid training that comes from acquiring such knowledge. It is this which ought to antedate the special training. It is this, and only this, which can form a firm foundation of preparation for the teacher's work.

Let us think a moment about the primary qualities we would all like to find in a teacher. Let us see what at least two of these are.

Whatever object we have in view and are working to get, there is always a gain in reducing the idea and the process to simple terms. There is always the danger of becoming confused in complexities and so losing sight of the main point. Simplicity is a virtue in all our work of education. This is not to say that there are short-cuts. There are no short-cuts in education any more than there are short-cuts in our manifold social problems. Simplicity in education simply means for us teachers that we try to state in as simple words as possible what we think education is, and that we try to see what is the simplest, not necessarily the easiest, way of getting it ourselves and then helping others to get it. In other words, there is virtue in getting down to first principles.

Of course one rarely speaks of a real teacher without mentioning first of all his or her personality. How often we hear emphasis laid, and rightly laid, on the teacher's personality. Dean Inge and others, in speaking of religious work and influence, say that what we are matters much more than what we do or say. It must be so, because what we are must inevitably flavor all that we say or do. We know that it is so. We say and repeat that it is so. The background of teachers, as of others, gets itself expressed in some way at every turn. In the profession of teaching this idea is especially important for the reason that teachers have to do with young minds that are easily influenced.

Now this element of personality is something that can be planted and nourished. However subtle it may be, it is a real thing. To realize it is one of the simple purposes to be kept in view in all our education and especially in our training of teachers. In begetting or fostering personality immense

help comes from two acquirements, which are good in themselves apart from any resultant personality. Without them no one could rightly be classed as more than half educated. We might call them two main objectives in the preparation of those who are to engage in the profession of educating others.

One of these main requirements in the training of a good teacher is the spirit of scholarship. It is not so much the amount of scholarship or the subject of scholarship as the spirit. It is the spirit of valuing, reverencing and seeking the fact, whatever the matter be. It is the spirit of accuracy, thoroughness, genuineness. Abraham Lincoln, without going to high school or college, had this spirit. However much it may have been a part of his nature, the study of Euclid by the light of a wood fire helped him to perfect it. We can well imagine that he did not turn a page until he knew what was on that page. He took a definite subject and pursued it in a genuine way. This is the whole simple secret. To this end would it not be well, in any normal school, school of education, or teachers' college, that the curriculum should include at least one definite subject like mathematics, physics, Latin, or English which would be required throughout the course? Whether or not one such subject be carried all the way, would it not be well, no matter how jealous may be the insistence on professional subjects, to stand by the requirement of at least one such definite subject each year? To get the spirit of scholarship the choice of subject is of little moment, provided it be a subject in which absolute accuracy can be and will be demanded.

Teachers who have this spirit of accuracy and genuineness spread it through their classes. It is a part of their personality. *They can get it by close, continued study of some definite subject, and there are no short-cuts.* Having got it in any one thing, they take it into other things.

The second thing which it seems to me we may be justified in naming as one of the two main objectives in the preparation of teachers is the spirit of discrimination, good taste, culture. Culture is a word abused, but it serves. Teachers who have culture change the atmosphere of their schools. A person of culture discriminates between good and bad in manners, in literature, dress, pictures, music and what not. How can we get this power of discrimination? Many things help. The reading of good books helps. The mastery of one of Gilbert Murray's translations of a Greek drama, the mastery of Matthew Arnold's introduction to his edition of Wordsworth—anything like these would help. Travel helps. Looking carefully at a good picture helps. Listening attentively to good music helps. Looking lovingly into the face of a beautiful rose helps. All contact with beautiful things helps.

But for most of us the greatest help comes from getting in touch directly with those who have this power of discrimination. When Sidney Lanier was half starving, suppose some college had found him out and paid him only to come and sit before an English class and talk about Shakespeare. What a well-spring of culture he would have been to the students who came thus in touch with him.

The personal contact is the main thing. It would be a good move if all places where teachers are trained would increase the practice of bringing in from the outside people of taste and discrimination. Not the professional platform people. Heavens, no! But people who by their ways and works have shown that they know the significance of culture and good taste. It may be a clergyman, or merchant, or doctor, or lawyer, or architect. There are some in all callings, some in almost every community.

So then let us not be confounded by a complexity of demands. Let us seek simplicity and ensue it. Whatever our teach-

ing-training must include, no matter how much professional technique may be required, let us keep in view the two simple objectives of accuracy, which is the truth of things, and culture, which is the beauty of things. Teachers who have themselves the spirit of accuracy and the spirit of culture will inevitably inspire like spirit in their pupils. They will beget in pupils the habit of accuracy and the tendency to discriminate between what is true and what is false in all the various contacts of life.

J. H. DILLARD

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