

DOWNLOAD PDF THE TEACHER OR, MORAL INFLUENCES EMPLOYED IN THE INSTRUCTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE YOUNG

Chapter 1 : The teacher.: Moral influences employed in the instruction and government of the young.

*The Teacher: Moral Influences Employed in the Instruction and Government of the Young (Classic Reprint) [Jacob Abbott] on blog.quintoapp.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Excerpt from The Teacher: Moral Influences Employed in the Instruction and Government of the Young In regard to the anecdotes and narratives which are very freely introduced.*

In such cases as this, it is very desirable that the answers should be general, so that throughout the school, there should be a spirited interest in the questions and replies. This will never be the case, if a small number of the boys only take part in the answers; and many teachers complain, that, when they try this experiment, they can seldom induce many of the pupils to take a part. The reason ordinarily is, that they say that any of the boys may answer, instead of that all of them may. If the answers were feeble, in the instance we are supposing, the teacher would perhaps say; "I only heard one or two answers: Will you all think, and answer together? Which way are they from us? I should like to have every one in the room answer, and all precisely together. A similar effort will always succeed. Some do not reply; some say, "Over the Rocky Mountains;" others, "Over us;" and others still, "The sun does not move at all. Now, how long does it take the sun to pass round the earth? The reader will observe that they inevitably lead the pupil, by short and simple steps, to a clear understanding of the point to be explained. It would depend upon the distance. Suppose then the Rocky Mountains were half round the globe, how long would it take the sun to go to them? How many will the sun pass, in going half round? In going quarter round? This you have already said will take six hours. In one hour then, how many degrees will the sun pass over? If so, the teacher will subdivide the question, on the principle we are explaining, so as to make the steps such that the pupils can take them. For the word meridian means a line drawn exactly north or south from any place. This point for instance, the meaning of meridian, may be the subject, if it were necessary, of many questions, which would render it simple to the youngest child. The teacher may point to the various articles in the room, or buildings, or other objects without, and ask if they are or are not in his meridian. I go into it here, merely to show, how, by simply subdividing the steps, a subject ordinarily perplexing, may be made plain. The reader will observe that in the above, there are no explanations by the teacher, there are not even leading questions; that is, there are no questions whose form suggests the answers desired. The pupil goes on from step to step, simply because he has but one short step to take at a time. They can, by a series of questions like the above, be led to see by their own reasoning, that time, as denoted by the clock, must differ in every two places, not upon the same meridian, and that the difference must be exactly proportional to the difference of longitude. So that a watch, which is right in one place, cannot, strictly speaking, be right in any other place, east or west of the first: The reader will observe, too, that the method by which this explanation is made, is strictly in accordance with the principle I am illustrating, which is by simply dividing the process into short steps. There is no ingenious reasoning on the part of the teacher, no happy illustrations; no apparatus, no diagrams. It is a pure process of mathematical reasoning, made clear and easy by simple analysis. In applying this method, however, the teacher should be very careful not to subdivide too much. It is best that the pupils should walk as fast as they can. The object of the teacher should be to smooth the path, not much more than barely enough to enable the pupil to go on. He should not endeavor to make it very easy. Truths must not only be taught to the pupils, but they must be fixed, and made familiar. This is a point which seems to be very generally overlooked. I only try it, as a sort of intellectual experiment. The boy went regularly onward to the end. In the latter, his knowledge is only imperfectly his own; he can make use of it only under favorable circumstances. In the former it is entirely his own; circumstances have no control over him. She hesitates and stammers, miscalls the cases, and then corrects herself, and if she gets through at last, she considers herself as having recited well; and very many teachers would consider it well too. When such a thing is said for the first time, it should not be severely reproofed, because nine children in ten honestly think, that if the lesson was learned so that it could be recited

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any where, their duty is discharged. But it should be kindly, though distinctly explained to them, that, in the business of life, they must have their knowledge so much at command, that they can use it, at all times, and in all circumstances, or it will do them little good. One of the most common causes of difficulty in pursuing mathematical studies, or studies of any kind, where the succeeding lessons depend upon those which precede, is the fact that the pupil, though he may understand what precedes, is not familiar with it. This is very strikingly the case with Geometry. The class study the definitions, and the teacher supposes they fully understand them; in fact, they do understand them, but the name and the thing are so feebly connected in their minds, that a direct effort, and a short pause, are necessary to recall the idea, when they hear or see the word. When they come on therefore to the demonstrations, which, in themselves, would be difficult enough, they have double duty to perform. The words used do not readily suggest the idea, and the connexion of the ideas requires careful study. Under this double burden, many a young geometrician sinks discouraged. A class should go on slowly, and dwell on details, so long as to fix firmly, and make perfectly familiar, whatever they undertake to learn. In this manner, the knowledge they acquire will become their own. It will be incorporated, as it were, into their very minds, and they cannot afterwards be deprived of it. The exercises which have for their object this rendering familiar what has been learned, may be so varied as to interest the pupil very much, instead of being tiresome, as it might, at first be supposed. Suppose, for instance, a teacher has explained to a large class in grammar, the difference between an adjective and an adverb: The first lesson might be to write twenty short sentences containing only adjectives. The second to write twenty, containing only adverbs. The third, to write sentences in two forms, one containing the adjective, and the other expressing the same idea by means of the adverb, arranging them in two columns, thus, He writes well. His writing is good. Again, they may make out a list of adjectives, with the adverbs derived from each, in another column. Then they may classify adverbs on the principle of their meaning, or according to their termination. The exercise may be infinitely varied, and yet the object of the whole may be, to make perfectly familiar, and to fix for ever in the mind, the distinction explained. These two points seem to me to be fundamental, so far as assisting pupils through the difficulties which lie in their way, is concerned. Diminish the difficulties as far as is necessary, by merely shortening and simplifying the steps, and make thorough work as you go on. These principles carried steadily into practice, will be effectual, in leading any mind through any difficulties which may occur. And though they cannot perhaps be fully applied to every mind, in a large school, yet they can be so far acted upon, in reference to the whole mass, as to accomplish the object for a very large majority. A few miscellaneous suggestions, which we shall include under this head, will conclude this chapter. Never do any thing for a scholar, but teach him to do it for himself. How many cases occur, in the schools of our country, where the boy brings his slate to the teacher, saying he cannot do a certain sum. The teacher takes the slate and pencil, performs the work in silence, brings the result, and returns the slate to the hands of his pupil, who walks off to his seat, and goes to work on the next example; perfectly satisfied with the manner in which he is passing on. A man who has not done this a hundred times himself, will hardly believe it possible that such a practice can prevail. It is so evidently a waste of time, both for master and scholar. Never get out of patience with dulness. Perhaps I ought to say, never get out of patience with any thing. That would perhaps be the wisest rule. But above all things, remember that dulness and stupidity, and you will certainly find them in every school, are the very last things to get out of patience with. If the Creator has so formed the mind of a boy, that he must go through life slowly and with difficulty, impeded by obstructions which others do not feel, and depressed by discouragements which others never know, his lot is surely hard enough, without having you to add to it the trials and suffering, which sarcasm and reproach from you, can heap upon him. Look over your school-room, therefore, and wherever you find one, whom you perceive the Creator to have endued with less intellectual power than others, fix your eye upon him with an expression of kindness and sympathy. Such a boy will have suffering enough from the selfish tyranny of his companions; he ought to find in you, a protector and friend. The teacher should be interested in all his scholars, and aim equally to secure the progress of all. Let there be no neglected ones in the school room. We should always remember that, however unpleasant in

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countenance and manners that bashful boy, in the corner, may be, or however repulsive in appearance, or unhappy in disposition, that girl, seeming to be interested in nobody, and nobody appearing interested in her, they still have, each of them, a mother, who loves her own child, and takes a deep and constant interest in its history. Those mothers have a right too, that their children should receive their full share of attention, in a school which has been established for the common and equal benefit of all. Do not hope or attempt to make all your pupils alike. Providence has determined that human minds should differ from each other, for the very purpose of giving variety and interest to this busy scene of life. Now if it were possible for a teacher, so to plan his operations, as to send his pupils forth upon the community, formed on the same model, as if they were made by machinery, he would do so much, towards spoiling one of the wisest of the plans which the Almighty has formed, for making this world a happy scene. We should bring out those powers with which the Creator has endued the minds placed under our control. We must open our garden to such influences as shall bring forward all the plants, each, in a way corresponding to its own nature. It is impossible, if it were wise, and it would be foolish, if it were possible, to stimulate, by artificial means, the rose, in hope of its reaching the size and magnitude of the apple-tree, or to try to cultivate the fig and the orange, where wheat only will grow. For the rest, he must remember that his province is to cultivate, not to create. Error on this point, is very common. Many teachers, even among those who have taken high rank, through the success with which they have labored in this field, have wasted much time, in attempting to do what can never be done; to form the character of those brought under their influence, after a certain uniform model, which they have conceived as the standard of excellence. Their pupils must write just such a hand, they must compose in just such a style, they must be similar in sentiment and feeling, and their manners must be formed according to a fixed and uniform model; and when, in such a case, a pupil comes under their charge whom Providence has designed to be entirely different from the beau ideal adopted as the standard, more time and pains, and anxious solicitude is wasted in vain attempts to produce the desired conformity, than half the school require beside. Do not allow the faults or obliquities of character, or the intellectual or moral wants, of any individual, of your pupils, to engross a disproportionate share of your time. I have already said, that those who are peculiarly in need of sympathy or help, should receive the special attention they seem to require; what I mean to say now, is, do not carry this to an extreme. When a parent sends you a pupil, who, in consequence of neglect or mismanagement, at home, has become wild and ungovernable, and full of all sorts of wickedness, he has no right to expect, that you shall turn your attention away from the wide field, which, in your whole school-room, lies before you, to spend your time, and exhaust your spirits and strength, in endeavoring to repair the injuries which his own neglect has occasioned. When you open a school, you do not engage, either openly or tacitly, to make every pupil who may be sent to you, a learned or a virtuous man. You do engage to give them all faithful instruction, and to bestow upon each such a degree of attention, as is consistent with the claims of the rest. But it is both unwise and unjust, to neglect the many trees in your nursery, which by ordinary attention, may be made to grow straight and tall, and to bear good fruit, that you may waste your labor upon a crooked stick, from which all your toil can secure very little beauty or fruitfulness. Let no one now understand me to say, that such cases are to be neglected. I admit the propriety, and in fact, have urged the duty, of paying to them a little more than their due share of attention.