

## Words Without Thoughts

By George M. Hyde

To reading and composition, in the student's life, may be applied the sage remark of one of Mr. Aldrich's picturesque characters concerning Capital and Labor: "They are like Siamese twins; if you pinch one, the other will sing out; . . . when either of them fetches the other a clip, he knocks himself down." Without observation and reading youthful composition is necessarily difficult. Indissolubly connected, they are interdependent. Curtail the one, and the other suffers. To "rear the tender thought" is "to teach the young idea how to shoot." This "delightful task" belongs not exclusively to the teacher of rhetoric; indeed, he is helpless without the co-operation of the teacher of literature, of science, of history. There is a timely significance for schools as well as colleges in the words of President Thwing:<sup>1</sup> "It is to be recognized that writing is a work involving all the work of the college; for in order to write one must have something to write, and having something to write is the result of general culture. . . . It is the business of the professor of Greek, of Latin, of French, of history, so to train the student that he will have something to say when the professor of rhetoric asks him to say something in a certain way. Good work in writing presupposes and necessitates good work in other departments."

Plain as is this principle, to its neglect may be attributed, we think, many discouragements and failures of both teachers and scholars. Too much "original" work is required at an age when their minds are all but vacant and idealess. The more creative literary work, which should be led up to naturally and gradually, is too often imposed at the very outset. What can a teacher expect in response to his demands but the

Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized?

What wonder that the pen is early *feared* more than the sword by the youthful writer; that, like the Dr. Birch mentioned by Boswell, he "no sooner takes pen in hand than it becomes a torpedo to him and benumbs all his faculties"? Is it strange that the subject of a composition or essay looms up before him till he worries himself into an abnormally vapid state of mind, the outcome of which is unworthy either of himself, his theme, or the occasion? He has not made all this trouble for himself. The "occasion" of it is the teacher who demands a higher grade of work than is forthcoming at so early an age. This attempt to make "brick without straw" yields only what might be expected—plenty of mud. The baleful cause of this disappointing result is too large expectations, founded on wrong psychology.

If school compositions are *merely* insipid or lame, there is ground for congratulation. There are worse evils not so nearly allied to infirmity. Invention is not always the child of necessity; in this case plagiarism, or something very like it, is more often. The average high-school youth stops thinking the moment too much is exacted of him. He clutches desperately at whatever helps are at hand, without knowing (perhaps never having been taught) how to use them.

He lays under tribute all the resources of his family. Father, mother, big brother, all are enlisted in the endeavor to "fill the bill." What wear and tear that nightly struggle involves, many parents can testify. The composition is finally written; and the boy, emerging from the forced march to which he has been subjected, may be almost pardoned if he hands it to the teacher next morning as his own. While the production is not his "ownty downty" own, it is at least the outcome of collaboration to which he is a party; and he has derived some mental stimulus from contact with the other minds of the family. In more flagrant cases of borrowing, where whole pages or columns are deliberately transcribed, no such incidental benefit is gained; the moral sense is irretrievably blunted; a habit of confusing the *meum* and *tuum* is formed which

must vitiate every subsequent effort, whether it be in writing or living.

Yet such stealing is not considered an offense by many a school girl or boy who feels obliged to appropriate what is not his own, from very poverty of thought. In a divine judgment as to the ethics of plagiarism, will not the "extenuating circumstances" enter, under which John or Mary labored and repined? and will not the responsibility be placed where it belongs? The teacher who in the broad light of to-day requires compositions that are beyond the knowledge and experience of his scholars, should return to the first principles of psychology.

Writers are made, not born. Originality without some mental preparation is all hocus-pocus. Burke wisely says, "There is no faculty of the mind which can bring its energy into effect unless the memory be stored with ideas for it to work upon." Many would have courage to persevere if they observed how dependent on reading literary composition has been in the lives of the world's brightest and best. Lowell "for ten years lay on his back and did nothing but read." Professor John Fiske absorbed everything worth his reading in half a dozen different languages before he put forth his first book—at the age of eleven having read "all of Shakespeare, a large part of Milton, Bunyan and Pope, Gibbon, Prescott, Froissart." Bancroft, if anybody, exemplified Bacon's "reading maketh a full man;" nothing short of complete mastery of a subject would satisfy him. Before venturing to write, he would read "every book and periodical article he could find in the Congressional Library, and every book he could buy." Maupassant was the diligent slave of Flaubert seven years before he was allowed to publish anything. Howells was advised by Lowell to get knowledge before giving full rein to sentiment and fancy; "read what will make you think, not dream." "You must sweat the *Heine* out of you as men do mercury." A writer is evolved; nor is he any the less a writer for being evolved. It is a credit to the whole world when a school of honest pen-grapplers recognize their present inability to do the first grade of literary work—called "original"—and consent to submit themselves to the natural laws of literary growth, conscientiously reading and analyzing the materials already before them, in the faith that admiration and sympathy may beget inspiration. Moore, in alluding to Byron's jest about his own *cribbing*, justifies the latter's perusal of others' work in that "the slightest hint, caught from his imagination as he read, was sufficient to kindle there such a train of thought as, but for that spark, had never been awakened." Most minds must be set in motion by some impulse from without. In fact, the only way to rise above the self-consciousness so fatal to successful composition is to forget all about writing *per se*, and read and think and talk till one instinctively reaches for the pen to register passing impressions. Then, and not till then, does writing become a pleasurable effort along the line of least resistance. Spontaneous combustion is not a literary phenomenon which is likely to become prevalent.

The academic problem of original composition, like most educational problems, will find its solution in a true conception of mental training. "Throughout all education, both of the school and of the family," says President Eliot, "there has been too much reliance on the principle of authority, too little on the progressive and persistent appeal to reason." Students should be taught to think fearlessly and without self-repression. To quote from Goethe's "Prelude,"

Let imagination the scene inspire, with all her choir  
Of attendant spirits,  
Reason, Sense, Sentiment, Passion.

These will come and abide in the mind that is ever receptive of new ideas, and takes delight in broad reading and thinking. But, coy creatures, they will not come at the whistling. It may be surmised that Jupiter's brain was not a *tabula rasa* when Minerva leaped full-fledged into the world. It doubtless is the mark and prerogative of genius, as John Foster has said, to be capable of "lighting its own fire." But most geniuses seem to have been content to know how; and, however capable of self-

<sup>1</sup>Quoted from The Outlook of October 7, 1893.

ignited originality, have done their best work when it was elicited by electric shock with other minds.



## State and School

### A Roman Catholic View

By Eric B. Dahlgren

Notwithstanding the recent attacks, the faith of the American people in the public-school system as an institution of our country is, if anything, stronger than ever. There is, however, a growing demand that better facilities for religious instruction should be afforded, such as might prove satisfactory to the religious feelings and prejudices of the community without essentially changing the underlying principles of the common-school system.

I have been asked as a Catholic for an expression of opinion, and I give it with pleasure.

It is one of the fundamental principles of American democracy that the State has no right either to interfere with the free exercise of religion or to teach it. It does not follow from this, however, that the people of the United States are an irreligious nation. No government exists at the present day that is so permeated with the true spirit of Christianity as that of the United States.

In the workings of the executive, judiciary, and legislative departments, daily proof is given of the people's belief and faith in the doctrines and teachings of Christ. Religion in our land is free, independent, but at the same time in perfectly friendly relation to the civil power. "We may truly say that with us separation of Church and State is not separation of the Nation from Religion. The American conception is that the religious character of the Nation consists mainly in the religious belief of the individual citizen and the conformity of conduct to that belief."

Believing that the underlying ideas of our common-school system are in conformity with the general spirit of our institutions, it is but right to suppose that they are framed in a perfectly Christian manner and with a Christian end in view.

Now, as a Catholic, I am bound to believe that the religious and secular education must go hand in hand; that the child whose religious education is neglected will not only make a bad Christian, but also a bad citizen. On this point all Catholics stand as a unit. If they differ, it is in regard to the method of its application. Also, as a Catholic, I have yet to learn "that any Pope has ever declared that the State went beyond its right in founding schools, *provided the instruction be organized in the spirit of Christianity.*"

Theoretically speaking, no conflict exists between the principle of the public school as an institution of a Christian State, and the doctrine of the Church.

The solution lies when in practice the common school is brought in closer conformity to its fundamental principles. The public schools should be what they are in name—the common schools of a Christian people, the property of no denomination or denominations.

Let there be no infringement of the religious rights or the wounding of the conscience of any of our people, be they Catholics, Protestants, or Jews. The Bible should be excluded. It properly belongs to the religious field of education.

You have no more right to impose upon the Catholic the Protestant version of the Bible than he has to make you read his. Besides, the Catholic does not believe that every one is capable of expounding the Bible, much less that children of all ages are capable of proper reception of its contents. Nor should the Jew be compelled to listen to the New Testament which he does not consider inspired.

It would seem beyond cavil that the Bible belongs to the religious field of education, and, as such, has no mission to fulfill in a purely non-sectarian school system.

Let the School Boards be so selected that there is an expressed understanding that all denominations have a right to representation. Not, however, by that class of

bigots whose chief mission is to live with a chip on their shoulders.

The public will then have confidence that all matters will be fairly and impartially dealt with. Let the teachers be selected from among those who, by examination, have given evidence of possessing the necessary moral and mental qualifications. Let it be a well-established rule that any attempt at proselytism be served with instant dismissal. Let the children be permitted to assemble during free time in separate class-rooms, according to their belief, for the reception of religious instruction from the religious teachers of such belief. By this use of the public school outside of school hours there is nothing done that is at all subversive of our institutions.

Does not the Government of the United States make Sunday a legal day of rest for all its officials? Are not the daily sessions of Congress opened with prayer by chaplains who receive their pay from the public funds? If the halls of the Congress and of the State Legislatures can be turned into a place of worship, surely there is no harm in the free use of the public schools by all our people alike for the imparting of religious instruction. As a matter of fact, they are so used in many portions of the country where churches are not available for religious exercises.

It is but the recognition by the State of its own Christianity that religion forms a vital and most important part in the making of a good citizen; that, without paying for religious instruction, it has no desire to impede the good work that religion can do in the development of the ideal citizen.

Let us have a free Church in a free State, and I am sure that in the spiritual field all the Catholic Church asks for is that which is so eminently characteristic of the American people—fair play and no favor.



## Social Settlements Among the Poor

One of the most inspiring meetings which the Congregational Club of New York has ever held was that of January 17. The subject was "Social Settlements Among the Poor." The first speaker was the Rev. George Hodges, D.D., whose good work in behalf of Christian union in Pittsburg has frequently been mentioned in these columns. He has just left Pittsburg and accepted the position of Dean in the Episcopal Theological Seminary, Cambridge, in succession to Bishop Lawrence. Dr. Hodges gave a historical review of settlements among the poor, beginning with the work of Professors T. H. Green and John Ruskin in Oxford, and then sketching various movements of the kind from that day until the present. He specially emphasized the fact that these settlements take to the people the finest personality, the most gracious culture, and the most inspiring types of life, and that they make a way for the service of humanity for those who do not feel that they are called to preach. Dr. Jane E. Robbins represented the College Woman's Settlement in Rivington Street. She showed that the abyss which is supposed to exist between the poor and the rich does not exist where those who are well-to-do and cultivated realize their responsibilities to the poor and weak. Very graciously and beautifully she described the work of educated women who choose to live in the midst of what are called the lowest parts of our great cities in order that they may influence the people to accept higher ideals. In the absence of Dr. Stanton Coit, Mrs. Bird told of her work among the lodging-house men and boys. Called upon without more than a moment's warning, with great feeling she described the work in which she is engaged, which has won for her the name of which she is justly proud—"the Mother of the Lodging-House Boys." The wife of a prominent banker, she has always been interested in work with her husband among the needy, and since his death has given her time almost entirely to this ministry. The last regular speaker was Miss Bradford, of the new Whittier House in Jersey City. This Settlement has been started but about a month, and already the demands upon the single worker are almost too great to be borne. At present the headquarters of the Whittier House are in the