

HUMANIZING SCIENCE TEACHING.

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I.

There are two outstanding types of poor teaching done by two types of teachers:

1. The first is a "teacher" who has little or no interest in either subject or in the student. This is of course the lowest form of teaching which does probably more harm than good, much like disinterested hired help in business who can run your trade "in the ground" in very short time. In education as in business, salesmanship is the essential quality that puts the thing over, in other words *education as well as goods must be sold by creating a desire to possess it.*

What a teacher of this type can do to a school is well illustrated by the following incident which came under my own observation some years ago in Pike County, Indiana in a country school house of the little red variety "on the hillside in the woods". For three years an enthusiastic teacher taught the school and in that time the interest of the community increased so remarkably that every available bit of space in the room was occupied by seats and chairs and the school was a beehive of life and industry. After the third year this teacher was promoted to the principalship of the schools of one of the smaller towns in the county and a new teacher came to teach the little school on the hillside. Now a great change set in; by the middle of the year the enrollment was exactly half of the other teacher's number the year before and by the end of the year she had about one third as many. Of course this was before compulsory attendance was in force but suppose it had been since the day of truancy laws what would have happened then? Beyond a doubt it would have been little better for the Community, because the majority would have attended under protest and their taste for education would have turned to nausea; and antagonism to the teacher would have made out of that room a place of contention and discontent.

I was personally much interested in this case because some of my own friends and acquaintances attended there and so I visited there one day and here is what I saw: The teacher, a young lady, sitting behind a small table, appeared half asleep, almost sullen in all her questions and remarks to the children, entirely without enthusiasm, no circumstance could seemingly induce her to smile and all in all she cast such a gloom over those children it gave one the impression she was dealing with two great evils, namely, the children and the curriculum of studies, that life was not worth living and the brats under her instruction were the worst ever wished on to any teacher since the profession was invented.

2. The second kind of poor teaching is caused by an over-estimation of the importance of the subject and a lack of interest in the student. Such a teacher will invariably dehumanize his teaching by regarding the learner as a sort of necessary evil in order that an opportunity may be found to teach *all* the important facts of the subject exactly as they appear to his own mature mind. He disregards the ability of the student to understand and fails to awaken an interest by giving the student some points of contact with his life's experiences and interests. Such a teacher is always a driver and never a leader of the young minds under his training.

II.

Now for two types of good teaching:

1. The highest type is that accomplished by a teacher who is interested in both his subject and the students. Such a teacher naturally senses the nature of every student individually and tries to connect up the subject with some human interest so that even the slowest ones can find it interesting to know something about it. This is the teacher who knows that a spark of interest must be kindled before the mind can have a desire to learn for in learning as in eating there must be a desire to partake or it simply will not happen. This teacher is essentially a leader instead of a driver *and blessed is he who can lead and need not drive.*

3. Another kind of good teaching is often accomplished by a teacher who has the proper human sympathies al-

though he may not have a first class knowledge of the subject to be taught. Such a teacher will, for the sake of the students, feel the responsibility to prepare the work well enough to achieve real results.

III.

Now in conclusion. How can teaching be humanized? It is, of course, easier said than done otherwise we could all do it and the teaching of Science would be like a picnic on a fine day or life at the edge of Paradise. The main point I believe is that cold isolated facts can be vitalized as a rule by connecting them up with some well known human interests as for instance in Chemistry the study of carbon or nitrogen and their compounds in relation to foods, poisons, plant growth, explosives, etc. In Biology the study of a fish or frogs, even their anatomy, can be related to human life both economically and structurally; their value to man is evident enough to the student and their structure is very much like that of our own bodies in many particulars and then their actions are really wonderfully like our own in response to stimuli upon the different senses.

Finally, what is teaching after all? I think we must agree that while some facts of knowledge must be imparted it is of far greater importance to arouse life interests which will remain and cause the learner to gather up more knowledge along the entire way of life.