

A
LECTURE
ON THE
NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS
OF
TEACHERS IN COMMON SCHOOLS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE CONNECTICUT CONVENTION OF TEACHERS
AND THE FRIENDS OF EDUCATION,

ASSEMBLED AT THE CITY HALL IN HARTFORD, NOV. 10, 1830.

BY GUSTAVUS F. DAVIS, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN HARTFORD.

Hartford;
PUBLISHED BY D. F. ROBINSON & CO.

P. CANFIELD, PRINTER.

.....
1830.

LECTURE

ON THE

TO THAT IMPORTANT AND HIGHLY INTERESTING
CLASS OF THE COMMUNITY,

THE

TEACHERS IN COMMON SCHOOLS,

THE FOLLOWING LECTURE IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

BY GUSTAVUS B. DAVIS, A. M.
LECTURER ON THE HISTORY OF MASSACHUSETTS

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO., 15 N. 2ND ST.

1864

LECTURE.

THIS is an age of scientific improvement. The exertions of the present period in favour of popular education, are unparalleled in the history of our country. With the efforts of Christian philanthropy, they form a distinct epoch in American annals.

Improvements are introduced into every department of instruction. The best methods of communicating knowledge are diligently sought by the University, venerable for its age, and by other Seminaries of learning, down to the Schools of recent origin, designed for the benefit of prattling infancy.

Among the Literary Institutions of Connecticut, Common Schools hold an important rank—the more important, as they are emphatically Common Schools; found in every city, borough, and village, and free of access to all classes of the community.

I believe it is generally admitted, that in these institutions we have not advanced in equal pace with the improvements of the age; and that immediate exertions for their lasting benefit should be made.

But if our edifices are hereafter to be builded upon better plans, and to combine more skill, taste, beauty, and usefulness in their construction, it is important that the builders should receive qualifications adapted to the improvements contemplated, or they will not be prepared to answer the reasonable demands and expectations of their employers. It becomes then an interesting inquiry,

others what they well understand themselves ; others, seem to have all their treasures of knowledge at command, and to be able to enrich the minds of those around them, without much apparent exertion.

The ability of the latter is a very desirable qualification in the teacher of children ; but to obtain it, requires some knowledge of the philosophy of the human mind in the early developement of its powers.

The teacher should be able in a short time to ascertain the peculiar capacity and tempèr of each of his pupils, and adapt his instructions to the varieties he shall find.

His business is to communicate instruction, and to mould and discipline minds of different complexions. He is to teach the ignorant, the undisciplined, and frequently the wayward ; for such may be found in every Common School. Now he should be able to classify minds and tempers as well as attainments, and vary his course of instruction accordingly. With the ignorant, he must not only employ knowledge, but method and simplification. He should be able to analyze every subject, and exhibit its parts separately ; for as in politics, so in science the great maxim is, "*Divide, divide, and conquer.*"

With the undisciplined, he must be firm and decided.

With the wayward, he must be serious, patient and persevering.

With *all*, in their early efforts, he must be condescending and kind ; remembering the assertions of Paul, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child," and adapting his instructions to the language, understanding, and thoughts of children. Like Israel's seer, he should contract himself to the child he is to benefit. It is also very important that a teacher possess a tact adapted to what may be called the *modus docendi* of the age.

A building cannot be erected with symmetrical beauty, un-

less the foundation be laid with special reference to the order and dimensions of the superstructure to rest upon it.

The Teachers in our Common Schools who lay the foundation, ought to be well instructed in the *general principles* which are to govern the future builders in erecting and completing the temple of science.

It has often been found to require much time, and many efforts to enable the student, when he enters an advanced Seminary, to unlearn the erroneous sentiments and habits acquired at the Common School.

I will illustrate my meaning by supposing a case.

Suppose in the Common School the instructor proceeds on the old plan of merely requiring lessons to be recited *memoritor*. Where this is the practice, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get an answer only in the precise words of the book, and not even such an answer, unless the question is propounded in the precise words of the book. I have seen a whole class thrown into utter confusion by a slight variation from the prescribed form.

Now suppose the general principle, adopted in higher Seminaries, is to learn the student *to think*—to teach him facts and ideas instead of mere words, (and this supposition I believe to be not far from the truth,) how poorly prepared is the pupil, instructed in the Common School, to enter one of these higher Seminaries! how long a period must elapse before his mind can be suitably disciplined to a method of tuition to which he has never been accustomed! how greatly must his progress be retarded!

I have named and illustrated but one principle; but let the same general principles be adopted in all our Seminaries, “from the least to the greatest,” and let all our teachers consider it as belonging to their qualifications to be fully acquainted with them.

3. They must *love their employment*.

Men are adapted to different pursuits according to their different tastes.

One man is adapted to the profession of law; another to that of medicine, and a third to that of divinity. For anyone to succeed well in a profession, he must not only have an adaptation of mind and study to the duties connected with it, but a hearty predilection for them. A man makes but a pitiable lawyer, an unskillful physician, or an unprofitable divine, if he has no love for his profession.

One man has a relish for agriculture; another for merchandize; another for navigation; another for some mechanic art. "Every man has his proper gift; one after this sort and another after that." It would be well for each individual to ascertain the business of his choice, and abide in that calling to which the bias of his mind inclines him.

The teacher of youth must, on every principle of human nature and common sense, *love his employment*, or he can never succeed. Though he may consider its numerous and complicated duties as imposing a severe *task* upon his mental and physical powers, yet to him it should be a

" *Delightful task!*

To teach the young idea how to shoot!"

Some men seem to hate children, to feel a strong aversion to their society, and to look upon every personal effort, to administer to their instruction, (*in contact with them*), as mere drudgery—a burden almost intolerable.

Such persons ought never to enter a School-room as Teachers; but if they have any talents suited to the benefit of children, employ them at home in some useful service in their behalf, as a kind of atonement for the want of love to their society.

4. They must have *equanimity in the government of the School*.

The want of evenness and mildness of disposition is a great deficiency in a Schoolmaster. He will certainly find many things to try his patience and forbearance; and if he be irri-

irritable and peevish, he will be unhappy himself, and render all around him unhappy. The exhibition of such a temper will create a disgust in the minds of his pupils not only towards him, but towards the very things which he teaches—a disgust greatly to be deprecated. “A good tutor,” says Dr. Watts, “should take particular care of his own *temper* and conduct, that there may be nothing in him or about him which may be of ill example; nothing that may savour of a haughty temper or a mean and sordid spirit; *nothing that may expose him to the aversion* or to the contempt of his scholars, or *create a prejudice in their minds against him and his instructions*; but if possible, he should have so much of a natural candour and *sweetness* mixed with all the improvements of learning, as might convey knowledge into the minds of his disciples with a sort of gentle insinuation, and sovereign delight, and may tempt them into the highest improvements of their reason by a resistless and insensible force.

To maintain his authority, a teacher must possess the art of *self-command*—an art which, in the estimation of the wisest man of antiquity, is of no ordinary excellence and glory. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and *he that ruleth his Spirit*, than he that taketh a city.”

The man who cannot govern himself, should never be entrusted with the government of others.

No man of quick and turbulent passions ought ever to be placed at the head of a School; for when the reason of a man is often subjected to the dominion of his passions, it is unsafe for children to be under his control.

“Many have very little of what may be called the *faculty* of government; and *late coercion* and punishment come in to supply the place of early guidance. Mr. Anderson strikingly illustrates this part of the subject, by a very familiar allusion: ‘I recollect hearing of two coaches, which used to drive into Newmarket from London, by a certain hour, at a time of strong competition. The horses of the coach which generally

came in first had scarcely a wet hair. In the other, though last, the horses were jaded and heated to excess, and had the appearance of having made great efforts. You perhaps understand the difference. The first man did it all, of course, by the *reins*; the second, unsteady in himself, or unskillful in the reins, had induced bad habits, and then employed the *whip*; but he could never cope with the other. So it will ever hold in all government. If obedience to the reins is found to be most pleasant in itself, and even the road to enjoyment, then obedience will grow into a habit, and become, in fact, the choice of the party.' This, then, is the first thing to be attended to—acquire skill in the management of the reins; govern by guiding, not by forcing.

But still, there are many, very many cases, in which the reins alone will not prove to be enough; the whip is wanted; and, where it is wanted, it ought to be applied. Not that I mean to enforce a system of *corporeal* punishment; no, this may be necessary occasionally, *as an experiment* in difficult cases, but, as a *system*, it is bad and unavailing, and is usually the resource of passionate, ignorant, and indolent masters.**

It should be the constant aim of an Instructor, by a mild, even-handed, but firm and persevering government, associated with dignified urbanity, suitable condescension, and an affable, conciliatory deportment, to render his school-room a place of delightful resort to his pupils; and to induce them to estimate their opportunities for acquiring useful learning among their choicest blessings—their highest privileges.

5. The teachers of our Common Schools should furnish *satisfactory evidence of correct moral habits*.

I am not prepared to say that none but such as give evidence of genuine piety shall be the instructors of our children and youth; though I am prepared to say that such piety would be a *desirable* qualification. If we say that none but real Christians shall be teachers; then we must have an umpire to

*James' Family Monitor, p. 97.

decide on their *Christian* as well as literary qualifications ; and, as there is a diversity of opinion respecting the characteristics of genuine piety, all our School-masters might be of that denomination that should happen to be the most numerous or influential in the community.

The sciences are not sectarian ; nor should the teachers of them as such be sectarian.

In the domestic circle, in the Sunday School, and in the pulpit, our peculiar denominational sentiments may suitably be inculcated. But in a Common School, including the children of different denominations, they should never be mentioned. No man wishes his children to be taught religious principles which he does not himself believe, or religious rites with which he has no fellowship. No catechism of a sectarian character should be introduced. For if the catechism of one sect be admitted, that of another, on the principle of equality, should also be admitted ; and in a School composed of several sects, it is easy to perceive that unless the teacher have a very pliant conscience, he must be placed at times in unpleasant circumstances, and that the children must have but confused ideas of truth. But besides the sectarianism which it would produce, I have another objection to making experimental religion an indispensable qualification in a School-teacher. I refer to the temptation to hypocrisy which it would spread before the young men of our country.

It is well known, that wherever and whenever full communion in some Christian Church has been made a prerequisite to office, men of graceless hearts have taken upon them this semblance of piety, merely for purposes of personal glory and emolument.

They have pretended to serve God, when they were in fact only paying homage at the shrine of mammon, to the god of this world. I should fear a similar result from the establishment of a test which would exclude from participation in the instruction of our Common Schools every man who should

not give to the constituted authorities evidence of having vital godliness.

Young men, qualified in other respects, would have a powerful inducement to make a *profession* of religion, even though conscious to themselves that they are not in *possession* of it.

But all will agree with me that a man must be a *moral* man, (in the usual acceptation of the word *moral*,) to be entitled to our suffrages as a teacher.

No man, unless devoid of all moral sense, would be willing to place his children under the tuition of a blasphemer, a drunkard, a gambler, a debauchee, or a man of any other vicious habits.

I tremble when I see a man of avowed infidelity, and loose morality, enter a School in the responsible character of a teacher; for I remember a young man (once under my pastoral care,) of very respectable talents, of unquestioned piety, and of cheering promise of usefulness to the Church and the world, who was ruined by placing himself under the tuition of a professed infidel.

At first unsettled, and then bewildered by the artful sophistry of his wicked but zealous and indefatigable teacher, he became mentally deranged. Efforts to restore him have been made for several years without success; and it is now feared that he will never again enjoy his reason!

Let not the poisonous principles of infidelity be inculcated, or the deleterious influence of a bad example, be exerted in any of our Schools.

Children are imitative creatures. The influence of example upon them is powerful.

An instructor is always teaching by his *conduct* when he is with his pupils. An upright and amiable deportment is visible philosophy which the minds of the dullest can understand.

I will conclude my remarks on this head in the words of a recent judicious Lecturer* on School-keeping.

“The moral character of instructors should be considered

* Hall.

a subject of very high importance; and let every one who knows himself to be immoral, renounce at once the thought of such an employment, while he continues to disregard the laws of God, and the happiness of his fellow men. Genuine piety is highly *desirable* in every one entrusted with the care and instruction of the young; but *morality*, at least, should be *required*, in every candidate for that important trust."

On the subject of this Lecture, and in view of the remarks now submitted to your consideration, it is natural to inquire, What shall be done to improve the qualifications of our teachers? or, how shall we secure in future more talented instructors in our Common Schools? In reply, some have proposed the establishment of a New England Institution, endowed with ample funds, furnished with able professors, with a well selected library, "and also with all the apparatus that modern ingenuity has devised for this purpose; such as maps, charts, globes, orreries," &c. &c.

In such an Institution it has been proposed to have a *model School*, in which the theories of the Faculty might be reduced to practice, and their utility demonstrated.

"To such an Institution," says one of its ablest advocates, "let young men resort, of piety, of talents, of industry, and of adaptedness to the business of the instruction of youth, and who would expect to *devote their lives* to so important an occupation. Let them attend a regular course of Lectures on the subject of Education; read the best works; take their turns in the instruction of the *experimental School*; and after thus becoming qualified for their office, leave the Institution with a suitable certificate or diploma, recommending them to the confidence of the public."

Of the *advantages* of a Seminary of this kind, established on honourable and catholic principles, I have no doubt; and as there are in New-England between fifteen and sixteen thousand teachers of District Schools annually employed, I am inclined to think that a sufficient number to sustain the

Seminary would be induced to attend, especially if it were so well endowed by public munificence as to bring the terms within the reach of men in moderate circumstances. But this Seminary is not yet in existence; and, if it were, several other means would still be necessary to increase the qualifications of many of our teachers. I will suggest a few of them.

1. Let there be a distinct department in every first rate Academy, in which instruction, specially adapted to the teachers, shall be imparted.

I rejoice that such departments are already established in some Academies of this sort. Mr. Hall is said to have established his Institution at Concord, Vermont, with particular reference to this object. For seven years past it has annually sent forth from twenty to fifty teachers with certificates of approbation. At Amherst Academy and at South-Reading Academy, there are classes of teachers receiving instruction every Autumn, with reference to their contemplated services in Common Schools during the following Winter.

Such classes are advantageous to the intended instructors, not only by increasing their qualifications to teach, but by enabling them more easily to obtain eligible situations; for numerous and early applications are made to these Academies for *teachers of the right stamp*.

The improved state of the Common Schools in the vicinity of these Institutions, demonstrates to a discerning community the practical utility of the preparatory course I am recommending.

2. Let there be a considerable advance in the compensation allowed to teachers.

I am convinced that they do not receive a fair compensation for their services in this State. The consequence is, they feel little inducement to employ their time, their mental energies, and their money, to obtain suitable qualifications; or, having obtained them, leave us and go into other sections of country, where their labours may be more fully rewarded.

A teacher should be so well paid for his services, that he can afford to *devote himself* to them, and not hurry over them as the mere step-stone to a more desirable and profitable employment.

I have known a Committee in Connecticut give certificates of approbation to persons whom they knew to be incompetent to teach, simply because they also knew that the provision made by the School society, or rather by the State, (for the School society raised nothing by tax,) would be no inducement to others better qualified.

How contemptible—how perfectly contemptible, it is to ask a man to teach a District School for eight or ten dollars a month, and then oblige him to go, like a beggar, from door to door, to get his bread while teaching! Who can expect to obtain teachers of suitable literary qualifications and honourable feelings under such degrading circumstances?

With many, cheapness is the *ONLY indispensable* qualification; and so long as this shall be the case, they will have cheap teachers and cheap Schools.

I am decidedly in favour of the Legislature's requiring, (if it be within their province to require,) as a condition of receiving their proportion of the Fund, the raising of the same amount by the towns to be expended for the same purpose.

"Wisdom is a defence, and *money is a defence.*" I believe with more money and more wisdom to direct in the application of it, the qualifications of our teachers would be abundantly increased, and our institutions defended.

3. Let your School Committees be judiciously selected.

The law is explicit. It says, "Each School Society shall appoint a suitable number of School visitors, not exceeding nine, of *competent skill in letters*, to be overseers or visitors of the Schools in such society, whose duty it shall be to examine the instructors, and to displace such as may be found *deficient in any requisite qualification*, or who will not conform to the regulations by them adopted—to superintend and direct

the general instruction of the scholars; and to visit the schools twice at least, during each season of schooling; at which visitations two or more shall be present, when they may require from the masters such exercises of the youth as will shew their proficiency in learning."

None can legally teach without "the aprobation of the visitors," as well as "the assent of the District." This board then is one of great importance to the improvement of our Schools. The subject may be more fully discussed by some other person who shall follow me, on this occasion.

I will dismiss it by saying, that while I would by no means take the power out of the hands of the people, (the legitimate and acknowledged sovereigns of America,) and while I consider the Statutes of Connecticut on this subject a truly republican and admirable arrangement, I would ask the people, when assembled to make choice of their School Committees, to delegate their power in all cases to men, some of whom shall be of "*competent skill in letters*," and all of whom shall be men of competent judgment and common sense to decide on the qualifications of those who are to be entrusted with the highly responsible care and instruction of their beloved offspring.

And may this Convention, in the practical results of its important deliberations, be the means of general improvement in the capability of those whose duty it is to bring forth the precious gems of intellect, talent, and genius, and prepare them to sparkle with cheering brilliancy in the diadem of our country's protection and glory.