

HORACE MANN
ON
THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION

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CHAPTER ONE - In the Words of Horace Mann

July 1846

The human heart is not like a box, or a trunk, or a bag, which will hold just so much and no more. A boy's heart is not like his vest or his jacket which would be very small, so small as to embrace only one's self in its thoughts and desires; this makes a very mean, selfish person. The heart may be enlarged so as to embrace a town; this makes a good townsman. Or it may take in one's whole nation; this makes a patriot. Or it may take in all mankind; this makes a philanthropist. Or it may embrace in its affections the whole universe and the Creator of it; this makes one godlike; and, all the way, let me tell you, from the narrowest limit to the vastest expansion, its happiness will be in proportion to its enlargement.

My young friends ... you were not made to lie, or to steal, or to use profane or obscene language, or to be intemperate, or to quarrel with your school mates, or to be unkind to brothers or sisters, or disobedient to parents and teachers, or to scoff or to mock at what is holy and good. It would be better that you should be flung into the hottest furnace that was ever kindled, than that you should train your tongues to falsehood, and perjury, and blasphemy.

You were made to be industrious. All your bones and muscles were made for work, just as much as the wheels of a clock or a watch were made to go round; and if you do not work in some way, you are as worthless as the clock made not to go. Industry gives health...

You were made to be temperate. The man who is always temperate enjoys a great deal more, in the long run, than one who gives way to excesses...

You were made to be clean and neat in your person and in your dress, and gentlemanly and ladylike in your manners. If you have not been bitten by a mad dog, don't be afraid of fresh water.

You were made to be kind, and generous, and magnanimous. If there is a boy in the school who has a club foot, don't let him know that you ever saw it. If there is a poor boy with ragged clothes, don't talk about rags when he is in hearing. If there is a lame boy, assign him some part of the game which does not require running. If there is a hungry one, give him part of your dinner. If there is a dull one, help him get his lessons. If there is a bright one, be not envious of him; for if one boy is proud of his talents, and another is envious of them, there are two great wrongs, and no more talents than before. Finally,

You were made to be moral and religious. Morality consists primarily in the performance of our duties to our fellow-men; religion is the performance of our duties to God. On the sublime and beautiful subject of morality, I have time only to touch upon one thing. That shall be honesty. If all men were honest, we should need no jails or prisons; no bolts nor locks; no high enclosures to keep out garden thieves; no criminal laws or courts. It is a shame to all mankind that such things are necessary. It seems to me that I should pine and die of mortification, if I thought such things were made for me. I want all of you to feel that such things were not made you...

You must be religious; that is you must be grateful to God, obey his laws, love and imitate his infinite excellence. The works of God are full of wonders and beauties. He has laid the foundations of the universe in miracles, and filled it with starry splendors.

These things, my dear children, and such as these you were made for. You were made for them, as the rich corn and delicious fruits were made to grow in the fertile valleys; and may your own efforts, encouraged and aided by divine goodness, enable you to fulfill the purposes of your creation. Remember, though man sinned, paradise was not destroyed. The sinner was driven from Eden, but Eden itself remained. It can be entered again. You can enter it and make it your own.

So far as I have observed in this life, ten men have failed from defect in morals where one has failed from defect in intellect.

Horace Mann's college at Antioch –

Of 150 applicants to Antioch, only 8 passed the entrance exam. Of 9 women and 31 men graduated from Antioch under Mann's teaching, all 9 women were married, 9 became teachers, 5 of those 9 were college professors, 7 became lawyers including 1 congressman, 4 became ministers (3 Unitarian), 3 were physicians, 3 businessmen, 2 doctors, 1 lecturer, and 1 naturalist. There were 4 who died in the Civil War on the Union side against slavery.

The Curriculum –

Mann favored science over classics, though classics were offered; the curriculum included botany, physical geography, chemistry, zoology, physics, civil engineering, astronomy, geology, mineralogy, Latin, Greek, French, German, math, history, and literature. Physical exercise was given every day at the start of the day for both teachers and students to the point of "free perspiration."

Seniors required courses: political economy, constitutional law, evidences of Christianity, natural theology (deism?), and ethics.

Mann made it a cardinal rule never to take a case in which he did not believe. "Never espouse the wrong side of a cause knowingly; ... it is utterly amazing to me how a man can trifle with his own mind. I do not mean, now, his mind considered as a part of his immortal self, but his mind considered as the mere instrument with which he works... What would you think of a poor barber who should batter the edge of his razors against flint, as preparatory to shaving? Well, that would be wisdom... compared with the man who would wear the edge off his conscience against known error..."

"I have faith in the improbability of the race, in their accelerating improbability..."

Commencement Speech 1859 –

"In the infinitely noble battle in which you are engaged against error and wrong, if ever repulsed or stricken down, may you always be solaced and cheered by the exulting cry of triumph over some abuse in church or state, some vice or folly in society, some false opinion or cruelty or guilt which you have overcome! And I beseech you to treasure up in your hearts these, my parting words: be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

State of Education, c. 1830 –

This is the era of district schools supported solely by taxes raised by the districts. It is regarded as one of the most depressing in U. S. history. Small and poor districts had small and poor schools. Children had to buy their own books. There was no central control, and no organized and uniform course of study. The school master could teach anything he wanted that didn't offend the community's religious convictions. He could leave anything out: "Very good people... but very poor teachers."

The physical plant was meager – memory skills were rewarded, independent thought and investigation (creativity) were penalized. Texts had no illustrations and nothing to stimulate the imagination.

Libraries were private and independent, funded by its members. The schools had no library. For Mann, the Calvinist church he grew up in was bigoted, cold, and insensitive, run for 50 years by a manipulative pastor. It was the driving force in his separation of church and state.

Brown University was where Mann attended. There was freedom of thought. It was liberal. There were no religious tests. There was liberty of conscience, and it was pragmatic in its approach.

c. 1837 – Massachusetts schools did nothing to contribute to the conception of liberty and equality for all; in point of fact, they were hindering it. Children of the wealthy attended private schools, and the children of the poor attended district or township schools, which had increasingly low standards. Mann wanted the schools to be effective instruments for the education of the young people in a democracy. The issue for him is whether all men, rich or poor, of whatever race or creed, have the *right* under the Constitution, to have equal and integrated opportunities for education – and this was so that there will be no dividing line between the educated and the ignorant because of circumstances beyond their control.

In the British system, there existed a class distinction between social and economic classes – one to work, the other to improve; such beliefs begin with the principle that some are from birth superior.

In America, the average age of a teacher was 16 with meager pay. Each school had a flogging post. Severity in a teacher was considered a virtue.

Mann's opposition (those who were against public schools) came from those who attended private school: why should mothers, who wanted their children to grow up in the intimacies of their own class, send them off to public schools to be degraded by those of lesser class?

Mann's agenda:

"It is the duty of school committees to select teachers, to modernize school buildings, and to teach reading by the word rather than by the letter. It is the responsibility of the people to improve the schools, and to form good reading habits. There is a need to establish public schools, to abolish districts and provide unified ones, and to have education contribute to industry and science. There is a need for practical courses of study to prepare students for daily life. There is value in studying physiology and hygiene. It is important to have oral instruction and not just books. There ought to be elementary science, language, geography (especially local geography), music, and drawing. There is a need to demonstrate the value of teachers colleges, the value of

equal educational opportunity, the relationship of education to crime, and the nature of life in a democracy.”

From the Annual Report 1838 –

“If you do not improve the schools, you must enlarge the prisons.”

Orthodox church leaders opposed Mann because of their special interest in maintaining control over their children’s beliefs. He was determined to have an educational system that was universal, non-sectarian, free, and aimed at social efficiency, civic virtue, and character.

Scotland and England –

Mann was troubled by the fact that prizes were given to the best scholars, and that they were encouraged to outdo their classmates rather than themselves. Most schools were meager and run by the church. Scholarship was indifferent. Inequalities abounded. The books in the libraries at Oxford were arranged by size, not topic.

EDITOR LOUIS FILLER WRITES,

The essence of Mann’s program was moral –

He believed that people had souls, and that these souls could be perverted to produce devils. He believed not only that education carried moral responsibilities, but that prosecuted without them, it could only produce more evil than it had inherited: that an educated devil was vastly more formidable and appalling than an uneducated one.

He believed a democracy required a democratic education. A person who could vote and not think was a danger to society. This fact created a stupendous need for educated teachers with a reverence for valid social principles.

He believed that morality was at the base of a valid education, and that the physical universe was a patent witness to the need for principled, healthful, social living.

Notable quotes from Mann –

Duty is expedient even for an atheist; but for believers in God, the knowledge and the performance of duty are the highest moral necessities for every human being.

Jails and State prisons are the complement of schools; so many less as you have the latter, so many more must you have of the former.

We want principles not only developed – the work of the closet – but *applied*, which is the work of life. Between the recluse who never emerges from his study, however well he may reason on human nature, and the acoveman, who prepares the machinery and puts it in operation, there is the same difference as between one who describes a wolf, and one who tames the animal.

The prayer of Christ was, “Thy kingdom come;” the prayer of every bigot is “My kingdom come.”

In this country, we seem to learn our *rights* quicker than our *duties*.

Manners easily and rapidly mature into morals.

In vain do they talk of happiness who never subdued an impulse in obedience to a principle. He who never sacrificed a present to a future good, or a personal to a general one, can speak of happiness only as the blind [speak] of colors.

Science and Religion –

In every instance where science has revealed a new truth which conflicted, not with the bible, but with the current interpretations of the bible – instead of inquiring whether the alleged discoveries were or were not true, many clergymen have denounced it, and poured vengeance upon its supporters. Hence a disastrous alienation has ensued between science and religion, or rather between disciples of science and the ministers of religion; for between true science and true religion there can never be any conflict, as all truth is from God, and the providence of God can never conflict with any revelation from God.

Abolition of Slavery –

Addressing the epithet “abolitionist”: Before we can decide upon the honor or the infamy of the term “abolitionist” we must know what things they are which he proposes to abolish. We of the north, you say, are abolitionists, but abolitionists of what? Are we abolitionists of the inalienable, indefeasible, indestructible rights of man? Are we abolitionists of knowledge, abolitionists of virtue, of education, and of human culture? Do we seek to abolish the glorious moral and intellectual attributes God has given to his children, and thus, as far as it lies in our power, make the facts of slavery conform to the law of slavery by obliterating the distinction between a man and a beast? Do our laws and our institutions seek to blot out and abolish the image of God in the human soul? Do we abolish the marriage covenant? Do we ruthlessly tear asunder the sacred ties of affection by which God has bound the parent to the child and the child to the parent? Do we seek to abolish all those noble instincts of the human soul, by which it yearns for improvement and progress? And do we quench its sublimest aspirations after knowledge and virtue? ...If we are abolitionists, we are abolitionists of human bondage; while those who oppose us are abolitionists of human liberty.

The Error of Education –

The unpardonable error of education has been that it has not begun with simple truths, with elementary ideas, and risen by gradations to combined results. It has begun with teaching systems, rules, schemes, complex doctrines, which years of analysis would scarcely serve to unfold. All is administered in a mass. The learner, not being able to comprehend, has endeavored to remember, and thus has been put off with a fact, in lieu of a principle explanatory of an entire class of facts. In this way, we pass our errors and our truths over to our successors done up in the same bundle, they to others, on so onward, to be perpetual sources of error, alienation, and discord.

On the Nature of Learning –

All Mental Growth is organization, not accretion; it comes from within outwards, and does not consist in enlargement by external application – aggregation.

Morals vs. Intellect –

I think I restrict myself within bounds in saying that so far as I have observed in this life, ten men have failed from defect in morals, where one has failed from defect in intellect.

Teacher Requirements –

Every teacher ought to know vastly more than he is required to teach, so that he may be furnished, on every subject, with copious illustrations and instructive anecdote; and so that the

pupils may be disabused of the notion that they are so apt to acquire, that they carry all knowledge in their satchels. Every teacher should be possessed of a facility at explanation.

In the education of children, motives are everything. [If we take a child only moderately interested in learning, but with an excessive interest in praise and honor, and we entice the child to learn by heaping praise and honor on him – then if he ever felt uneasy about how his promotion would affect the less brilliant, though no less meritorious other children – then our motive (in praising him) must be to *smother* his uneasiness and *encourage* his selfish contemplation of his future fame and glory. In that future, this individual will desert a righteous but unpopular cause in favor of the unrighteous popular one – and we will lament his moral suicide].

1. **Knowledge of common-school studies** – a perfect knowledge of the rudimental branches required by law to be taught. They should know not only the rules, but the principles underlying them. Teachers should be able to teach *subjects*, not merely manuals.

2. **The art of teaching, or aptness to teach** – the ability to acquire and the ability to impart are wholly different talents. The ability to acquire is the power of understanding the subject matter of investigation. Aptness to teach involves the power of perceiving how far a scholar understands the subject-matter to be learned, and what... is the next step he is to take. It involves the power of discovering, and of solving at the same time the exact difficulty by which the learner is embarrassed. How much does the pupil comprehend of the subject? What should his next step be? Is his mind looking towards a truth or an error? The answer to these questions must be intuitive in the person who is apt to teach.

Aptness to teach includes the presentation of the different parts of a subject in a natural order... [It] embraces a knowledge of methods and processes. Some are adapted to accomplish their object in an easy and natural manner; others in a toilsome and circuitous one; others may accomplish the object with certainty and dispatch, but secure it by inflicting deep and lasting injuries upon the social and moral sentiments.

3. There is a necessary connection between literary competency, aptness to teach, and the power to **manage or govern a school successfully**. Teachers should not determine a penalty and then enforce it. Discipline and indulgence should not vary widely from year to year.

4. **Teachers must teach good behavior** which begins with good manners. They must therefore be ladies and gentlemen. They are the pattern or model from which the students are to form their manners.

5. **Teachers must be of moral character** – teachers vouch for the quality of their students as the review/recommending committee which hires the teacher vouches for the teacher's integrity and moral uprightness. If we are defrauded in the marketplace we have a remedy against the guarantor. And yet the one who recommends a dissolute, vicious teacher escapes punishment. That person has inflicted damage on an entire district's students by failing to be a sentinel to ensure that each teacher is clothed in virtue: that the teacher is not profane or intemperate, addicted to low associations, or branded with the stigma of vice – rather that the teacher has pure tastes, good manners, and exemplary morals. Then the schools and their outbuildings would be free of the pollution of ribald inscriptions and carvings of obscene emblems that would make a heathen blush.

Every person, therefore, who indorses another's character, as on befitting¹ a school teacher, stands before the public as his moral bondsman and sponsor, and should be held to a rigid accountability.

Sovereign, reigning over and above all other influences upon the school is, or rather might be, that of the parents. They have a responsibility to arrange the affairs of the home in a way that accommodates school hours: to facilitate punctual and regular attendance, to show an interest in each child's studies, to set aside some other interest in order to visit the school, to invite a teacher home and treat him as a wiser friend, not a hireling; to converse about the school in a way that displays your concern; all of which instills the child with a sense of responsibility as well as encouragement with regard to his studies, a love of knowledge, a habit of industry, a sense of decorum, a respect for manly conduct and dignity of character prophetic of the child's future usefulness, happiness, and honor.

As is the teacher, so is the school, and as are the parents, so are both teacher and school.

The Pilgrims and Education –

Within nine months of founding Boston, a school master was appointed to “teach and nurture” the children of the city. “Nurturing” implied the warming into birth, to foster strength, and to advance to predominance all kindly sympathies towards men, all elevated thoughts respecting duties and the destiny of life, and a supreme reverence for the character and attributes of the Creator.

The universal education law of 1642, just eight years later, required religious instruction and also that all parents and masters bring up their children and apprentices in some honest, lawful calling, labor, or employment... profitable for themselves and the commonwealth... if they cannot make them fit for higher employments. Failure to do so would result in the removal of the child or apprentice from the parent or master. In 1647 the schools became free and publicly supported.

Two divine ideas filled their great hearts – their duty to God and to posterity. For one they built the church; for the other they opened the school. Religion and knowledge: two attributes of the same glorious and eternal truth. Such a bold measure had precedent in the world's history.

The establishment of free schools was one of those grand mental and moral experiments whose effects could not be developed and made manifest in a single generation.

Manners – manners are the root, laws only the trunk and branches. Manners are the archetypes of laws. Manners are laws in their infancy; laws are manners fully grown – or manners are children, which, when grown up, become laws.

The Teacher's Duty – when the teacher fails to meet the *intellectual* wants of a child, it is the case of asking for bread and receiving a stone; but when he fails to meet its *moral* wants, it is giving a serpent.

Haste in Teaching – in trying to teach children a great deal in a short time, they are treated not as though the race they were to run was for life, but simply a three-mile heat.

Managing Disobedient Children – it requires all possible prudence, calmness, consideration, judgement, wisely to govern a refractory child. It is a common saying that anger should never be

¹ That is, recommending or qualifying – it refers to the preparation of the teacher so as to represent him or her to others as properly qualified.

manifested towards the young or the insane. Feelings of wrath, madness, are as absurd and incongruous in the management of a disobedient child as they would be in a surgeon when amputating a limb or couching an eye... Are the moral sensibilities of a child less delicate in their texture than the corporeal senses? Does the body require a finer touch and a nicer skill than the soul? Is less knowledge and discretion necessary in him who seeks to influence the invisible and immortal spirit than in him who operates the visible and material frame? Let teachers discipline their own feelings to the holy work they have undertaken.

To instruct the beautiful, the affectionate, the intelligent, the grateful is unalloyed delight. But to take an awkward, gawky, unclean, ill-dressed, ill-mannered, ill-tempered child, and to work up an interest in it, to love it, to caress it, to perform a full measure of duty to it – this draws upon all the resources of conscience, virtue, and religion.

Treating such a child with signal kindness and attention in a persevering fashion will permit old impulses to die and a new creation of motives will supply their place. Do not expect too much from them at once and immediately. Time is an important element in the process of weakening and subduing bad principles of action as well as in the growing and strengthening of good ones. Remove the temptation that led to bad behavior.

If all good purposes in the mind are the result of growth, the seed must first be sown; and *then* all those circumstances attended to which, will warm and foster and nourish it. Never issue a command without the highest degree of certainty that it will be obeyed. To command a child to do or to abstain from doing what, under the circumstance, he will probably refuse to do or to abstain from doing, is as false to duty as it would be in a general to engage voluntarily in a battle when he was exposed to certain defeat. In directing a child to carry a burden we consider his age, his size, his strength. None but a tyrant would command him to bear a weight beneath which he could not stand. This principle applies to moral efforts with far greater force than it does to physical. As his moral strength increases, we may then increase his moral responsibility.

Excerpts