A Tribute to an Educator, Horace Mann

by Mary Gilmore

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A Thesis in Didactics

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Thesis of Mary Elmore B.A.
Private to an Educator.

Our educational systems have reached such a state of perfection never before before attained, and the minds of education are better understood than in previous history. He will not say our institutions are perfect for, "It is of human institutions as of men, not any one is so good that it can not be made better." The question then arises, why our boasted state? It is only in comparison with the past, our progress over that, that we can boast. glancing back but half a century we can realize the change.

Perhaps standing prominent before all other states is that of Massachusetts and with it, its great university, Harvard.
claims our attention. This state, that contains the oldest College in America, whose people liberally endowed their beloved Harvard two hundred years ago; built it almost before they built for themselves homes; nourished it when they were akin to starvation; established it for a perpetual existence when their own local government was on the "ragged edge of destruction." With this noble beginning did their progeny keep pace? Far from it! Early in our century we find them in grasping slyly-mill strong, ye, and an undemocratic strong opposed to reform. Grasping, for they would not purchase apparatus for Common School purposes. Undemocratic, for they patronized private schools allowing their public institutions to go un-cared for. Not reformers, for they were en-
failing instead of improving their so-called 
teacher education.

But Horace Mann as he looked upon it 
all did not say "Be told it was very good." 
For it was not so good but what it could be 
made better. The schools were disconnected, no 
harmonious concerted action, each laboring in 
his own field, isolated from others, they did 
not meet and compare plans, send no reports 
to a bureau to be compiled; all this is the 
result of our educator Horace Mann. They lacked 
the having opportunities to study for their pro-
fusion until he organized for them the Nor-
mal Schools.

In speaking of Mr. Mann as an educa-
tor we speak of what was his life work; for, 
that cause above all other moves him 
action, all his power. He was always inter-
acted in reform, but in no cause in which.
The duties as citizenship involved him, did he spend so much of his strength and so much of his time. He inclined perhaps more in the word education than many of our short-sighted teachers. In his Lecture on the Necessity of Education in a Republican Government, we find his understanding of the term: — “I hardly need to say, that, by the word Education, I mean much more than an ability to read and write and keep common accounts. I comprehend, under this noble word, such a training of the body as shall build it up with robustness and vigor, at once protecting it from disease, and enabling it to act,formatively, upon the crude substances of nature,—to turn a wilderness into
cultivated fields, forests into ships, or squares and clay pits into villages and cities.

I mean, also, to include such a cultivation of the intellect as shall enable it to discover those permanent and mighty laws which pervade all parts of the created universe, whether material or spiritual. This is necessary, because, if we act in obedience to these laws, all the restless forces of nature become our auxiliaries, and cheer us on to certain prosperity and triumph; but, if we act in contradiction or defiance of these laws, then nature resists. Winds, baffles us, and in the end, it is just as certain that she will overwhelm us with ruin, as it is that God is stronger than man. And, finally, by the term education, I mean such a culture of our moral affec-
trine and religious susceptibilities, as in
the course of Nature and Providence, shall
lead to a subjection or conformity of all
our appetites, propensities and sentiments
to the will of Heaven."

In instructing the human race to attain to
these ends, the greater part of Human Man's life
was spent. It was a Herculean task — was it
a Herculian that did it? A Herculian in intelli-
gence and willingness, but not in physique. He
was often in no condition to travel and lec-
ture and after completing his arduous tasks
he would perhaps bid farewell to smoke. The death
was brought on by an unusual series of
illness. The thought arose was the cause wor-
thy of the effect on the motor? — a sacrifice
of our life? And such a life! So much
moral courage and mental might might
has been used in some base living way. He chose a calling that was largely filled with opposition and irritations. But, taking it matter of fact — on the other hand, we shall work more or less actively according to our dispositions and it begin as... and more noble to have an unselfish end in view than such ends as many of us have. The time that comes to me is soft and yielding: like wax we can shape it as we please. We take it, or perhaps scarcely take it; as it please or give it in touch, or a careful, prayerful moulding: and now it is adamant. Yes, it is beyond miracle, working power; Omnipotence can not alter it or modify it, how wonderful! Now nothing so flowing, so ductile, so shapeable; now all that calls itself might on earth or in or beyond
the story universe cannot color it with a new tint, or give it a new attitude. It is eternal. All that we would wish to do to our subjects we would be to have given it a happier tint by a more genial appreciation of its attitude. All is well, however. As Horace Mann says of a colleague — "There is no place so good to die in as at the post of duty," and in the same connection he quotes —

"Whether on the gallows high,
Or in the battle array,
The fittest place for man to die
Is where he dies for man."

The temperament of Mr. Mann seemed to eminently qualify him for an educator. He had such great love for humanity, he felt so keenly the sufferings of others, he sympathized with the little ones as well as the older...
once. He had a great personal influence, a magnetic force over those with whom he came in contact. Overall he being his conscience regained supreme. He might naturally follow he was a successful teacher occupying a full time as foreman in Satin and Creek at Brown University. His childhood was spent in the country and at a country school, so from personal contact he knew the circumstances of rural school life. He took highest honors of his college, was the cleanest thinker among the last students and afterwards occupied a high and lucrative position among the contemporaneous lawyers. He was member of the state of legislature being speaker of the senate for several years. He relinquished all this to take a humble place that of Secretary of the Board of Education where he spent
a dozen years of his prime.

The duty of the Board was to improve the common school system. As they found it, it had degenerated in practice from the original intention of the Pilgrim Fathers. Common and equal opportunities for all was the primitive idea, but the schools had been allowed to run into neglected schools for the poorer classes. Consequently, unhealthier and better educated citizens turned away from them, the best talent and education were not secured to carry them on. Mr. Manne with his sense to restore the good, old custom of having the rich and the poor educated together, and for that end he wished the schools to be as good as possible, so that the rich and poor would not be coincident with the educated and the ignorant.
Of the work of regeneration Horace Mann says:—"Whoever shall undertake that task must encounter privation, labor, and an infinite annoyance from an infinite number of schemes. He must endure the stream of enthusiasm, and soften the rock of the incredulous. That task in arriving at a true system himself! That task in urging that system into the minds of others! How many dead minds to be reinvigorated! How many live minds once to be cooled! How much of mingled truth and error to be compounded, and analyzed! What a spirit of perseverance would be needed to sustain him all the way between the inception and the accomplishment of his objects! But should he succeed what respectability of thee, where he would confer! How would his beneficial influence upon mankind widen and deepen
ae it descended forever!

It was much as he anticipated, "Ah me," he exclaimed, "I have told of such a large mountain, there is much danger that I shall break my back in trying to lift it! To have any ill feeling would turn apathy into hostility, and me for dependance, the cause is so glorious that it must dispair that." In another page of his journal he writes, "To make an inspection in regard to schools is like attempting to batter down Gibraltar with one's fist." "The edifice is not only to be reared but the very materials out of which it is to be constituted rare to be found. Can I grow them? that is the question. In fact, perhaps, may be the answer. Some one else may arise to form them into a noble and everlasting temple. This may be the labor, and another the honor. Well,
if I knew the work would go on when my labor ceased, I would not touch the cause of ultimate honor. Give me the certainty that the cause shall succeed, and I will raise all questions about honor; nay, even in the uncertainty whether it will succeed at all, it shall have my utmost exertions.

As Secretary of the Board Horace Mann travelled over every county while the schools were in session, holding conventions for teachers, members of School Committees and the citizens, to discuss methods and surcease an instinct: no partisanship was ever dragged in. He compiled and had published annual Abstracts of the School Returns. He delivered before the Board his annual Report stating the needs and the evils of the schools. He edited a school journal, a periodical that
fully answered the purpose for which it was established. It was continued for ten years and contains not only Mr. Mann's, but thoughts upon all the topics treated in it, in all the Annual Reports made to the Board during his secretarship. Friends contributed valuable papers to it also. It is a work which has been sought by those interested in education all over the world, in the heart of Asia.

The common school, Mr. Mann considered a panacea, an article in the Journal of Peace, "To the patriot, then, who desires the well being of his nation; to the philanthropist, who labor for the happiness of his race; to the Christian, who includes both worlds in his comprehensive survey — is not the path of duty to new men institutions, or to give new
efficiency to old once, for the diffusion of useful knowledge, for the creation of intellectual faculty, for the cultivation of the spirit of concord, for giving to those who are to come after us better means of discovering truth, higher forms of advocating it, stronger resolutions of obedience to it, than we have ever enjoyed, too weak, or felt?"......"The common school is the institution which can receive and train up children in the elements of all good knowledge and of virtue before they are subjected to the alienating competitions of life. This institution is the greatest discovery ever made by man; we repeat it, the common school is the greatest discovery ever made by man. In two grand, characteristic attributes, it is superior to many all other: first, in its universality, for it is capacious enough to
receive and cherish in its parental bosom every child that comes into the world; and, second, in the timeliness of the aid it proffers—its early, reasonable supplies of counsel and guidance making security antitoxin danger. Other social organizations are curative and remedial: this is a preventative and an antidote. They come to heal disease and wounds; this, to make the physical and moral frame invulnerable, to them. Let the common school be expanded to its capability; let it be worked with the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nineteen-tenth of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged; men would walk more safely by day; every fellow would be inviolable by night; property, life, and character held by a strong...
er tenure; all national hope respecting the future brightened." In simpler more direct words, the object was to give to every child "a firm straight-forward solid pathway, by which he could walk directly up from the ignorance of an infant to a knowledge of the primary duties of a man; and would acquire a power and an invincible will to discharge them." Though Massachusetts Common Schools, nor any others, have reached Mr. Mann's high ambitions for them, they were greatly respected under him; indeed, they received a lasting benefit.

Another one of Lie's efficient works was the founding of the Normal Schools, which he felt were to be the nursery of true teaching and having the foundation solidly built, the whole common wealth would be rightly established.
The Normal Schools were to fit men and women for the greatest of all labor, to compare a teacher's labor with that of an artist. "If it costs the artist so much labor, such delicate study, such vehement striving, to draw the outline of form with such wonderful exactness, to color the space within the outline with such wonderful in such exquisite skill, so that a mere trembling of his hand in the delineation, the slightest failure in the touch of his pencil, would mar the beauty of his productions— if all his toil and care and diligence are requisite to make a dead image, a lifeless, thoughtless, confounded copy of a soul—how much more toil and care and judgment are demanded in those who have the formation of the soul itself!"

To found schools to one to fill these in—
portant times he visited members of the legislature to obtain appropriations, and he gave literally of his own resources. He needed for principals for the schools always personally saw to their appropriations. The results were worthy of the effort, as the Normal School and training was a success.

To find plans for improving the schools Mr. Mann travelled in Europe, especially in Germany he hoped for enlightenment. He found the Normal Schools very efficient in Saxony and Prussia. Of Germany Belgium and the British Isles, the Government had their church doctrine taught much to the disgust of this worthy visitor. But in Massachusetts with his effectual assistance, — nor in all the states, — Sectarianism is entirely crushed out.
Another theme of Horace Mann's was no corporal punishment, from his very sympathy in nature he could not think of children suffering always under a shadow of fear. He writes: "Fear is one of the most delating and demoralizing of all the passions. ... Peace of mind should never be associated with what is to be desired, toiled for, loved. If a child apprehends he broke his leg on getting it free labor. If he revolts at them, then it is slave labor."

The writings of Horace Mann, are full of practical suggestions for a teacher. His aspirations for women are encouraging; he did not agree with those who think women's right mean a right to do as she please, but he desired for her a useful career and had faith in her equal ability with men to follow
professors, the profession of teaching in par-

It was his opinion, that the divinity of p-%

pointed millions of woman is to teach, and it

was his wish to introduce her into every depart-

ment of instruction as soon as it could be

done with good effect. He had watched teach-

ing long enough to know that, other things being

equal, woman teaching is more patient, per-

sistent, and thorough than man; and that

to equal intellectual advantages, that of moral

culture, which should never be divorced from

these, is more surely added thereby; and that

this grows out of the domestic traits, which are

not marred by this sex, but only thus directed
to the noblest end.

He now has many educational insti-

tutions, and in the founding of these in-

stitutions, one educational was foremost.
Antioch College in Ohio, he spent the last six years of his existence, from 1853-59. Primarily the College was not sustained but co-
education was proved to be an elevation to both sexes, overcoming feminine frivolities and mere lack of refinement. With the love of education there was love of true universal freedom; two sessions he spent in Congress for advocating emancipation of the slave. He was arraigned on the side of temperance. He was one of the founders or reformers of our institutions for the blind, the deaf and the insane.

All these stand humane institutions as well as our grand system of Common Schools Normal and coeducational Colleges stand as eternal monuments of the work of this one man.
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