



"Lectures on school-keeping", by Samuel Read Hall (1829)

Citation

Smith, Lydia A. H. 1972. "Lectures on school-keeping", by Samuel Read Hall (1829).
Harvard Library Bulletin XX (1), January 1972: 84-106.

Link

<https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37364042>

Terms of use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material (LAA), as set forth at

<https://harvardwiki.atlassian.net/wiki/external/NGY5NDE4ZjgzNTc5NDQzMGIzZWZhMGFIOWI2M2EwYTg>

Accessibility

<https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/digital-accessibility-policy>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#)

Lectures on School-Keeping, by Samuel Read Hall (1829)

Lydia A. H. Smith

IN 1829 a remarkable little pedagogical manual was published.¹ *Lectures on School-Keeping*, by S. R. Hall, was written for those intrepid souls who aspired to teach in the district schools of New England. The Rev. Mr. Hall was then in charge of the department of Phillips Academy, Andover, which prepared teachers for their careers. There were no public normal schools as yet² and the academics provided what little there was by way of secondary education. And often, as at Andover, they included a teacher-training department, for teachers in the lower schools.

Hall's manual was the first of several such books, a great success, reprinted many times, and referred to by later authors with respect. Horace Mann, then editor of the *Common School Journal*, writes thus about teacher training in general, and manuals in particular:

The great and pressing want, — that in comparison with which most of the others sink into insignificance, — is the want of well-qualified teachers. . . . There have been some good books written on the subject of teaching, which will materially aid those who desire to improve themselves. Such are "The Teacher" by Jacob Abbott, "Lectures on School-Keeping" by S. R. Hall . . .³

David Page's widely read book, *The Theory and Practice of Teaching* (1831), mentions Hall's book as if it were in common use. And Jacob

¹ Samuel Read Hall, *Lectures on School-Keeping*. Third edition, 1831. "To which is added a lecture on the construction of a school house with a plan." Boston; Richardson, Lord and Holbrook, No. 133, Washington St., Boston; 1831. (Preface from the original edition of 1829.) Cited throughout this article as *Lectures*. Reprinted in 1929, with a biographical sketch of Hall. Not reprinted since. Located in the Harvard College Library collection.

² Hall himself had founded the first private normal school in Concord, Vermont, in 1823 (Cf. Merle Borrowman, *The Liberal and Technical in Teacher Education*, Teachers College Press, 1956, p. 37); the first public normal school was founded by Horace Mann, Hall's friend and contemporary, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, in Lexington, Mass., in 1839 under Cyrus Peirce.

³ *The Common School Journal* (Horace Mann, editor), III (1841), 60-61.

Abbott's, *The Teacher*, which Mann referred to, actually uses a section of it verbatim (although it does not cite the reference).⁴

Hall's values and beliefs, as his manual discloses them, were in every way congruent with those of his day, e.g., echoes of Horace Mann's *Annual Reports* are on nearly every page. Yet the book is more than simply a reflection of the value system of his day: other ideas in it are far beyond his time, prefiguring John Dewey and even Carl Rogers in sincere interest in freeing a child's power to learn. It also shows a practical sagacity about the teacher's difficulties and problems in the school and in the community he will serve. Clearly Hall knew the inside of a school at first hand. Thus, although his values do not differ from those of his contemporaries, and although he never questions those values or asks, "What knowledge is of most worth?" his concern for the pupil and his shrewdly realistic description of the job make this book extraordinary. Many of his problems are still ours, and his ideas and suggestions are not wholly out of date.

Lectures on School-Keeping is exactly what the title declares: a collection of Hall's lectures to his students in the Seminary for Teachers at Andover. After the title page, the preface, and an "advertisement" come the lectures themselves, twelve of them, and finally "Questions" on each for discussion among student teachers and those already teaching.

The Preface places the reader squarely in the early days of this republic.

Of nothing are the people of the United States more disposed to boast, than of the free government, free institutions and free schools which they have established.⁵

But, says Hall, it is often complained that the schools are not doing the job they should despite efforts to improve them. The fault lies chiefly with the "improper character and superficial qualifications of teachers."⁶ Thus he goes straight to the heart of the problem with the schools, in his day or in any other: as the teacher goes, so goes the school.

Having laid the blame on the teachers' doorstep, he gives them his lectures that they may study them and improve the schools. He even

⁴ Cf. note 77 below.

⁵ *Lectures*, p. vi.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

suggests in several places that the lectures are not intended only for the student teacher; teachers active in the schools could read them with profit, discuss them together, and bring up the schools' standard, for, as he says,

No one ought to assume the office of teacher without having endeavoured first to obtain some correct views of its duties — of the obstacles in his way — the manner in which they may be overcome — the labour he is to perform — and the most probable means of benefiting, in the highest degree, his youthful charges.⁷

It requires several lectures to lay all this clearly before his "young gentlemen."

The first lecture is sub-titled, "Indifference to the importance, character, and usefulness of common schools — its origin and influence."⁸ There is, he says, in our country widespread agreement that education is a good thing in general, but there is also widespread indifference and ignorance about the schools.⁹ This attitude is shown by poor attendance at school meetings, by the small attention given to teachers' qualifications other than their willingness to work for very little money, and by parents' careless ignorance about the work of the school and the progress of their own children. Habit, ignorance, and "want of reflection" have combined to create this deplorable attitude.

Inattention to the means of extending knowledge through the land, is undermining the beautiful pillars of our republican government. . . . It should be known by all, that the best institutions of our country can be perpetuated no longer than intelligence and virtue continue among the common people.¹⁰

The power of education, however, is crucial: it alone produces the virtue and intelligence without which the infant republic would fall. Quoting Burnside's address in Worcester, Hall points, with the total faith in education so typical of his time, to

. . . the magic influence of our schools in the habits, industry, sobriety and order which prevail in the community; in the cheerful obedience yielded to the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. x.

⁹ Cf. Horace Mann's First Annual Report of 1837, after he had been Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education for a year — in Lawrence Cremin, ed., *The Republic and the Schools* (New York, 1959), pp. 26 ff.; cited hereafter as *Reports*.

¹⁰ *Lectures*, p. 17.

laws, and in the acts of charity and benevolence, which are every day multiplied around us.¹¹

Clearly, "we may as well expect virtue in a band of robbers, as among our citizens, when ignorance is the characteristic of the common people."¹² Further, the indifferent parent may as well poison or starve his child as deprive him of "mental culture."¹³ Only the selfish parent would "consider it a duty to *himself* to obtain as much benefit as possible from [children's] earnings before manhood."¹⁴ In these days before compulsory schooling parents evidently had to be persuaded to give up their children's working time to the school. Hall's final thrust at indifference is metaphysical: no parent can truly hold himself accountable to God for his child's character who does not take thought for his mental discipline and right morals, which the schools supply.

Having begun by warning teachers what attitude they are likely to meet in the community, Hall proceeds in his second lecture to describe other "Obstacles to the usefulness of common schools."¹⁵ Obstacle number one is particularly interesting: there is a shortage of "apparatus" (audiovisual aids) in the schools. Globes, maps, and other ways of illustrating subjects are not expensive and would arouse children's interest in their studies.¹⁶ But parents are always averse to change, and introducing such equipment would, of course, be different. They say, "There was no such thing when I was young — no such thing when I attended school, therefore it is not necessary now."¹⁷ That attitude, together with the usual parsimony of New England, makes it difficult to obtain apparatus for the schools. But Hall provides a most ingenious argument to counter such parental objections: he works it out so that such apparatus would double a child's progress; thus he would be in school half the time, and imagine the savings in board, tuition, and clothes that this would mean!

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹³ Cf. Mann's Tenth Report of 1848 (*Reports*, p. 75). There he claims that a person who denies a child an education commits infanticide.

¹⁴ *Lectures*, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. x.

¹⁶ Here Hall describes the apparatus devised by Josiah Holbrook (founder of the Lyceum in 1826), using equipment which illustrates geometry, mechanics, astronomy, etc. Cf. Josiah Holbrook, "The Lyceums: To Improve Schools and Diffuse Useful Knowledge," in C. Hartley Grattan, ed., *American Ideas about Adult Education, 1710-1951* (New York, 1959), pp. 26 ff.

¹⁷ *Lectures*, p. 21.

The second obstacle to the usefulness of the schools is the existence of political factions in the district. Unfortunately, school issues get involved in political controversy, and this even intrudes into the classroom itself, occupying the time and energy of adult and child alike in fruitless wrangling.

The third obstacle is that wealthy people send their children to private academies¹⁸ and they have little interest in the public common schools. Thus the necessary work of aiding and elevating these schools is left to those least fit for it, "the poorer part of the community."¹⁹ Still another obstacle is that the common schools have a "negative character" as "seminaries of vice."²⁰ Strenuous efforts should be made to improve the moral tone of the schools, for "the most orderly, the most moral school will make the best progress in study."²¹ Therefore the school must include both "literary improvement" and moral cultivation. It never occurs to educational writers of this period that vigorous character development is not necessarily an explicit role of the school in society.

In the second lecture, we find more obstacles to the schools' progress: the "imperfect qualifications of instructors."²² Hall here inserts a long footnote quoting from the *Journal of Education*:²³

Every stripling who has passed four years within the walls of a college, every dissatisfied clerk, who has not ability enough to manage the trifling concerns of a retail shop, every young farmer who obtains in the winter a short vacation from the toils of summer,—in short, every person who is conscious of his imbecility in other business, esteems himself fully competent to train the ignorance and weakness of infancy, into all the virtue and power and wisdom of maturer years—to form a creature, the frailest and feeblest that heaven has made, into the intelligent and fearless sovereign of the whole animated creation, the interpreter and adorer, and almost the representative of Divinity.²⁴

To all these unfit varieties of people, the mere ability to read and write and cipher seemed qualification enough for teaching.

Other obstacles to the schools are poor salaries for teachers, less than

¹⁸ Cf. Mann's First Report of 1837 (*Reports*, p. 31). Here he describes the interests and attitudes of rich parents in much the same way.

¹⁹ *Lectures*, p. 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²¹ *Loc. cit.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²³ No. 65, p. 163, no author given.

²⁴ *Lectures*, p. 27, footnote.

one third that of a "journeyman mechanic"; the lack of up-to-date books, especially spellers; and the bad construction of schoolhouses in general.

Having presumably frightened off all weak candidates, Hall then proceeds to list in his third lecture, "Requisite qualifications of teachers."²⁵ "Literary qualifications" are necessary, to be sure, but they are not sufficient. A teacher must also have, first, common sense, "that faculty by which things are seen as they are,"²⁶ the ability to judge with discrimination and propriety the "common affairs of life, to let reason, unhampered by passion or prejudice . . . shine with a constant and useful light."²⁷ Second on the list is "uniformity of temper."²⁸ A teacher must remain uninfluenced by the passions of the moment, calm amid the storm of immediate events. Next, he must have the "capacity to understand and discriminate character. . . . Varying shades of disposition and capacity should be quickly learned by the instructor, that he may benefit all and do injustice to none."²⁹ Also he must have "much decision of character."³⁰ He must remember that "the little world by which he is surrounded, is the miniature of the older community,"³¹ and he must therefore exemplify the right kind of authority, so the children will learn true respect and obedience. But the teacher need not be stern or distant; he should also be "affectionate."³² His behavior should show kindness and true benevolence, ease and politeness to his pupils, for these qualities will surely bring out similar ones in the children. Lastly, he must have "just moral discernment."³³ This is really the pre-eminent qualification to Hall, for "the cultivation of virtuous propensities is more important to children than even their intellectual culture."³⁴

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. x. Cf. also Mann's Fourth Report of 1840. His qualifications for a teacher were: knowledge of common-school studies; aptness to teach; management, government, discipline; good behavior (manners); morals.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁷ *Loc. cit.*

²⁸ *Loc. cit.*

²⁹ *Loc. cit.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³¹ *Loc. cit.* Cf. John Dewey's belief that the schoolroom is a microcosm of society, "My Pedagogic Creed, Article II," — in Martin Dworkin, ed., *Dewey on Education* (New York, 1959), pp. 22-25.

³² *Lectures*, p. 33.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁴ *Loc. cit.*

A wistful note is added here, for Hall was a man of the cloth in a time of increasing secularization and sectarian controversy. "Genuine piety is highly desirable in everyone entrusted with the care and instruction of the young; but morality, at least, should be *required*, in every candidate for that important trust."³⁵

Having dealt with the character of the future teacher, Hall now turns to the necessary "literary qualifications of a teacher."³⁶ Like Mann's teacher, he must have a very thorough knowledge of common school subjects, viz., reading, spelling, writing, American history, grammar, arithmetic, and geography. He must know the basic principles of all these, not just a page or two ahead of his pupils. These subjects are the required minimum for the common school, for they are both necessary for the "ordinary transactions"³⁷ of life and as the source of a future citizen's patriotism. They will do, then, for the "letter of the law,"³⁸ but there are other subjects which the school would do well to include, whenever possible. Here Hall goes well beyond the ordinary scope of the common school curriculum, to include mental arithmetic, the Constitutions of the United States and of the state, rhetoric (style in composition), natural philosophy (physics), and especially moral philosophy, "that science which teaches men their duty and the reasons of it."³⁹ All these should be taught by the school; all these the teacher must know thoroughly.

Having described the difficulties which the teacher will encounter, and the character and knowledge he must bring to bear on them, Hall turns in the fourth lecture to "Practical Directions to Teachers."⁴⁰ These continue for a large part of the rest of the book and show the sound good sense of a man who had not only spent many days and weeks teaching in the common schools himself, but who had also reflected on them with intelligence and concern. First of all, "endeavour to become acquainted with the nature of your employment."⁴¹ Know your duties and responsibilities well, and do not be surprised at difficulties or form unrealistic hopes of your own effectiveness.

The very different tempers of those you have to teach and govern; and the wide

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁸ *Loc. cit.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴¹ *Loc. cit.*

difference of treatment they have received from their parents at home, will give you much trouble, if you awake to the reality of your situation only when a mountain of care presses upon you.⁴²

Bear in mind that,

When we expect hardship, we are prepared to endure it with patience; when we look for trial, we are prepared to meet it with comparative composure.⁴³

How shall this composure be achieved? By a thoroughly professional attitude, laudable in a teacher of any society. First, read the current professional literature to learn what other teachers are doing. Then, observe the "peculiar natures" ⁴⁴ of the children, for they vary widely. Parents' treatment of their children also varies, and a teacher must think carefully about the home from which each pupil comes. Further, parents may try to tell you what to do, and must be resisted in such attempts.

Some will wish you to govern the school, others will wish *to govern you*. One parent wishes you to be very strict, others dread nothing so much as that their favourite children should feel "the rod of correction." Some will wish you to pursue a certain mode of teaching, others will be strong advocates for a system entirely different. Some will wish you to close early, others will fear that you will not keep your hours. Mr. A. is willing to trust the school entirely to your management, while Mr. B. is very jealous, lest you assume more than your delegated power. Some will be very anxious to have the school successful, others will be entirely indifferent to the subject. Some will cheerfully furnish all the necessary books,⁴⁵ while others will think it enough to send their children without any, or with such as are entirely unfit for use. Some will be ready to listen to every complaint of their children, and others will teach them to "tell no tales out of school." The wealthy may perhaps think *their* children entitled to more attention than those of the poor, and the latter may be ready to imagine such a distinction, even if none really exist.⁴⁶

A teacher must continually guard against such parental interference. He would also be wise to talk with other teachers about their experiences, so as to be realistic about his own job.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44. "Peculiar" is used here in the same way as when slavery was called "the peculiar institution," that is, unique.

⁴⁵ This was before schools purchased schoolbooks, and every family had its own set, handed down from older to younger children. Thus a teacher could not even be sure his pupils all had the same book, except, of course, the Bible, which was in every home and therefore used as a textbook for teaching reading for many years.

⁴⁶ *Lectures*, pp. 45-46.

Further, it is of the greatest importance that the teacher pay close attention to his "mode of teaching."⁴⁷ "To teach is to communicate ideas . . . it is indispensable that you should be understood. . . . The teacher should put himself in the place of the child⁴⁸ and then inquire what course it would be necessary for him to take to gain a knowledge of any subject with which he was not familiar."⁴⁹ Unlike Horace Mann, he does not dwell on this aspect of teaching for any length of time.

Such procedures will acquaint the teacher with the nature of his work, both inside and outside the schoolroom. The next "practical direction" is to "consider the responsibility of the station you are to occupy."⁵⁰ Teaching is *not* easier than other work: it is arduous indeed, a solemn and awesome responsibility in this era of the common man:

In a country like ours, where character is the passport to the most important stations in society, and where offices are open to every one who shows himself worthy of the confidence of the people, the responsibility of the teacher is even higher than in those countries where estates and offices are hereditary.⁵¹

Remember that you may be teaching a future national leader; and in any case, you are educating future citizens — "every free man should be in some sense a politician."⁵² And, as a teacher, you may actually gain more influence than parents, in your attempts to win your pupils to a love of learning, respect for virtues, social affections like benevolence and humanity, moral decision, obedience to duly constituted authority, and even Heaven itself. One day you must render an account to God for the discharge of your responsibility; your influence may benefit both the individual child and the whole community, or it may lead your pupils to vicious habits of character and mind. So reflect, and pray for God's help.

Lecture Five continues the practical directions with this injunction: "Endeavour to ascertain by what means you are to gain that ascendancy over your pupils, which is necessary in order to confer on them the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46. Cf. again, Mann's "aptness to teach" idea, note 24 above.

⁴⁸ Mann says that a teacher's mind must "migrate" into that of a child, enter it for a while, to see and feel as he does. Fourth Report of 1839 (*Reports*, p. 46).

⁴⁹ *Lectures*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

highest degree of benefit.”⁵³ Begin by thinking back to the effective teachers you had yourself, and ask yourself what pleased you about them and how you can emulate those qualities. But Hall does not simply invoke past models: there are other ways to gain pupils’ respect and confidence. First, “convince pupils you are their friend,”⁵⁴ not just by saying so, but by going to some real trouble for them.⁵⁵ Second, “do not be hasty, to reprove or praise, to promise or threaten, to punish or forgive.”⁵⁶ “Never speak angrily or loudly,”⁵⁷ for such a voice is disagreeable to everyone. Be punctual and be consistent in everything, carrying out exactly what you promise. Then your pupils will know that you love them and that you mean what you say, and you will have their confidence. You will also have fulfilled your own human nature, for “the opposite course . . . is opposed to the principles of our nature.”⁵⁸

Next, the teacher “must be willing to devote” his “whole time, and strive to make the most judicious use of it.”⁵⁹ If you once undertake the job, do it fully and give it your best attention, taking time out only for rest and exercise, and for “answering the claims of friendship.”⁶⁰ You are actually teaching in the classroom only six hours, but there is much more to be done during the day. Prepare the copy books carefully ahead of time; make up a proper fire early enough so the school is warm when the scholars come; correct written exercises daily during lunch to hand back in the afternoon; “secure” the fire after school; in the evenings meet with your pupils for special help, visit their parents, and prepare the next day’s lessons. Thus you will be busy and not find time hangs heavy on your hands; thus the school will be successful, pupils will multiply, and knowledge and virtue will flourish.

Lecture Six moves from matters which the prospective teacher

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵⁵ One is reminded of Pestalozzi’s famous schoolmaster, Glülphi, who won a place in the hearts of the villagers of Bonnal by lifting his pupils patiently, one by one, across a flooded stream. In “How Gertrude Teaches her Children,” in Robert Ulich, ed., *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 506.

⁵⁶ *Lectures*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

should consider before he enters upon his duties to his actual classroom work. The important first direction is promptly given: "*govern your school*," for "order is Heaven's first law."⁶¹ And here Hall makes the wise distinction between genuine authority and the surface appearance of it. How may one govern his school? First, govern yourself. Do not indulge feelings, especially anger; make no contemptuous remarks about your pupils; do not laugh at their family background, however primitive it may appear to be. Resolve firmly to be master, and you will be. "Consider your scholars as reasonable and intelligent beings, . . . and they may easily be brought to know, that they are happier when they do right, than when they do wrong."⁶² Be uniform and consistent every day, no matter how you happen to feel. Be firm, establish reasonable rules for the school and explain them, do not misjudge, insist on complete compliance, and stick to your decisions amid the bustle and confusion of the school. For "much of your success, in the important business of teaching, depends on little things."⁶³ How true that still is!

Lecture Seven continues in much the same vein. "Let the government of the school be impartial," for the "law for one should be the law for all."⁶⁴ Next, "pursue such a course as shall produce the most lasting results."⁶⁵

Outside the confines of the school building: "the instructor [*sic*] must be *master* in all places and at all hours,"⁶⁶ not just in the classroom, but even in sports. He should see that children play no games that will injure their bodies or their characters, but good, wholesome games only. "It should be your object to examine what may be attended with the fewest evils and the greatest good."⁶⁷

Yet the teacher should not be unpleasantly dictatorial. His manner of speaking should not be lordly and austere, but kindly and affectionate, even when a reproof is being administered.⁶⁸ Remember that

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶³ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶⁸ Cf. Mann's Seventh Report of 1843, in which he describes with much enthusiasm the loving teachers whom he saw when he visited Prussia. They were using the Pestalozzian methods (*Reports*, pp. 54-56).

rules are made for the benefit of the school and the child, not for your own comfort; infractions, therefore, are not personal affronts.

What of the incorrigible child, however, who will not obey readily and cheerfully, and who thus disrupts the whole class? Never believe he is wrong hastily, and try to establish his innocence if you can, as in the law courts. Do not punish him at once, but talk with him, show his faults to him, and try to get him to see that his behavior would "destroy the usefulness of the school."⁶⁹ If all this fails, impress on him that he is transgressing God's Law (Order is Heaven's first law), and that there will surely be "awful consequences of these vices."⁷⁰ Make him memorize relevant passages from Scripture and let him reflect on them. Punish him if you must, but only so that the punishment will benefit him in some way. Reward him, if you can, for any efforts at improvement, but use reward sparingly. If all else fails, remove him from the school. All these procedures flow from the belief that a child is potentially a reasonable creature who understands that to know the good is to do it.

Lecture Eight concerns general management of the school. "The great object [of the school] is to prepare children to be happy; and to be useful to themselves and others — to teach them how to acquire knowledge and to apply it . . . to teach how to think and how to act in all the vicissitudes of life."⁷¹ That being the case, the first thing is to "adopt such a course as to render the school *pleasant*."⁷² Everyone is affected by the environment, so the teacher should smile and be happy, and others around him will be so too. Next, "reduce everything to system," for "irregularity is the enemy of happiness."⁷³ Have a time for doing everything and do it then; do only one thing at a time with the class and do it carefully; do everything thoroughly when you once begin; classify your subjects according to their importance (for example, reading is more important than geography, because of its usefulness in later life), and spend your time and attention proportionately; put easy subjects first and then follow with harder ones.⁷⁴

Hall then goes over each subject at length, giving exact directions

⁶⁹ *Lectures*, p. 74.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁷² *Loc. cit.*

⁷³ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁴ Cf. Mann's Fourth Report of 1840 again. His third attribute of a good teacher was executive ability, really, for "system compacts labor" (*Reports*, p. 49).

about the right way to proceed with each. Here, again, he proves his thorough experience with classrooms. As one example, he teaches reading thus: The child comes to school knowing his alphabet and some easy syllables. The teacher then teaches the proper pronunciation of harder syllables and of words. (One recalls that all reading was done orally at that time.) Then he directs the pupil's attention to the meaning of the words by "*sensible objects*, by using little stories to illustrate, or by an opposite word." For "words are signs of ideas, . . . a very early habit should be formed of knowing the meaning of the words he pronounces."⁷⁵

Lecture Nine really amplifies one of his former directions to his prospective teachers: "consider your manner of teaching." "To direct and assist them in . . . order to obtain the knowledge desired . . . and to teach them to exercise their own powers, and elicit their own strength, is the principal duty of an instructor [*sic*]."⁷⁶ Thus Hall sees that the best teacher is the one who frees the child's powers and leads him to the place where the teacher is no longer needed.

When teaching each subject, the teacher must be sure he is understood by all, for unintelligible language will lead to confusion and indistinct ideas, whereas familiar language will lead to pleasure and to learning. It is not enough to ask the pupil if he understands you; satisfy yourself that he does by asking questions and varying the material until you are sure it is grasped. Always use language and illustrative material which a child can understand at his level, lest a child be confused and blocked.

"Will you please to tell me why I carry one for every ten?" said little Laura to her instructor. "Yes, my dear," said he kindly. "It is because numbers increase from right to left in a decimal ratio."

Laura sat and repeated it to herself two or three times and then looked very sad. . . . After some time she put away her arithmetic. When asked why she did so, she replied, "I don't like to study it, I can't understand it."⁷⁷

"Make every study as pleasant as possible."⁷⁸ Show your own love of study, and your pupils will catch the contagion. Teach children simple things at first, engage their mental powers by using familiar

⁷⁵ *Lectures*, p. 78. Mann's major emphasis in teaching reading is similar: above all, the teacher must ask, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Second Report of 1838 (*Reports*, p. 43).

⁷⁶ *Lectures*, p. 80.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82. This is the story Abbott used without the reference.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

words and objects, for "children need neither punishment nor reward to enjoy work — all aim at progress."⁷⁹ Hall had read Madame de Staël's biography of Pestalozzi, and he cites the Swiss educator's methods here as worthy of imitation. The teacher can make studying pleasant by:

exhibiting the importance of the study — showing its usefulness — exhibiting its connexions with business and enjoyment, and, by making the study plain and intelligible by familiar illustration and explanation. This will not be done without effort and *persevering* effort, but this is most reasonable, where so much is dependent upon it.⁸⁰

Then follows a discussion of teaching correct spelling, lest pupils be embarrassed in later life by their bad spelling. Rules of derivation are given, emphasis laid on clarifying homonyms, and careful oral pronunciation is urged at all times to help correct spelling. Similarly, explicit directions are given to teach the pupils good (oral) reading, for "to read with propriety and elegance is an interesting and valuable accomplishment."⁸¹

Having now dealt with the language arts, Hall goes on in Lecture Ten to consider arithmetic and proper modes of teaching it. The pupil should be led to ask for reasons, not for rules only, and in general "if possible, let that assistance be given in such a way, as shall make him his own teacher."⁸²

Geography comes next, with the wise admonition to start with the child's own home neighborhood, not foreign continents. "Why should we attempt to teach a child what he cannot comprehend?"⁸³ Then one can move outward to the larger world, by slow degrees. Show the outlines of the countries, but also their prominent features, their climate, economy, and so on, so the pupils will eventually grasp what it is like for others to live and work in each part of the globe.⁸⁴ All this, of course, is not without its moral:

No part of the world is unprovided with the means of human happiness. . . .

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 84-85. Maria Montessori's methods were similarly based on this natural desire of children to learn and progress. So are all student-centered methods.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁸²*Loc. cit.* Cf. Mann on motivating students, Second Report of 1838 (*Reports*, pp. 37-38).

⁸³*Lectures*, p. 92.

⁸⁴Cf. today's famous "Man, A Course of Study," proposed in Jerome Bruner's *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966.

one part of the world is dependent on another for some of the conveniences of life.⁸⁵

Here is a one-world notion for its time, based on God's providential plan for all His human creatures.

Grammar follows, thoroughly entered into, especially the linguistic principles which were then believed to underlie the language. Again, mere parsing sentences is not enough: principles which lie behind them must be understood. Hall makes an interesting suggestion in this connection: listen to your pupils and use sentences overheard from their conversation in the schoolroom or playground. They are often incorrect, and pupils will learn about their own faults from their own words, and thus be motivated to correct them.

Careful attention must be given to penmanship, which the common school teacher of the day was expected to teach, although Hall approved the older system of separate writing schools.⁸⁶ Exact directions for the preparation of copy material, and precise time allotment are prescribed for this part of the schoolwork.

Hall's teaching of history is similar to his method with geography: begin with the child's own, familiar locality. The teacher must know the region and its tales and famous events. He may even take the children on a "field trip" (as we would call it) to a particularly revered spot nearby, since fresh air is healthy and the sight of the actual scene of a famous battle or other event gives the children a realistic feeling for it. There are no really good history textbooks, Hall feels, a lack which he bemoans often with many different subjects.⁸⁷ Therefore, a teacher is thrown on his own resources, and he may even serve the town as a resource, giving lectures about local history from time to time. In school, he should deal particularly with events which will edify his pupils, especially those which develop patriotic pride.⁸⁸

Lecture Nine moves on to directions about the other studies which might be pursued, beyond the basic ones, as he listed them earlier. His advice on teaching composition ("rhetoric," he calls it) is particularly interesting. Composition, he says, gives mental discipline and helps

⁸⁵ *Lectures*, p. 93.

⁸⁶ Penmanship was then really calligraphy — an art in itself, as witness the signatures on the Declaration of Independence. Cf., by contrast, Franklin's early plea for legible handwriting in his "Idea of an English School," 1747 — in TheodoreSizer, ed., *The Age of the Academies* (New York, 1964), p. 71.

⁸⁷ Hall himself wrote many textbooks for use in schools. See Appendix.

⁸⁸ *Lectures*, p. 100.

clear expression of thoughts. "It is the application of knowledge to the business of life."⁸⁹ First, show pupils the importance of good writing by using familiar examples; then give them simple nouns to use in sentences; then read a story and have them retell it in their own words; finally, give topics for full-scale compositions. Do not let the pupil choose any topic he likes, but give him ones which will encourage moral reflection:

. . . better to *give* subjects than let the pupil *select* for himself; for he will often choose without judgment, . . . unable to decide, he will select the hardest subjects thinking them the easiest, . . . like friendship, love, hope, spring, youth, etc.⁹⁰

Instead, give specific questions which encourage an organized piece of writing: "What four things ought the young to seek first, in order to promote their happiness?" Or, again, "By the formation of what five habits can I do the most good to my fellow creatures?"⁹¹ Here Hall shows a curious combination of ideas: he knows that broad topics like friendship, love, and hope are less useful composition topics than specific ones ("What four things . . ."); at the same time, he must be moralizing always.

After such exercises, the teacher may have pupils write letters to each other and even keep diaries of their private reflections on the passing scene, day by day. These will cultivate both social affections and composition. Naturally, they will be seen by the teacher, so no complete privacy is being suggested. In general, the teacher will encourage "everything, which has a tendency to call forth their own powers of mind . . . and be productive of good."⁹² Again one sees the dual purpose of his whole method.

Then Hall moves to moral philosophy, as if that had not been implicit in nearly everything so far. But its specific study will lead the pupil still further, particularly in the ability to examine the reasons for moral distinctions, because after all, "in *all* there is implanted a moral sentiment, and this has a material influence on human happiness."⁹³ Let the child know which feelings and acts are evil and which are virtuous, and the twig will surely bend in the right way. Hall

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁹¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹³ *Loc. cit.*

subscribes to the belief that to know the good is to do it; virtue will bring happiness; everyone has the ability to do what is good, if he only finds out what that is; and vice brings only misery.⁹⁴

Rounding out his discussion of the curriculum of the common school, Hall speaks briefly of natural philosophy (physics) and chemistry. Typically, he begins by asking questions which lie within the child's experience: "Why does water rise in a pump?" "Why does wood burn but not stone?"⁹⁵ And he proceeds from there, methodically, to basic principles.

In general, Hall urges the teacher to "impart all the knowledge within your power."⁹⁶ He should use every available moment to impart useful instruction — an eclipse, a wretched beggar, anything may lead to a lesson — "Seize these precious occasions and improve them with a high regard to the best interest of your pupils."⁹⁷

In Lecture Twelve, Hall devotes himself to the absorbing problem of motivation, "exciting attention" of the pupils to their schoolwork. His general statement is:

. . . those inducements should be used, which will lead to the happiest result, and not be attended with particular or general evil: and those methods of excitement are censurable, which are attended with evils greater than the amount of good they are intended to effect.⁹⁸

In other words, the means must suit the end. For example, he says, even if competition in the class makes the children do their work, it is a faulty method of motivation, for it also leads to narrow and selfish ambition, the desire "to excel for the sake of the gratification of being superior to others,"⁹⁹ rather than for the sake of the learning itself.

How, then, can one motivate justifiably? First, show that knowledge is the sure means to future usefulness, respectability, and happiness. Next, show your pleasure in your pupils' progress, although you must be watchful that the pupils do not simply emulate you, but work and learn in their own style. Then, teach pupils to love learning for its own sake, for the fun of using one's mental powers and acquiring

⁹⁴ Cf. Lindley Murray's widely used *Introduction to the English Reader* (New York, 1805). It begins, "To be good is to be happy, Vice, soon or late, brings misery."

⁹⁵ *Lectures*, p. 106.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁹⁹ *Loc. cit.*

new ideas. Last, present study as a duty, whose performance will lead to happiness. It is a duty to themselves and their own future, to their teacher who works so hard for them, to their parents who have such solicitude and anxiety for their welfare as to send them to school, to their country which needs intelligent citizens, and especially to God, the Maker and Preserver of all mankind. Finally, Hall suggests that a teacher should also use every chance available to show the bad consequences which come from inattention, ignorance, and the vice which inevitably follows.

In Hall's first edition, of 1829, a thirteenth lecture was "to female instructors." In later editions he omitted his lecture to female teachers because he was about to amplify it into a whole book. This latter volume was published in 1831.¹⁰⁰

The thirteenth lecture of the 1829 edition gives a clear view of elementary education of the time. Women taught the littlest ones, ages 3-7 years (sometimes even younger, he says!), so that when children came to the district school he had been describing, they already knew their alphabet, a few elementary syllables, and a little arithmetic.¹⁰¹ In general, Hall says, the twelve preceding lectures hold true for all teachers, but some "variation of manner"¹⁰² will naturally occur when the teacher is feminine. Then, characteristically, he seriously lays out the teacher's awesome responsibility: "Next to mothers, the character of children will depend on you."¹⁰³ And the teacher can lay important groundwork for the children's whole lives in this early school, if she will consider well "what they are, how their attention can be excited; how they are pleased, and in what manner they may, most easily, be governed."¹⁰⁴ A little child, for instance, should not be confined for long periods of time, for that is unreasonable and cruel, and will make school an unpleasant place to him, where he suffers in health and spirits. Activities should be often changed, they should arouse natural curiosity, and they should always be instructive. For example, hold up a picture of a horse. Talk about its properties and its usefulness to man, ask what the children know

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Read Hall, *Lectures to Female Instructors on School-Keeping*. Boston, 1831.

¹⁰¹ Here was probably the reason he wrote a separate book for women: they taught younger pupils than the district schoolmaster.

¹⁰² *Lectures*, p. 115.

¹⁰³ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

about horses, and so on. Hold up the Bible and engage in discussion about it:

God is its Author. Ought we to know all it contains?

Yes.

Can you read it?

No.

Do you wish you could?

Yes.

Well, if you will try to learn, I will teach you to read.¹⁰⁵

Then, when the children have been thus suitably motivated, begin to teach letters and reading. Starting with the alphabet, prepare large cards with letters on them. Hold them up, ask the name of each, and repeat it till all can say it. Then work with a few while the monitors¹⁰⁶ continue the teaching. Then out the door with everyone, into the sunshine, to play games — particularly educational games. Then indoors again to work on counting and adding: 2 plus 2, 2 plus 4, 2 plus 6, and so on. Next, hold up another picture of a familiar object, ask about its function and the children's experience with it. Next, read a story, usually from the Bible, further inculcating the desire to read.

By some such procedure, the teacher can change the pace of the classwork rapidly, yet everything a child does teaches him something. In passing, Hall claims that arithmetic is "unquestionably the leading subject"¹⁰⁷ because it deals with familiar objects and can be most easily comprehended. Apples, nuts, — anything can be counted, added, subtracted, and so on, and children enjoy this kind of activity.

He finishes his discourse to female teachers with five general directions. First,

Converse much with them about the nature of things, and call forth their own thoughts as much as possible. . . . They are led to think, to examine and to inquire, and will thus be led to form habits of reflection.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁶ Hall means the Lancastrian "monitorial system" here. Older students were used as sub-teachers, each in charge of a small group of children. The head teacher gave out some of the lesson, which the monitors in turn taught to their groups. They were not paid, and thus one master could deal with ten monitors and one hundred children — an inexpensive situation for the taxpayers, indeed. Cf. R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence Cremin, *A History of Education in the American Culture* (New York, 1953), p. 275.

¹⁰⁷ *Lectures*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Second, "spend part of each day in questioning the children on the meaning of words,"¹⁰⁹ by giving out a word to be considered, talking about it, and reading a story to illustrate it. Naturally, the words chosen were edifying ones like cruelty, affection, and others. Third, "keep the children fully occupied."¹¹⁰ Use older scholars as monitors, especially if they are training to become teachers, to help keep the class busy. But don't teach "needle-work"! That is not in the best interest of the school, and should be done at home or elsewhere.

Fourth, make the schoolroom a pleasant, orderly place. Then the children will enjoy coming there, and they will learn orderliness themselves. Fifth, teach "propriety of conduct."¹¹¹ Let them learn how to enter a room, how to speak properly.¹¹² Everyone should learn that the basis of good manners is that a well-bred person "will never say or do that unnecessarily, which will make anyone around him unhappy."¹¹³ Also the children should be taught to love their studies, to be anxious to do right, and to pray daily. If all these directions are faithfully followed, the proper groundwork is laid for the next schoolroom the child will enter.

So ends the 1829 edition of Hall's *Lectures*. Since their great success necessitated more editions, he had a chance in 1831 to add to his original baker's dozen not only a sketch of a properly arranged schoolroom, but also two more lectures.

The new Lecture Thirteen dwelt on the importance of establishing a Lyceum¹¹⁴ in the evenings, for boys and girls who are able and willing to make "an uncommon effort."¹¹⁵ In such a select seminar, the topics would be more advanced, moving beyond the work of the schoolroom. Lectures could be given by the schoolmaster, and any other local people with specialized knowledge. Also important was a public library¹¹⁶ well stocked with books, open to all in the community. In general, the schoolmaster should actively pursue every educational influence on the town as a whole, not just on his school.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹¹⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹¹² Cf. Mann's fourth qualification for a teacher: good manners. See note 25.

¹¹³ *Lectures*, p. 123.

¹¹⁴ Holbrook's Lyceum again. See note 16. It was an early form of adult education, and here included youngsters as well as adults.

¹¹⁵ *Lectures* (1831 edition), p. 121.

¹¹⁶ Based on the first one, founded in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin in 1742.

Money will be hard to extract for such purposes, but one must "yield to no discouragement which you may encounter."¹¹⁷

Lecture Fourteen is a discourse on proper schoolhouses, and it is illustrated by the plan which forms the frontispiece. Hall begs that their construction and location not be governed chiefly by motives of economy. The schoolhouse should be in a pleasant and healthful place, large enough for ease of motion, warmly heated by the fire, with windows in good repair, and so on. He gives exact directions about the house, the desks, the fireplace, and all, giving the reader an inkling of just how bad schoolhouses actually were, and what a serious teacher would recommend for their improvement.

The whole book, in all editions, is completed by questions on each lecture (except the one on the schoolhouse). One remembers his idea that teachers should come together, read, and discuss his lectures, for these are clearly discussion questions. Many are factual, but some are really thought-provoking: "Have you evidence of possessing the necessary qualifications for teaching?"¹¹⁸ Some will drive the teacher to look at his own work and hold it up to Hall's yardstick of quality. "If the scholars are not pleased with their studies, what is the reason?"¹¹⁹ "Do you think this is a reasonable direction (about discipline)?"¹²⁰ Clearly he knew that talking one's work over with colleagues can be stimulating and lead to serious thought. The value of in-service training is not a new insight.

This little manual is remarkably complete. It covers the whole subject of teaching — its influence, its problems, its daily work — with care and serious concern. Seldom does one read such an exhaustive study of an occupation. And its very completeness gives the modern reader a good view of educational ideas at that time. Some that Hall presents are very typical of it. There is his strong moral emphasis, not doctrinal but moral in a more general sense, very like Horace Mann's position on basic Christian principles. There is, too, his total faith in the beneficent power of academic education, as it develops the reasoning powers of a child and thus leads him to knowledge and virtue. As a contemporary put it, "man is the architect of his own character and

¹¹⁷ *Lectures*, p. 122.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

fortune.”¹²¹ Character *and* fortune, for the serious student may achieve both. And, finally, there is his belief that a republican form of government requires an educated, virtuous citizenry. Man needs knowledge to be a good citizen, but knowledge is a power which can be used for good or for evil, so he needs a virtuous character as well. Thus the school is used as a way to realize human perfectibility.

There are also many aspects of Hall's manual which look far ahead of his time, however, and demonstrate his remarkable perspicacity about what really goes on in schools, then as now. He knows that the home has tremendous influence on the pupil, and that the town has an influence on the teacher and the school as well. He knows that an indifferent community is bad for the school, that people are in favor of education in general, but do not actively support it, either personally or financially. He knows that the kind of people who were then going into teaching did not do the profession any good, and did not understand that it is hard, responsible, and exacting work for anyone who takes it as seriously as it deserves. He knows the value of developing very early the observing, questioning, reflecting attitude, not just the parroting-back style of learning. He knows that true authority comes from inside and is demonstrated by the teacher in many little ways, but not in the surface, authoritarian manner. He knows that the child hears feelings as well as words, and reacts to them, so that a teacher is loved and respected who first loves and respects his pupils. He knows that children like to talk about what is familiar and well known — home, locality, small observations, their own conversations — and that these are good starting points for teaching. He knows that a teacher needs to know the whole subject he is teaching, not be just a few pages ahead of the pupils. He knows that children benefit from quick reinforcement, so he urges teachers to pass back papers soon. He knows the trap of reading just words without actively engaging their meaning. He knows that teachers are teaching their own attitudes while they teach subject matter. He even knows the value of audio-visual aids in teaching.

Above all, he knows children. And he knows that the best thing a teacher can do for a child is to lead him to where “he is self-motive and goes alone,” as Mann put it.¹²² “Everything that calls forth the

¹²¹ Cf. Edward Hitchcock, “The American Academic System Defended” (1845) — in Sizer, *op. cit.*, pp. 101 ff.

¹²² Cf. Mann's Second Report of 1838, on learning (*Reports*, p. 39).

powers of mind" is useful, every way is explored to help the child develop his independent powers of judgment and discernment, every attempt is made to help him grow more and more mature. Therefore, as is forever true, the schoolroom is concerned with much more than just the subject matter: it is concerned with the whole child, his feelings, his character, his abilities, his happiness, everything.

APPENDIX

Schoolbooks written by Samuel R. Hall (1795-1877)

Alphabet of Geology

The Arithmetical Manual

The Child's Assistant to a Knowledge of the Geography and History of Vermont (To which were added the United States Constitution and some notes and questions, by Pliny H. White, in later editions.)

The Child's Book of Geography

The Child's Instructor; or Lessons on Common Things and the Means of Securing Happiness

The Grammatical Assistant

Outlines of the Geography, Natural, and Civil History, and Constitution of Vermont

School Arithmetic

School History of the United States (with A. R. Baker)

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR H. COLE, Professor of Business Economics, *Emeritus*, at Harvard, was Librarian of the Baker Library of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration from 1932 until he retired in 1956. He has written a number of books and articles; his most recent contribution to the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN was "The Delights of Translation," in the October 1970 issue.

BARRY A. CROUCH, whose dissertation at the University of New Mexico (1970) was on William A. Lawrence, is now completing a biography of Amos A. Lawrence.

MARY HYDE is an author, editor, and collector; her *Playwriting for Elizabethans, 1600-1605*, which was published by the Columbia University Press in 1949, grew out of her dissertation. Mrs. Hyde is a member of the University Library Visiting Committee of the Harvard Board of Overseers.

LYDIA A. H. SMITH is Assistant Professor of Education at Simmons College; her Harvard dissertation (1960) was on "Major American Children's Readers," and her article on "Three Spelling Books of American Schools, 1740-1800" appeared in the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN for January 1968.

EUGENE W. WU, Librarian of the Harvard-Yenching Library, collaborated with Peter Burton on *Contemporary China: A Research Guide* (1967) and contributed "Studies of Contemporary China Outside the United States" to the April 1970 issue of the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN.