

What Shall We Do With Our Young Folks?

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MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

We enter this world without our own consent, and without any responsibility for our physical or mental characteristics; regardless of our own wishes, and often against the wishes of our progenitors. But we are here, and must face the stern fact that we are as we are, and to make ourselves as we would be, must engage our noblest effort. In this matter of trying to solve the problem of making ourselves and our young folks what we would be, or what we should be, we must have the co-operation of both old and young; there must be reciprocity between parent and child, between teacher and pupil, between the community and its wards. Friendly and cordial relations must be established, and the authority of force must give place to the authority of affection.

In order to advance, we must first discover our fault, and perhaps feel a sense of humiliation at its existence; then must establish a desire to correct or outgrow it; then must come the ways and means, the "How", of its correction; and, lastly, the execution, the putting in motion these ways and means.

I believe that every one in this audience has discovered and fully recognizes the fact that the young folks of this community have faults, and that their correction is desirable. That is not speaking badly for this place, for it is no worse than a thousand other towns; but let us not lapse into that moral lethargy, where people justify their own weaknesses and shortcomings by recognizing the same or worse conditions in others. Let us rather say, there is nothing too good for Silverton and its people. Let us stand at the head of the class, and let us be of the highest class.

From the cradle to the grave life is one round of activities, and it is the direction of these activities that makes us good or bad. Often the beginning of ruin is the misdirection of activities in child life. Is a child meddlesome? Does he annoy by tearing leaves from your best book? Divert his mind. Start his activities along some other line that engages and pleases, and your books and your patience are saved.

The whole problem, then of what we shall do with our young folks is solved by directing these mental and physical activities into right channels. A good deal of the trouble grows out of the fact that we do not take the time. We are too busy with our housework, or with schem-

ing to get ahead of our neighbor in snaring a wary dollar. In this struggle our little ones are let run wild and to weeds, and their minds go undeveloped, or developed in wrong directions, until they know little that they should, and everything they should not.

Now, what is to be done? Shall we stand and watch them drifting, drifting, drifting, hither and thither and yon, some of them into the stagnant sloughs, some into the rapids and the fatal whirlpool of dissipation or crime? Shall we stand and look, and gaze, and stare, with our hands idly by our sides, until we catch the gleam of the wild, upturned face of despair, the faint shriek for help, the wildly grasping hands, as they pass over the brink, gone from our help forever? Let us begin to answer that question now, by a steady, determined effort to make the conditions suitable for the grander growth.

Let us consider first what may be accomplished in the home. Here, we cannot begin too early. Many a child is spoiled before it is a week old. Let us instruct the parents on these points. Let us teach them that the first duty to the child is harmony between father and mother; and where there is discord between the parents, they owe it to their little ones to reconcile their differences. Children are sharp observers and great imitators, and to them AN OUNCE OF EXAMPLE IS WORTH A POUND OF PRECEPT.

There must be firmness, but charity also; and the most potential influence is love. There are always duties and often drudgeries which must be done; but youth is buoyant and hopeful, and they easily learn to bear the drudgeries for the rewards they promise.

Amusements must be provided, and herein should each home be made attractive. These may be varied to meet the requirements from the simplest pastime to the highest mental and physical activities, and the acquirements of art and skill. Here we may develop tastes and cultivate the nobler attributes of mind. Here we may learn to depose ourselves modestly to the defeated ones, and to bear our own defeats gracefully, and to acquire other accomplishments that go to make the true lady or gentleman.

The Public School. Here, to begin with, we should have the best possible school house—and Silverton has a good one—with best equipments and apparatus for amusements, illustration and experiment-

ation, and, above all, healthful construction and conditions. To school elections everybody should turn out and make the contest for the best and ablest men in the community for school directors—men who will take pride in making their school the best in the State of its grade.

With a high grade public school in this town, its population would not only greatly increase in the winter time, but permanently increase. The additional revenues from such growth would pay the added salary for first class teachers.

A word or two about teachers may not be amiss. We need more of the original class; more who DO NOT DO IT AS OTHERS DO IT, but possess originality and the courage to put it to use. Teachers should be students of human nature, of temperaments, of phrenology, if you please. They must learn the lesson well, that there are many ways to accomplish a given result, and that the minds of the young have many ways of approaching and grasping thoughts as well as objects. And while it is the duty of all to know as much as can be known, the teacher must learn to dwell in the same atmosphere as does the pupil. While he acts as leader, he can accomplish much more by sending his boys and girls out on excursions in advance to see what they can discover for themselves. The stimulus of discovery electrifies every nerve, strings every muscle, expands the lungs, sends the fresh blood bounding to every fibre, until every sense is alert, the imagination glowing, and the eyes and whole countenance radiant.

Now let us take up what should be the most interesting part of this discussion: What shall we, the community, the people of Silverton, do with and for our young folk? What can we do to employ, amuse, direct them along right lines up to a good and useful citizenship; and to keep them away from idleness, dissipation and crime.

First, let us revolutionize the older heads and enthuse them with the idea of needful reform. Let us talk and write this question up until the people with one accord take hold of the work, forgetting all about creeds and sects, and raise the ideals of the community until we all become saturated with the determination of placing Silverton in the first rank of intellectual and moral excellence, and make it a business point to be envied. Let us stop talking against one another and all go to work for the common weal.

First, as noted above, let us have first quality in our public school, and make the school year at least nine months. There are those among us who need schooling, but are unable to go for want of funds. We must see if ways cannot be provided, and for those whom we are unable to get into school, provide

employment. These last may be able to receive the benefits of night school.

One of the first things you will think of for the good of the young is a Public Library. That is a good thought, too, and one that will soon be realized in this forward movement if only our good mothers will take hold of it with zeal.

An Astronomical Observatory. The saw-mill men of this vicinity can well afford to donate lumber for such an enterprise, if assured that it is for public and not private good. Carpenters could be found to do the work of construction, and a good telescope with other apparatus can be easily purchased if the community so wills. The cost of suitable instruments need not exceed \$500. We have natural astronomers growing up among us, and the science is more charming than fiction; the infinite distances of suns and systems, the endlessness of space which it reveals, the rush of spheres, the tremendous velocity of our own earth, moving in three directions at once, all without a jolt or jostle, the facts take on all the charm of fancies, and the realities become as delightful to our senses as the deepest dreams of imagination.

Botany. At our very doors we have a most splendid opportunity for the study of botany. On every hill-top, in every vale, beside the silver streams and the cooling springs may be found mosses and ferns and fungi, and everything to charm the lover of an immense flora.

Geology. Here, too, is a field delightful and instructive, which appalls us with the wonderful forces that have been spent upon our globe for ages incomprehensible.

Our state, and even this locality, furnishes great resources for the student of some branches of natural history, such as entomology, ornithology, zoology, etc.

Collection of cabinets of natural curiosities, selections of the native woods of the state, and other similar enterprises, would please and satisfy some of the active minds of our young folks and would be a perpetual source of usefulness and ornament to the town.

Think for a moment what these accomplishments would mean for Silverton. With such intelligence in our midst, would we not continually rise in the estimation of our visitors, and would we not draw to us the most desirable people of the outside world? The name of Silverton would stand for everything good, pure, noble and intellectual, and our people would be courted to fill stations in all the higher walks of life. Think, too, what the reverse of this means for us. If we are idle and thoughtless and dissipated, what classes will we attract to us—what will the harvest be then?