

A TRIBUTE TO THE UNKNOWN TEACHER



And what of teaching? Ah, there you have the worst paid, and the best rewarded, of all the vocations. Dare not to enter it unless you love it. For the vast majority of men and women it has no promise of wealth or fame, but they, to whom it is dear for its own sake, are among the nobility of mankind.

I sing the praise of the unknown teachers. Great generals win campaigns, but it is the unknown soldier who wins the war.

Famous educators plan new systems of pedagogy, but it is the unknown teacher who delivers and guides the young. He lives in obscurity and contends with hardship. For him no trumpets blare, no chariots wait, no golden decorations are decreed. He keeps the watch along the borders of darkness and makes the attack on the trenches of ignorance and folly. Patient in his daily duty, he strives to conquer the evil powers which are the enemies of youth. He awakens sleeping spirits. He quickens the indolent, encourages the eager, and steadies the unstable. He communicates his own joy in learning and shares with boys and girls the best treasures of his mind. He lights many candles which, in later years, will shine back to cheer him. This is his reward.

Knowledge may be gained from books, but the love of knowledge is transmitted only by personal contact. No one has deserved better of the republic than the unknown teacher. No one is more worthy to be enrolled in a democratic aristocracy, "king of himself and servant of mankind."—

HENRY VAN DYKE