

I have heard that the principals of some schools encourage meetings of parents now and then at the school, in pre-arranged groups, to talk over school matters with the teachers: is this practicable? A society has lately been established called the "Parents' National Educational Union," one object of which is "to secure greater unity and continuity of education by harmonizing home and school training." How far can such a society be useful? And, if it can be of use, can we co-operate with it?

Next, as to training in the school itself. We all know that if the tone of a school is to be good, the teacher must be in touch with his pupils, realizing their individual difficulties and temptations, appreciating their efforts, and understanding and making allowance for—even while firmly punishing—their faults. But this cannot be done if the teacher's time is wholly taken up with preparing pupils for examinations, or if he is distracted between many classes. Lecturers do good work, but lecturers cannot give training in morality; and a teacher of many classes tends to become a lecturer.

Where a teacher's attention is thus distracted (and there are many intellectual advantages to be pleaded for the system which thus utilizes specialists as teachers), it becomes desirable that a group of boys should be attached during the term to some one master whom they may consult as their friend in troubles and difficulties, and to whom they must present regular reports of their work and conduct. If a teacher has not time or opportunity for acquiring more than a mere intellectual knowledge of the pupils under his care, the moral loss to them is very great. An over-worked teacher tends to become a machine, and a teaching machine produces in its pupils machine-like learning, and machine-like morals.

Not, indeed, that I underrate the minor and mechanical habits of punctuality, neatness, orderliness, and general attention to things seemly. Drill, in itself, exercises a good influence, though much depends upon the spirit of the drill and character of the instructor; but these small habits also constitute a kind of drill, which strengthens the mind, increases energy, self-respect, and self-control, and forms a kind of bulwark or outer circle to resist attacks against morality. And how often it happens that the mere mechanical arrangements of a school, or parts of a school, fight, so to speak, against these minor moralities! Ill-constructed passages, or staircases, or lavatories, or cloak-rooms, or ill-devised arrangements in connection with them—how often do they encourage disorder, bullying, dishonesty, suspicion of dishonesty, and a generally bad tone! I have often seen, and still sometimes see, young boys emerging from schools into the street, who regularly act as though there were no accommodation for decency in the school, and whose conduct toward one another would certainly not suggest that in that very afternoon they had been receiving a lesson on the Sermon on the Mount. Certainly, therefore, so far from underrating the machine-like routine of ordinary school discipline, I am of one mind with the head master of the most successful day school in London—or, I may say, in England—who told me that, in a former school of his, the chairman of his council, after visiting the class-rooms, was in the habit of saying, "I don't believe much good is being done in Mr. So-and-so's room; there's too much paper on the floor;" "and," continued the head master, "the chairman was right." And I wish I could induce all the members of my profession, especially the untrained members, to believe in that chairman.