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## Editorial

### The Middle Ground

On one side of the school is the home; on the other side the great complex of social institutions, such as the vocation, the state, the church and polite society. In going through the school pupils should lose none of the graces and virtues bequeathed to them by the home, and they should acquire no habits, tastes, nor dispositions that would have to be cast aside as useless in the worthy callings of life. It is not beneath the school to test its work by the two standards here suggested. Whether it does so or not, the other institutions are continually making the test, and their verdict is sometimes flattering and sometimes the reverse.

The home sometimes tells us that the children soon after going to school lose their faith and innocence, and that there is a great falling away in language and behavior. Probably the charge on the first two counts would be admitted. It is evident that as children are introduced to the world of hard, cold fact they must be influenced by human sin, callousness and unreliability. There is no reason, however, why there should be a deterioration in language and conduct. Yet, parents are emphatic in saying there is deterioration. They tell us that the children on coming to school are pure in speech and angelic in disposition—indeed, beyond reproach. They tell us that the school corrupts, brutalizes, makes for coarseness and rudeness. Is it true?

All that parents say cannot be accepted at full value. They are just as critical of the street and its associations as

they are of the school. I do not suppose there ever was a normal city child who, according to the word of the parents, was not contaminated by street association. I feel sure that I have never yet heard a parent confess that her own child was responsible for the contamination. And this is a very strange thing. In the matter of bad language and bad conduct all children seem to be in the passive voice—they are ready to be acted upon; they are never active. Individually they are perfect; collectively they develop all forms of iniquity. The whole is very different from the sum of its parts. This surely is a great anomaly. Truly, it makes us feel that parents do not always report all the facts with regard to their offspring. Perhaps it would be more just to say they do not know all the facts. Nor would it be surprising if, when the children are old enough to come to school, they possess powers and habits of which their parents are in complete ignorance.

Nevertheless, teachers themselves will admit that school association frequently tends to develop in pupils qualities that the unlovely, and that in most schools there is in use a vocabulary which is scarcely in harmony with approved standards. This change in the temper and language of pupils should be attributed in most cases, not to carelessness and lack of supervision by the school, but to the fact that normal development demands new activities, new modes of expression. Growing children should not be expected to retain the attitudes, the habits and the language of infancy.