

## CIVIC AND MORAL TRAINING IN SCHOOLS.\*

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MOST school subjects imply not only rules (with reasons where they can be made intelligible) but also exercises. One reason why it is hard to teach history profitably to young boys is, that they cannot "do exercises" in it—that is to say, exercises that are something more than mere repetitions. A pupil learns arithmetic, or Latin, or geometry, by being led up to rules; by seeing his teacher do exercises; but, best of all, by doing exercises himself, with an intelligent knowledge of the principles on which they are based. The most efficacious means of teaching appears to be teaching by exercises.

This applies to moral and civic training. The "rule" for morality—to love one's neighbour as one loves one's self—is intelligible and simple. The great point is—for all of us, old as well as young—the "exercises." Reading may do something, discourse from a teacher with convictions can do still more; but neither can do much in comparison with the "exercises," many of which—for boys at a day school—are done in the streets, or in the train, and most of all at home. "I don't mind your teaching him the Catechism," said some parent who did not believe in the Catechism, but who was asking that his son might be admitted into a school where the Catechism was, at that time, indispensable; "you may hammer it into him at school and I'll hammer it out of him at home; I shan't object." The story is probably legendary; but it understates, rather than exaggerates,

an important truth. Moral training in a day school, so far as it is mere book teaching, may be excellent in its way, and yet quite unable to compete with the more powerful training—not "hammering" at all, but much more silent, persistent, and efficacious—of the out-of-school world.

I make no apology, then, for speaking first of "exercises" in morality, although there is nothing novel in this part of the subject. If teachers were waiting to give moral and civic training until the publication of some authoritative text-books on it, I am convinced that it would never be given. The text-book might be published, but it would be sure to disappoint expectations. If we cannot make a considerable use of the instruments at our command, no new instrument is likely to help us much. My impression is that our present means may be better used than they have been; and, therefore, though I shall touch on the introduction of new means, I shall lay most stress upon the improved use of the old. But bearing in mind that many of my suggestions may have been anticipated by others who have long acted on them, I will ask you to excuse me if I state points briefly, rather as subjects for discussion than as defined conclusions.

First, then, what means are there of securing the co-operation of parents, and can they be improved? Are there monthly or other reports sent home to them? If there are not, and if there is a general feeling that this would be useful in itself, but more than counterbalanced by the increased burden of secretarial work, already perhaps too heavy, could not the secretarial assistance be increased?

\* A paper read by the Rev. Dr. Abbott, late Head Master of the City of London School, at the Conference of the N. U. T., London, 1890.