

Special Papers.

POLITENESS IN OUR SCHOOLS.

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IN considering this subject let us regard politeness not as an end, but as a most important means. Let us consider first why is it that rudeness predominates in the majority of our schools; that the polite pupil is the exception, the *rara avis*, while the rude one is the rule?

2nd.—Why should politeness be a marked characteristic of every school?

3rd.—How can we best succeed in giving it its essential place in our schools?

First, why is rudeness so very prevalent in our schools? No doubt many of us console ourselves with the idea that it is owing to the neglect of parents, and that though numbers of our children are outside of school-houses, allowed to "run wild," we are not to blame; that the home is the place to teach morals and manners. True enough; but where the home fails in its duty, the school must come to the rescue and the teacher must be for six hours daily *in loco parentis*.

Though rudeness in our schools is to a certain extent attributable to a lack of home-training it is, in a far greater degree, attributable to our neglect, as teachers, to make the most of the golden opportunities within our reach; and only too often is it but the reflection of our rudeness to our pupils, for as the rivulet in the meadow reflects not only the sunshine, but the shadows, so do those mirrors of our actions reproduce not only our virtues but our failings. Don't misunderstand me. I do not for one moment suppose that any on (even the very last recruit) in the "noble army" of teachers is last guilty of positive rudeness to pupils; but I do maintain that very many of us are guilty, if not every day of our lives, at least very often, of negative rudeness, of grave breaches of etiquette such as would not be tolerated in cultured society. How many of us practice in our school-rooms our "Society Manners?" Do we treat our young friends as politely in our schools, as we would in our parlors, or even as politely as we expect them to treat us? Why, some of us actually begin the day by outraging the feelings of the most sensitive pupil, by deliberately walking past them into school without so much as the "Good Morning," that many of those self-same pupils accord their dumb friends. On a day thus begun I'm sure the teacher is much ruder than the rudest of his or her pupils. We know better, and many of them do not and never will unless we are up and doing, alive to our duty in this respect. "But," we say, (and we all know the old, worn-out excuse) "No time, over-crowded school-rooms and programmes." Very true; but "no time, over-crowded school-rooms and programmes" do not enable us, as one writer suggests, to "do away with character-building in our schools." We cannot do it, for if we are not, both by example and precept, laying such a foundation of politeness as shall ornament the whole superstructure of after life, we are, by that very neglect, laying the foundation stones of rudeness and immorality. Let us not be satisfied to leave this subject to home-training, any more than we can leave reading or arithmetic, lest from the conduct of our pupils we be thought to agree with Will Carleton's District Father, when he says:—

"There aint no great good in their speakin'
Their words so polite as I see,
Provided you know what the facts is
And tell 'em off just as they be."

And what "great good" is there? This brings me to the second point, viz.: Why should politeness be a marked characteristic of every school? Why is it necessary that, in order that our schools may fulfil their highest function, they should be characterized by a spirit of genuine politeness?

First.—Because it enlists sympathy. There is nothing that establishes a bond of sympathy between teacher and pupils like the pleasant, though often half-hearted "Good morning, children," and the cheerful, hearty response of thirty, forty or fifty voices coming like the morning sun to drive away every shadow of the night "Good morning, teacher." They feel the teacher's interest in them, and

are ready to be interested. The teacher is more energetic, and the pupils more attentive for it.

Second.—It exterminates selfishness and jealousy from our schools, and consequently petty disagreements and quarrels from our play-grounds. No ments and quarrels from our play-grounds. No child, whatever his disposition, can be selfish, jealous or unkind very long in a school, where true politeness, that generous consideration of the rights and feelings of others to which St. Paul refers where he says, "Let each esteem other better than themselves" and "In honor preferring one another," is not only taught but lived by both teacher and pupils.

Third.—It instills in our boys a manly consideration of their girl playmates, and teaches our girls to expect from them that deference which every true woman expects from a gentleman. No boy that is required by his teacher to lay aside his individual comfort in behalf of his girl friend, to give up his chair when she is standing, to offer her the cup before drinking, to attend to the fire, the wood and the water without having to be asked—little things it is true, but "mighty oaks from little acorns grow"—can go out into the home to see any one of woman-kind, sister, wife, or mother do work that he could do, while he sits idly by, reading his paper perhaps and ignoring her very existence; nor will girls who have been courteously treated at school submit to such treatment as they only too often meet with in after-life. And as "Habit becomes second nature" politeness in the school means politeness in the home, better boys and girls, better men and women, happier homes, and altogether a better state of society.

Fourth.—Politeness is a stepping-stone to morality. Prof. S. H. Albro says: "You cannot have rudeness in your schools and do good moral work," and surely every teacher aims at elevating humanity, lifting it up to higher levels; and our efforts in this direction have a far greater influence on our own lives than perhaps we are aware of, for before we can raise up our pupils we ourselves must first be up, must constantly be on the watch for some way of benefiting them, morally as well as intellectually, some way of lightening the heavier cross that many of them have to bear. Thus, by the very thoughtfulness which politeness compels, teachers and pupils become daily more like Him whose perfect life is our pattern; who, though His work was made little of and He Himself misunderstood by His most intimate friends, yet "went about doing good" not only that we might have life, but that we "might have it more abundantly." The more we become like Him and our teaching like His the more shall our pupils be enabled to live better, nobler and more useful lives.

Assuming then that politeness is essential to true manhood and womanhood, and that we, as teachers, are to blame for its non-existence in our schools, it yet remains for us to decide how we can best succeed in giving it its essential place in our schools.

The most effective way is by incidental teaching. Do not make it your hobby and lecture your pupils for an hour at a time on "Good Behavior." Do not even let them suspect that you are trying to make them polite. Incidents will occur in every school which, aided by a few well-considered, well-directed words from the teacher, impress on the minds of the pupils lessons in politeness never forgotten.

For instance (and I trust you will pardon me for here referring to my own experience), on my first morning in a certain school, I said to the pupils as they came in, "Good morning," but, to my great surprise, though they all "smiled and looked pleasant," not one of about thirty-five answered me. The next morning, having learned their names the first day, I tried again, addressing each one individually, "good morning, Mary," "good morning, John," with the same result, no reply.

After ringing the bell, all in position, I said, "Children, I want your opinion," and immediately every child was "all attention." "If I went into your house, and your mother met me, and said, 'Good morning, Miss Anderson,' 'what would you expect me to do?' Every hand was raised. "To stay for tea." "To say good morning." "To answer her," are some of the many answers given. "But if I did not answer her what would you think?" "That you didn't know very much," was one answer; "That you weren't glad to see her," another. Taking the latter answer, I said, "Now, I've said 'Good morning' to each of you on

these two mornings, and no one has answered me, am I to think that you are not glad to see me? As I haven't time to say 'good morning' to each of you, I'll say to all, and I'm sure you'll answer me, 'Good morning, girls,'" and immediately there sounded forth such a hearty "Good morning, Miss Anderson," as would, for the time being, fill any teacher with enthusiasm. "But," I said, "girls, in what position was I when I spoke?" "Standing," was the answer. "And you?" No reply. "Now try again—Good morning, girls." All standing, the reply was hearty as before, "Good morning, Miss Anderson."

"Now, boys, if a lady meets a gentleman on the road, and says 'Good morning' to him, how does he salute her?" "He raises his hat." "Well, as you haven't on your hats, I want you to give me a right hand salute. Good morning, boys." Every boy on his feet, every right hand to the forehead, and the walls rang with the cheerful "Good morning, Miss Anderson." At four o'clock I said, "Good night, girls," and "good night, boys," in turn, and no one needed to ask, "What must I do?" Thus, in far less time than it takes to tell, we have established in our school such a form of greeting and leave-taking, as any teacher might be proud to receive from his or her pupils. Similarly, after the departure of our first visitor, I impressed them with the fact, that every visitor in a school is the guest, not only of the teacher but of the pupils, and as such must be received by them standing, in place of what we so often find, every head turned round and every eye staring.

And so on—opportunities daily present themselves for such lessons, which, in my experience, rarely have to be repeated.

But however well-directed, however well-chosen, these lessons are not enough. Use constantly that "bunch of golden keys"—"Good morning," "good night," "if you please," "I thank you," "excuse me," "I beg your pardon," as well as require your pupils to use it. Be what you would have your pupils be; do what you would have them do, and rest assured that they will find out for themselves the use and beauty of politeness, and appreciate it accordingly; whereas, if you are not polite, no amount of lecturing will instill in your pupils principles, which it is only too evident are lacking in yourself. Be the ideal which you present them, and you will never lack followers among your pupils. They will respect, love, obey and imitate you.

"As in the elder days of art,
Builders wrought with greatest care,
Each minute and unseen part,
For the gods see everywhere.
Let us do our work as well,
Both the unseen and the seen.
Make the house where gods may dwell
Beautiful, entire and clean."

A GOOD IDEA.

THE teacher was absent. We took the school. Spelling was the order of the programme. Papers were passed and pupils' names written. One pupil said, "Shall we spell a geography word?" "I don't know whether there is one in the lesson or not," said I. "If there is I hope you will spell it, when I pronounce it." Hands flying wildly. "Well," said I to the speaker. She replied that the teacher allowed each pupil to spell a geography word of his own selection each day. "Why, yes, certainly, spell it," said I. This gives each pupil an opportunity to review the words he most needs. He will study the word he is doubtful about. The teacher sees that they select the more common geographical words that everybody should know how to spell.—*Indiana School Journal*.

ONE impulse from a vernal wood,
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

—Wordsworth.

SMALL service is true service while it lasts:
Of humblest friends, bright creature scorn
not one:

The daisy by the shade it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

—Wordsworth.

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