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SCHOOL DISCIPLINE.

It is frequently a matter of some difficulty to decide, as magistrates are occasionally required to do, when a teacher in flogging a pupil has overstepped the line which separates legitimate corporal punishment from unwarrantable assault. It would certainly be going too far in one direction to say that there should be no right of appeal to the civil power against abuse of authority, just as it would be going too far in the other to say that the magistrate should have a moral and legal right to review and pass judgment upon every case of flogging in school. There is, no doubt, a golden mean which may easily be determined in every particular case if all parties concerned are disposed to act fairly by each other, and endeavour to bring to its consideration judgments unclouded by passion or prejudice. There is no doubt that in this country corporal punishment in schools, when it is not excessive, is perfectly legal, and the general feeling seems to be in favour of leaving it so. Many experienced educationists have discussed this question, and though all of them have condemned over-indulgence in a mode of punishment which is apt to have, even when temporarily efficacious, a demoralizing effect on both teacher and pupil, there are few who do not admit the necessity of leaving in the teacher's hands some discretionary power as to the time and mode of its infliction. There is still unfortunately far too much flogging in schools, but it may fairly be questioned whether magisterial interference is the best means of abolishing it. Trustees or School Commissioners are perfectly justified in regarding the frequent use of the rod as a tolerably sure sign of want of moral power in a master. There are other methods of dealing with refractory or careless pupils which the high-minded and enthusiastic teacher will readily discover, and the most effective way to discourage flogging in schools is for trustees to manifest a marked preference, other things being equal, for the teacher who can govern his school successfully without resorting to corporal punishment. But in truth "other things" are rarely equal in such a case, for as a rule a man who has moral power enough over his pupils to maintain perfect discipline without resorting to brute force will be found superior also in intellectual power and culture.

These remarks have been occasioned by a recent case of

magisterial interference with school discipline in Halifax. A teacher who had flogged a boy was brought before a magistrate and fined—an occurrence by no means uncommon. The School Board, however, took the matter up, and after investigation stood by the teacher, paid his fine, and decided that he had gone no further in the infliction of punishment than the nature of the offence warranted. As a rule this is the safest course for School Boards to pursue. So long as corporal punishment is allowed, the parents of flogged boys will be apt to think the teacher has either overdone the flogging or flogged the wrong boy, and as an appeal to a magistrate is the most convenient resort it is made accordingly. Discipline maintained by means of the rod may not be the highest type of school discipline, but it is better than none, and there is no surer means of destroying a teacher's usefulness than for parents and outside authorities to interfere with his management. The Hon. Mr. Crooks, in an official memorandum published a few months ago, thus effectively deals with the question:

"The interference of any magistrate in matters pertaining merely to the discipline of our Public Schools is to be deprecated, and it is only in a case where undue severity has been exercised by the teacher that any magistrate should consider it a case to be dealt with according to law. The teacher's task is quite onerous enough without unnecessary and injudicious interference on the part of parents who, under fancied grievances, complain to a magistrate. Unless the children receive some substantial injury his duty should be to refuse to interfere, and leave the question to be dealt with by those best conversant with it, namely, the trustees of the school themselves."

In a second memorandum on the same case he was if possible even more explicit:—

"I regret that in the exercise of an official duty my views should reflect on others who are also assuming to discharge official duties; but I think I am bound to declare as explicitly as possible, in the interest of education, that the discipline in the school, which the teacher can alone exercise beneficially, should not be impaired by the interference of school trustees or justices of the peace, except in a grave case of undue severity or cruelty."

The duty of the teacher in the matter is to dispense with corporal punishment as much as possible, to habitually regard it as a last resort, and always inflict it with caution and without passion. The duty of the parent is to refrain from interference unless when the occasion urgently requires it, and in all cases to communicate privately with the teacher before he invokes outside interference. Most of the cases which are handed over to magistrates could be easily settled by a friendly conference, provided that the parent will refrain from assuming that there is only one side to the case, and that his boy's testimony is to be accepted implicitly and as a matter of course. A boy who has been flogged by a teacher is not usually sufficiently disinterested or unprejudiced to be a competent witness against the master who flogged him, however honest or well-disposed he may be.

We commence in this issue the publication of the papers set at the Entrance and Intermediate High School Examinations for December. We have reason to believe, from facts which have come under our notice, that many candidates for entrance failed on the passages taken from the Fourth Reader. We propose therefore to publish in subsequent numbers of the JOURNAL the specimen questions set last June, together with other questions on these texts prepared by practical teachers.