

## Papers on Practical Education.

### SCHOOL MANAGEMENT.

#### WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF THE MASTER OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?

The duties of the Master of an elementary school may be classed under Superintendence, Instruction, Examination, Punishment and Visiting.

#### I. SUPERINTENDENCE.

Considering the elements of which it is composed a school should never be destitute of superintendence. It is doubtless desirable that children should be trained to depend upon themselves; to do right from no lower motive than because it is right; it is an evil also to imply distrust and suspicion, yet there is so much of thoughtlessness, ignorance, and occasionally of worse elements in a school as to render vigilant oversight necessary. A portion of every day should be devoted by the master to superintendence, and when otherwise engaged he should delegate the duty to subordinates.

The objects superintendence is to secure are,—

(1.) *An infusion of the spirit of work into every part of the school.* The presence, example, and spirit of the master must pervade every class, and must be specially felt in the weak ones. All temptation to idleness must be prevented.

(2.) *Order in the classes and regularity in the changes and movements.* Where classes get disarranged, where slovenly postures are assumed, where time is not kept, and where disorderly marching is permitted, a silent influence is at work which cannot but have an injurious effect on the character and habits of the future.

(3.) *Uniformity of treatment and protection from evil influences.*—In the absence of efficient control, children are subjected to a variety of treatment at the hands of apprentices and monitors, which is alike injurious to their character and to the authority of the master. From this it is his duty to preserve them. Besides which there is a sort of moral protection required from him; such as screening them from improper words, by carefully removing any which may have been written on the walls or elsewhere; and by taking such measures as will prevent the repetition of the offence; separating the children whose mutual influence is demoralizing or in any way evil; and removing entirely any child whose influence is pernicious. Further, there is what Heinroth calls "corporeal protection" required; that is, protection of the health, by attention to the position of the children, to the necessary physical exercises, and to the ventilation.

#### II. INSTRUCTION.

Responsible for the efficiency of his school as a place of instruction, the following points will require his attention:—

(1.) *The selection and adaptation of the subjects of instruction to the wants of the various classes.*—He must take care that the subjects are taught in their right order, with especial reference to the periods of mental development, and that the essential subjects, reading, writing, arithmetic, and Scripture, have most time and labour devoted to them.

(2.) *That each subject is taught by its appropriate methods.*—This is a point requiring great vigilance. Situated as elementary schools are, with subordinates who are necessarily very ignorant of method, it becomes the duty of the master to show how to teach as well as to fix what to teach. This he may partly accomplish by his own exemplar teaching; by instruction in method; and by careful inspection and criticism of the methods employed.

(3.) *The nature and amount of his own personal teaching.*—The day is passed in which the master was considered merely the director of the machinery. No longer the mere policeman of the establishment, he has taken his right place as its teacher and educator. Were any consideration necessary to show the reasonableness of this, they are to be found in the claims of the children on his superior skill in intellectual and moral training; and in those of his subordinates to witness exemplar teaching. (a.) His teaching should not be restricted to any subject or to any form of instruction. Even in those which are the most technical and mechanical, his subordinate should have the benefit of his example, and the class the infusion of his spirit. (b.) The daily amount of his teaching will be determined primarily by the size of his school, and by the character of the teaching power at his disposal; but he ought to claim for himself the privilege, and impose upon himself the duty of coming at least once daily into personal contact with each child. (c.) In the distribution of his labour each division has a claim; but the middle and lower classes require the greater share. It is well to secure the morning for his own teaching, making the afternoon a season chiefly of learning and superintendence.

#### III. EXAMINATION.

To successful school keeping, whether viewed in relation to the internal progress of the school, or to the estimation in which it is held

out of doors, one of the most important things is the practice of periodical examinations. We do not here refer to public examinations, valuable as they are to the growth and prosperity of a school, but to monthly examinations for the threefold purpose of advancing the proficient, recording the progress, and criticising methods and results.

(1.) *The first of these* is necessary to the harmonious working of the school, and to the efficient and systematic instruction of a class. A course of lessons for a given period and that a short one, with the certainty of an examination at its close, will excite and sustain a spirit of healthy emulation, at the same time removal of the successful, keeps the class more equal in point of attainment.

(2.) *A monthly record of the position of each child in the various subjects of instruction*, with an indication of its chief wants, often leads to the discovery of weak points in the instruction both in relation to the school and child. Statistics are thus furnished which form a valuable body of reference, by which managers and inspectors may form an estimate of the work done in a school. They enable the teacher to apply the proper tests to the progress of a child, whether it is in accordance with its age, its length of time in the school, and the labour bestowed. They also enable the master to supply the parents with monthly or quarterly reports, thus strengthening their interest in the school and in the progress of their children, and increasing their confidence in the master.

(3.) *The periodical criticism of his methods with a record of their results* will commend themselves to every one who is thoroughly aware of their importance educationally. Education is one of the inductive sciences. Theory must be tested by facts, and principles and methods must be generalizations from such facts. Some masters are content with the mere application of what others have discovered; they never deviate from beaten track; theirs is a dog-trot, in which they never mend the pace nor alter the course from what is customary. Others, aware that mental and moral growth are much affected by the circumstances and surroundings of an individual, and by the influences to which he is exposed, are constantly observing facts, and modify their practice accordingly. Such teachers need no inferior motives to appoint times of examination for the purpose of recording facts in the light of a dispassionate criticism. Here they are presented with an opportunity of testing, after careful and lengthened trial, the efficiency of different methods on different minds, and in various hands; and of testing the application of various methods to different subjects and at different ages. Besides, as much of the instruction is necessarily committed to inexperienced teachers, all of whom have claims on his superior skill, and all of whom should be encouraged and stimulated by the fact that their work is inspected, it is advisable to enter in a book for reference his criticism on their methods and results.

#### IV. PUNISHMENT.

The administration of personal chastisement ought never to be delegated to subordinates as that involves a breach of faith, the teacher alone being *in loco parentis*. To permit it is unwise, as it never fails to beget a strong feeling against the school, while its decided tendency is to lower the master's authority. Much judgment and kindness, in sorrow rather than in anger, should mark its infliction. Never at the moment of the offence; never when the child is not expecting it, such as approaching it unawares and striking it; never when under provocation; and when serious chastisement is required, never in the presence of the other children, as the disparity in the ages and strength of the parties seldom fails to enlist the sympathies of the others in favour of the culprit.

#### V. VISITING.

It may be matter of question whether the visiting of his children at their homes is one of the master's duties; but it has advantages which no earnest teacher would like to forego. His interest in particular children is deepened; he becomes acquainted with their difficulties; he gains a keener insight into their character, and thereby obtains the key to the most effectual mode of treatment. Besides, their attachment to him is strengthened; a salutary check on their conduct is established; and the means obtained of promoting regular and punctual attendance, by enlisting the co-operation of the parents to an extent that would not otherwise be practicable. G.

—Papers for the Schoolmaster.

#### OCULAR TEACHING.

The main thing which we ought to teach our youth is to see something—all that the eyes which God has given them are capable of seeing. The sum of what we do teach them is to say something. As far as I have experience of instruction, no man ever dreams of teaching a boy to get to the root of a matter; to think it out; to get quit of passion and desire in the process of thinking, or to fear no face of man in plainly asserting the ascertained result. The common plea that anything does to "exercise the mind upon" is an utterly false one. The human soul, in youth, is not a machine of which you can polish the cogs with any kelp or brickdust near at hand; and having