

The Management of Children

An Address given by Dr. H. S. Bridges before St. John County Teachers' Institute, December 21st, 1917, and again before the Provincial Institute of N. B. at Moncton, June 1918

An eminent teacher of this Province is said to have begun the work of each school day with a prayer to Deity, that he should receive Divine assistance in the difficult task of discipline. Discipline is the supposed premiss of all school work. Though it does not appear on the time table, yet without it no time table—no part of any time table—can be effectively carried out. By its influence the pupils become accustomed to order, to obedience and to application, which are so necessary to the success of teaching. In short, discipline is the necessary preliminary and accompaniment of all instruction and of all character building. No form of corporate or social life can exist which does not presuppose the discipline of the members composing such society or corporation.

The discipline of a school, however, differs from that of a city, a society or a state, in the fact that those who compose a school are for the most part children and have had no voice in framing its laws. They have not joined the school of their own deliberate choice, nor have they the power of withdrawing themselves at will. It follows, therefore, that the government of a school must be patriarchal, not democratic. There must be one person in whom the government of this patriarchal community is invested—the teacher or head-master whose authority is or should be supreme throughout his dominions in all matters.

The lesson of obedience is one that many children learn before coming to school; still more, unfortunately, do not. The primary function of the school, therefore, is to enforce the lesson of obedience, for I take it not to be the sole business of the school to instruct the rising generation, but to train them in that respect for constituted authority which is necessary to prepare them as citizens for the duties they may be called upon to discharge in the city, state or church.