

SCHOOL GOVERNMENT.

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In order to become a moral trainer, the first step a teacher must take must be to overhaul the present expedients of his school government. Does he rule his little empire by the law of love or of fear? Dose he secure order, obedience, and industry, by infusing the spirit of work from a lawful desire to please others, or honest love of approbation, and for the principal of duty; or does he force results, if not by a rod of iron, by the rod of hard and elastic wood? I am no advocate for weak discipline, properly so called; but I do not call *that* discipline which subdues the spirit of a child, instead of forming his pliant character. There are a thousand arguments against the rod. It is a very easy expedient—an irresistible argument—which the worst master who has but a man's strength can employ. I cannot but think, however, that it is occasionally placed upon the wrong pair of shoulders, when I see a boy punished for indolence or indifference, or which the want of tact and skill in the master is alone to be blamed. The master cannot interest his class—the boy is inattentive. The master is the cause, the boy is the effect; the effect is punished, and the cause escapes. Depend upon it that the teacher who avails himself of all the moral means of discipline which he could find, if he only looked for them where they are to be found—in the sympathies of our common nature—will produce a better condition of discipline, and with far less trouble to himself. School government built upon these sympathies, and backed by public opinion, will be far safer, far pleasanter, and far more productive of fruits, than one enforced by violence and fear. I know that it may be said that universal practice seems to show that the rod must have had its origin in some principle of our nature. This argument I grant; but that principle may be the unfitness and the inertness of the master's nature, and not the want of response to a higher appeal, which will be found in the boy's nature, unless it has perished for want of exercise. An ignorant man, and an unskilful man, of whom accident, and not nature or cultivation, has made a schoolmaster, will find opposed to him the whole sympathy—the public opinion—of his scholars, and he has no alternative but rebellion or the use of his wooden rod; and, as in all stimulus, the dose must be increased, he has no limit to the extent of the employment of it, until a boy too big or too brave for him shall measure his animal strength with his own. There are innumerable objections to the indiscriminate use of this weapon at least, if not its use altogether.—(1) It is seldom applied without passion. (2) A blow inflicted, if it afterwards be proved in error, cannot be recalled. (3) It takes no cognizance of the temper or animus of the culprit. (4) It draws out a direct and hating antagonism among the children. (5) A fault so punished is regarded by the culprit as expiated as soon as the atonement is made. (6) It hardens the sensibilities of a boy's moral nature. Corporal punishment, when anything good is left in a boy, breeds a reckless temper that defies the pain in the bold, and tends to press and to extinguish that becoming self-esteem, and spoils the very spirit of the more gentle boy. As *war* is the last appeal of kings, *death* is the last appeal of the law, so the *rod* should be that of the schoolmaster. I know, as well as any one here, that there must be punishment; but it should consist in the *moral sense of disgrace*, and not in the *animal sense of pain*. What a bad master calls a bad boy, may be the bravest and the finest boy in the school. The master has never courted his affections, or challenged his confidence, and now he despises pain without flinching, for it is the price at which he buys the secret admiration and the sympathy of all his peers. If a master would secure a high state of discipline without the rod, he must begin to organize the school better, to prepare lessons of deeper interest, and adapt them to boy-nature more skilfully—he must claim their sympathies, condescend to play with them, to become a boy with a boy, a child with a child—he must listen to their tales of woe—every school has its own laws of morality—he must be himself an invisible party to their fabrication—he must seek to secure public opinion (what Stow calls the "sympathy of numbers") on his side, and then the stoutest heart of his most obdurate boy, robbed of the admiration of his equals, will not need his strong arm any more, he will wince before the very look of his displeasure. Severity either begets *defiance*, or it begets *terror*. If defiance, the whole discipline fails, unless you can pass from rods to scorpions and from scorpions to thumb-screws. If it begets terror, terror will take its coward refuge in cunning or falsehood; and, as all the glossoms of nobility of character drop off one by one, instead of a *man*, you have made a very *slave* of a boy. We have tried the rod long enough and if a voice from our prisons—if a voice from our reformatories—tells us that the words of human kindness alone can touch a string, the only string left that will vibrate within the broken instrument of an outcast's heart, surely we are doing a crying injustice to our comparatively innocent children whose natures are not utterly unstrung. Last winter, I wandered into the Sessions House in Hull, and I witnessed the trial of a boy of tender years. The Recorder was affected with emotion when he found that he was a hardened and oft-condemned

criminal, though young. He had behaved throughout his trial with the most sullen indifference. In passing sentence, the Recorder followed a new track. "My boy," he said, "I can find none to say a word for you, but I can pity you from my heart; you even know not who your father is, and your other unnatural parent deserted you while a child; you have had no friend to guard you, no monitor to warn you; you have never known a tender mother's love, and were never taught by her to think of God and to pray to Him." The boy, who could hear of former committals and endless thefts without an emotion, began to lower his head when the Recorder used the first tone of compassion; lower and lower it went; but at the name of mother—though one worth the name of mother he had never known—the dry channels of his eyes became filled, until at last the boy sobbed as if his heart would break for the very unwontedness of his emotions. So taught the Saviour of mankind the outcast, the publican, and the sinner, and shall we fall back upon terror and fear with the tender children of our daily schools?

SCHOOL JURISPRUDENCE.

THE OLD SCHOOLMASTER'S STORY.

"When I taught a district school," said he, I adopted it as a principle to give as few rules to my scholars as possible. I had however, one standing rule, which was, "*Strive under all circumstances to do right*," and the text of right, under all circumstances, was the GOLDEN RULE. "*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*"

If an offense was committed, it was my invariable practice to ask "was it right?" "Was it doing as you would be done by?"

All my experience and observation have convinced me that no act of a pupil ought to be regarded as an offence, unless it be when measured by the standard of the Golden Rule. During the last years of my teaching the only tests I ever applied to an act of which it was necessary to judge, were those of the above questions. By this course I gained many important advantages.

In the first place, the plea, "You have not made any rule against it," which for a long time was a terrible burden to me, lost all its power.

In the second place, by keeping constantly before the scholars as a standard of action, the single text of right and wrong as one which they were to apply for themselves, I was enabled to cultivate in them a deep feeling of personal responsibility.

In the third place, I got a stronger hold on their feelings, and acquired a new power of cultivating and directing them.

In the fourth place, I had the satisfaction of seeing them become more truthful, honest, trustworthy and manly in their intercourse with me, with their friends, and with each other.

Once, however, I was sadly puzzled by an application of the principle, by one of my scholars, George Jones,—a large boy—who partly through a false feeling of honor, and partly through a feeling of stubbornness, refused to give me some information. The circumstances were these.

A scholar had played some trick which had intercepted the exercises. As was my custom, I called on the one who had done the mischief to come forward. As no one started I repeated the request, but with no success. Finding that the culprit would not confess his guilt, I asked George if he knew who had committed the offence?

"I did not do it," was the reply.

"But do you know who did?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was it?"

"I do not wish to tell."

"But you must; it is my duty to ask, and yours to answer me."

"I cannot do it sir," said George firmly.

"Then you must stop with me after school."

He stopped as requested, but nothing which I could urge would induce him to reveal anything. At last, out of patience with what I believed to be the obstinacy of the boy, I said—

"Well, George, I have borne with you as long as I can, and you must either tell me or be punished."

With a triumphant look, as though conscious that he had cornered me by an application of my favorite rule, he replied, "I can't tell you because it would not be right; the boy would not like to have me tell of him, and I'll do as I'd be done by."

A few years earlier I should have deemed a reply thus given an insult, and should have resented it accordingly; but experience and reflection had taught me the folly of this, and that one of the most important applications of my oft quoted rule was—to *judge of the motives of others as I would wish to have them judge of mine*. Yet, for a moment, I was staggered. His plea was plausible; he might be honest in making it; I did not see in what respect it was fallacious. I felt that it would not do to retreat from my position and suffer the offender to escape, and yet that I should do a great injustice by compelling a boy to do a thing, if he really believed it to be wrong.