EDUCATION FOR CHARACTER

Moral Training in the School and Home

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PREFACE

The subject-matter of the following study is one department of the great problem how to develop in children and young people their latent capacities for good. Of the many agencies that may contribute to this end we shall confine our attention entirely to one, moral education. In the main our subject is moral education in the school. And we shall have before our mind's eye primarily one type of educational institution, the American public school.

Limitations of space compel a still narrower definition of our subject. The moral life is a very complex affair, and its existence and welfare are inextricably intertwined with all the other elements of life. The physical life is no exception. The school physician and the school nurse accordingly are, among other things, moral reformers, and in some instances the rest of us can accomplish little or nothing until they have done their work.

Furthermore, the moral life has many allies, as it has many enemies. Take, as an illustration of the former, pride in physical perfection. "It may be fairly claimed for reformatory and industrial schools," writes Mr. Legge, Director of the Schools of Liverpool, "that they have proved two things:

first, that the earliest glimmer of reformation in the inmate of a reformatory school is detected when he is found to have developed a feeling of self-respect; secondly, that this feeling of self-respect is easiest aroused by inducing a boy to take a pride in his physical development." This principle is being used in the Philadelphia public schools for all their boys, in what seems to me an admirable and yet very simple fashion; and it is being used not merely to awaken latent self-respect but also to help arm the pupils against the temptations of vice and idleness.

An account of even the more important of these various auxiliary agencies would require an encyclopedia. Interesting and important as they are, they are omitted in this study because the only protection against scattering lies in confining ourselves to the center of the problem, how directly to develop and strengthen loyalty to moral ideals as such.

The teacher and the parent are dealing with a constantly changing organism. For this reason the writer of a book on moral education might perhaps be expected to present an account of the principles of moral development. Here again I have had to face the problem of the boy in the fable who put his hand in the jar of nuts and seized so many that he could not pull his hand out. It has seemed to me that the most pressing need at the present time lay

in the discussion of another set of problems. I have accordingly confined myself to a survey of the concrete aims of moral education and the agencies and instruments by which they may be attained.

The chief means at the disposal of the school for the development of character are the influence of personality on personality, exercised in the ordinary routine of its every-day life, moral training through work and play, and moral instruction, or the influencing of character through ideas. These distinctions are far from being absolute, but they are convenient for practise. To each of these subjects is devoted a section of the book. The application to the home of the principles worked out at length for the school forms the last division of our study. The most general statement of the principles upon which all forms of moral education must rest, wherever they may be conducted, will be found in Chapter XII.

Of the methods described, all have been actually tried in the fires of experience. For the more elaborate methods of moral training I have been compelled to rely upon a study of the work of other teachers. But the discussion of moral instruction rests upon a year's experience of my own in the city high school of Madison, and four years of work in the high school of the University of Wisconsin.

PREFACE

This book has grown out of lectures on moral education delivered in the University of Wisconsin from 1899 to 1902, and from 1911 to the present time. My students in these courses, particularly the members of my summer session classes, have given me valuable suggestions along many lines. For this help I wish to express my sincere appreciation.

F. C. S.

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CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF MORAL EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL

THE value to the community of a system of training in marksmanship will depend not merely upon the amount of skill which it succeeds in developing, but also upon the direction in which the rifle will be aimed after the skill has been acquired. Precisely the same thing is true of an educational system. We teachers are attempting to impart knowledge and to sharpen wits. But the value of our work depends upon the ends for which these acquisitions are employed. In an address delivered shortly before his death Professor James said: "In my time there has been in Eastern Massachusetts no enterprise of public or private rascality that has not been organized or led by a Harvard man." Professor James was speaking as a Harvard graduate. But if for "Eastern Massachusetts" you read cities of the United States, and for "Harvard man," college man, you obtain a statement which, as a college graduate, I

am prepared to admit is near enough the truth to be an extremely disquieting fact. When one considers that the community, either through taxes or donations, is all the while paying the expenses for thus drilling its enemies, the transaction seems, in one aspect, almost grotesque. The conclusion to be drawn from the facts would seem to be that the training of the intellect should be balanced by the training of the will, so that the result will be a well-rounded personality, and not a perversion, repellent in itself and a menace to the community.

The School as an Instrument of Moral Education.—A great many agencies must contribute if the moral situation which we face to-day is ever to be radically and permanently improved. Of these, none has greater potentiality for good—all things considered—and none is more amenable to public sentiment than our public schools. Moral education, in fact, lies in the way of the school as certainly as it does in the way of the home and the church. For the end of education can not be stated in any less inclusive terms than as training for complete living. This is one justification for the introduction of physical education into the schools. It applies equally to the training of character. The moral end was indeed regarded as the fundamental one by Horace Mann when he toiled to create our present public-school system. And this view was shared by the great majority of the teachers, and

served to guide the actual conduct of their work—according to their lights—until about a generation ago. The one-sided insistence upon intellectual results is—broadly speaking—a phenomenon of comparatively recent years. Such a point of view can never have been universal, and even its partial acceptance can be only temporary. For the effects of grafting upon the wolf the qualities of the fox and letting it go at that are too serious long to escape observation. Hence the wide-spread interest to-day in the problem of moral education in the schools.

It is indeed maintained by some that the proper place for moral education is the church and the home. The proper place for moral education is wherever it can be given. For the task is at once enormously difficult, and one which is vital to human society. For our civilization can be preserved, to say nothing of being rendered worth preserving, only in so far as every agency uses all its powers to this end. And if the home (and to a considerable extent this statement holds for the church) ever does its full part it will be because for a generation the school has impressed upon its pupils the value of character by the training and instruction which it has given them, and shown them how—for it is no easy matter—to train and instruct the children who, when they themselves become parents, will be entrusted to their care. Here, if anywhere, apply the words of von Humboldt: "What you wish to

see appear in the life of a nation must be first introduced into the schools."

Limitations of the Moral Influence of the Church.—Furthermore, while home and church have many advantages over the school as the seat of moral education, the school in its turn has and always will have certain great advantages peculiar to itself. The limitations of the influence of the church are easily discovered. It fails entirely to reach a considerable proportion of the population; it secures a large amount of time and attention from only a very small part of the community. Those who carry its message to the children, whether in church service or Sunday-school, are too often without pedagogical experience, or skill, or knowledge of and sympathy with the child's point of view. The great Roman Catholic communion has virtually admitted the truth of this contention by its practise of establishing a very expensive system of parochial schools to supplement the influences of the church.

Limitations of the Moral Influence of the Home.—The home, too, has its own limitations as compared with the school. A higher average of intelligence and character undoubtedly obtains among school-teachers than among the adult population as a whole; and it must never be forgotten that intelligence is an indispensable factor in developing character. Teachers are as a class more interested in and also more familiar with the meth-