HINTS ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

BY

ERNEST F. ROW

B.Sc. (Econ.), L.C.P.

AUTHOR OF

"A SHORT OUTLINE OF PRUSSIAN HISTORY" (OXFORD PAMPHLETS),

AND "A HISTORY OF MIDHURST GRAMMAR SCHOOL"

HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

AMEN CORNER, LONDON, E.C.

1920

Price Two Shillings net

HINTS ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

BY

ERNEST F. ROW

B.Sc. (Econ.), L.C.P.

AUTHOR OF
"A SHORT OUTLINE OF PRUSSIAN HISTORY", (OXFORD PAMPHLETS),
AND "A HISTORY OF MIDHURST GRAMMAR SCHOOL"

"Forgive me, if I seem to teach, who am as ignorant as the trees of the mountain."—R. L. STEVENSON

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN CORNER, LONDON, E.C.
1920

PREFACE

THIS little book has no very ambitious aim. It is an attempt to set down some of the practical conclusions arrived at in the course of a good many years of service as a schoolmaster, in the hope that they may be of use to young masters beginning their careers in secondary schools.

E. F. R.

MIDHURST
July 1919

CONTENTS

HINTS ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Neglect of subject of discipline — Natural disciplinarians — Can discipline be taught?—Negative character of discipline.

THERE is no profession that is entered with less preliminary training than that of the schoolmaster. Whatever views may be held as to the value of training, it cannot be denied that teaching is an art in which there is a great deal that cannot be acquired beforehand. The beginner is consequently faced by many difficulties, and the greatest of them is generally that of discipline, the art of controlling and managing boys and of 'keeping order', both in and out of school.

Strictly speaking, there are two ways in which the practice of discipline can be regarded: as an end in itself, an essential part of the training of youth, and as a means to that end, an indispensable preliminary to any kind of training. We are mainly concerned here with discipline in this latter sense, though the two are not mutually exclusive.

Innumerable books have been written on methods of teaching, and the principles of school and class organisation, as well as on every aspect of education, philosophical, psychological, ethical, and physical, but very little attention has been paid to the purely practical problem of discipline as it confronts the beginner in the craft of teaching. All methods of teaching, whether new or old, presuppose the teacher's ability to handle his class in a satisfactory manner. They assume that the master will control the boys and not be controlled by them—a very large assumption sometimes in the earliest stages of a master's career. Yet this fundamental need is largely neglected by those who write for inexperienced schoolmasters.

Nor does the beginner have much chance of observing the methods of his more expert colleagues. Teaching has to be carried on in comparative isolation, and the headmasters who arrange for their junior assistants to watch an older man at work are few and far between.

It is quite true that some men, fewer perhaps than is often imagined, are naturally good disciplinarians, and have little to learn even at the beginning. They have no trouble with their forms from the very outset. There are also some who, if we are to judge from their own proud reminiscences, solved the problem once for all in their early days by a summary (and very questionable) process of assault and battery. No doubt we have all met colleagues who related how they began their career by 'laying out' the biggest boy in the form at the first hint of disorder, and thus disposed of all potentialities of trouble by a single

well-directed blow. This is an example not lightly to be followed in these humanitarian days.

But though some men are born disciplinarians and some boys have discipline violently thrust upon them, it is yet true that good discipline can be achieved, though sometimes only at the cost of long and painful experience. A reasonable measure of common sense and a vast willingness to learn are the essential prerequisites. It is hopeless to begin by thinking that you know all that there is to know in the matter. Pride and swelled head will assuredly precede a fall. Once upon a time a very youthful junior master began his teaching career in a fairly big school, and his chief said to him : ' Any man can become a good disciplinarian, *if he isn't a fool.*' So there is hope for some of us at least.

There is also a certain amount of truth in the oft-repeated statement that discipline cannot be taught. It is said that you can only learn from your own experience, and that no man can instruct another in the art of maintaining order. But this is not entirely true. Discipline certainly is very largely a personal and individual matter, for which rules of universal application cannot well be laid down. Moreover, different masters will constantly employ different methods. One will be the strictest of martinets, ruling with a rod of iron held in a mailed fist. Another will succeed equally well by a free and easy use of a gift for banter and cajolery. His fist is concealed in a velvet glove. But these differences are most in evidence among men of considerable experience. Their methods were probably less varied when they began

to teach, and they have gradually developed with their developing personality. Individual peculiarities are bound to develop in such a personal business as teaching.

Yet there are undoubtedly many hints that can be given by the experienced to the inexperienced, many golden rules that can be impressed on him, and many pitfalls that he can be taught to avoid. Perhaps this last point is the most important. It is easier to tell a beginner what to avoid than what to do, so any advice on the subject is likely very often to take a negative form. Nor is this such a weakness as might appear at first sight, because discipline, after all, is largely a negative matter. More disciplinary trouble arises through the master's sins of commission than through those of omission. It is in what he does rather than in what he leaves undone that he is liable to go wrong. Again, the business of the master is rather to prevent disorder than to keep order, more negative than positive, for, as we shall show later, order is the more normal and natural state for a class and disorder the exception, however hard a saying this may appear to the neophyte in the thick of his first struggles with youthful Bolshevism.

It may be objected that this is making too absolute a divorce between discipline and teaching. The only way to keep order, it may be said, is to occupy and interest the boys so that they have neither time nor inclination for disorder. This is true enough in a sense, though it is perhaps a counsel of perfection. If a master can get his boys so completely absorbed in their work that their attention becomes entirely

spontaneous, as the psychologists say, then he will have no disciplinary difficulties, at least in the class-room.

Teaching and discipline are not of course entirely distinct functions. But undoubtedly they present themselves to the beginner as two separate problems. To borrow a useful simile which has been employed in a different connection, we may compare the joint process of teaching and keeping order to that of driving a tunnel through sandy soil. The question arises: How is it that the walls of the tunnel do not fall in without the casing of brick, and how can the casing be fixed in its place without first driving the tunnel? The young master is faced by a similar dilemma. He has no chance to use his teaching powers until he can maintain reasonable order, and he cannot maintain order without teaching. In both cases the solution is that the two processes must be carried on as far as possible simultaneously.

A further reason for isolating the disciplinary aspect of a master's work for separate consideration lies in the fact that discipline is not concerned only with teaching. It extends beyond the class-room, into the boarding-house, the playing field, and the dormitory.

CHAPTER II

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

Need of a definite aim — Self-deception — Excuses — Test of good discipline — Master's responsibility — Boys are not fools—Turning boys out of class—Storm centres.

THE first essential requirements of the disciplinarian are that he should know clearly what he is aiming at, and that he should not be content with anything short of perfection. Needless to say he is not likely to attain it, but he can at least be always striving for improvement. He should never rest on his oars and think there is nothing further to be done. He must rid himself of the idea that so long as the boys are passably quiet and well-behaved in ordinary circumstances there is nothing wrong with his discipline. He must be prepared for extraordinary circumstances as well, for those times of excitement which come, for example, at the end of term and on Prize Days, when boys are unsettled and restless, and discipline is put severely to the proof. Nor will his discipline be good enough if it is only maintained at the cost of friction and antagonism with his class. He must regard it as a reflection on his ability if he ever has

to interrupt his teaching to call some one to order or if each period of work leaves a crop of punishments behind it. Discipline is a habit, and like all habits it works unconsciously and smoothly.

Yet there is a great deal of self-deception abroad in this matter. One may find masters going on from term to term and from year to year without appearing to realise that their discipline is only moderate, if not positively bad. This may be due to sheer slackness and disinclination to take trouble, or to lack of imagination and the ability to see themselves as others see them, or to pure ignorance of what real discipline involves. But possibly the commonest cause is the fatal delusion that the fault lies with the boys, or with the general discipline of the school, or with one's predecessor, or with the system of punishments, or with the headmaster—with anything in fact but oneself. Of course we all do it; it is an intensely human failing to search everywhere for excuses: *If only the chief hadn't such a silly prejudice against thrashing boys, it would be all right.—How can one be expected to keep a form in order when they have come straight from Robinson, who lets them do just as they like?—Smith minor is a thundering nuisance every time; he ought to be in a reformatory.* Let us consider these points more closely.

If poor discipline is due to ignorance of the right standard to be achieved it should be speedily dissipated by noticing the effect of the entry of the headmaster into the class. Any weakness is at once disclosed by the sudden hush, the self-conscious looks that betray guilt, and the hurried attempts of the boys to

straighten themselves up, take their hands from their pockets, and look as if they were hard at work. If a master sees this sort of thing happening in his class he may be quite sure that his discipline is not good enough. If, on the other hand, the class carries on unconcernedly, without the least change when the head comes in, then the master may feel satisfied at passing the test. (This is assuming, of course, that the headmaster's own authority is all that it should be.)

What we have called the 'fatal delusion' that the fault lies elsewhere than with the teacher himself, is responsible for a great deal of trouble. This is not to say that he may not be handicapped by various considerations. Some of his excuses may have some weight. But it cannot be too firmly impressed on the novice that in nine cases out of ten the fault is really his own. If he demurs to this painful thought let him at least ponder over the words of Burke, who does not go quite so far as this: 'I am not one of those who think that the people are never in the wrong. . . . But I do say, that in all disputes between them and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people.' Burke was thinking of the state of England in 1770, but his words are very apposite to the class-room. Translated into practice, they mean that the master should start by assuming that he is making mistakes somewhere, and set to work to find out what is wrong and to put it right. The alternative method of blaming some one else leads nowhere, and to appeal precipitately to the headmaster (except privately,

and with a view to obtaining advice) only brings temporary relief without removing the cause of the difficulty. Not only so, but it also gives the master away, *and the boys know it.*

This brings us to another consideration of the first importance. The young master is often very apt to credit boys with far less wisdom and common sense than they possess. Boys are always human, sometimes knaves, but very rarely fools. Let him try to see himself from their point of view, an invaluable exercise which should be constantly employed. He cannot impose his will upon them and keep them properly under control. He has to submit to be ruled by them instead of being himself the ruler. They are perfectly conscious of it; they know that he fails where other men succeed. After all, with their experience of many masters they should surely be connoisseurs of discipline, a matter which touches them so closely. Moreover, they are anxious, within certain limits, to be controlled and to submit to this man's authority as to that of others. They have no respect, and therefore no liking, as a general rule, for the man they can rag, but they are intensely human. They have much of the inconsistency that is commonly associated with the gentler sex. (In fact they are in many ways more feminine than masculine.) Consequently, when a master asks for trouble they are ready enough to supply it. At the same time they are quite clever enough to see (feminine intuition, perhaps ?) that an appeal to the headmaster for assistance is a confession of weakness on his part and a feather in their own

cap: 'Old Bunny can't manage us; he has to go and fetch the head.' And the master ought to regard it as a confession of weakness himself and not as a normal proceeding.

Unfortunately one meets occasionally with the idea that it is the head's business to see to discipline and that his masters have only to teach. The master who is content to carry on with his teaching while his chief helps him out and makes his teaching possible by sitting at the back of his class-room during a lesson, is not going the right way to work to acquire authority. Not the least difficult of the problems of a headmaster is that of deciding how far he is justified in punishing boys for faults due to a master's lack of experience and inefficiency.

A similar misconception of the boy's point of view and of his own responsibility sometimes leads a master to turn out of his class a boy who causes him trouble. This is to be condemned on several grounds. It rarely punishes the boy, who thus gets an unexpected period of freedom; it shows the class the master's inability to deal with them; and it ignores the fact that the master's business is to teach the boy, and the boy is there to be taught. In other words the master is not carrying out his part of the contract with the school, and the boy's parents are paying for what they do not receive. The plan can only be justified by claiming that the boy thus evicted will make up later on for his lost time, which may or may not be the case. The device mentioned in a subsequent chapter of keeping a whole class unoccupied for a short space is not a parallel case,

as they remain under supervision and control. If a boy *must* be turned out, it should only be for the purpose of reporting himself at once to the head-master. Needless to say, the master must assure himself that he does so.

The old military maxim: 'Never under-estimate the strength of your enemy,' holds good of the class-room as well as the battle-field. In the early stages there may very possibly be a measure of hostility between boys and master, or at least a state of armed neutrality. But it is the wisdom rather than the strength of the foe that is generally under-estimated.

Some masters, particularly those who are enthusiastic scholars, are liable to think too much of their subject and too little of their boys. They are apt to regard the subject as the end of teaching and not the means to the development of a human being. Consequently, to them a badly-behaved boy is mainly a nuisance, a drag on the work and progress of the rest. They do not realise that the difficult and tiresome boy needs educating as much as the others, if not more. To put it bluntly: any one can teach a boy who wishes to learn; the real art of the teacher lies in teaching the idle and the ill-behaved. Moreover, values are not altogether the same in the world as in the school. The boy who is a failure at school in very many cases turns out better than the well-behaved one, and the dunce is just as likely to succeed as the brilliant scholar to whom examinations are child's play. Perhaps we might go even farther, if we judge from experience,

and say that he is *more* likely to succeed; but such generalisations are dangerous. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that every boy is entitled to his fair share of attention, and 'the worse the material, the greater the skill in working it'.

The most aggressive offenders against discipline are the boys who are troublesome but open and straightforward. This is not to say that they are the worst, or even the hardest to deal with. But it is they who introduce themselves first to the notice of the young master. They are the storm centres of the form, the ringleaders in any disturbances. It is they who try to 'draw' the newcomer by unwelcome and excessive questions, who are most officious in offering gratuitous information and advice, and who, at a later stage, may evolve the daring plan of perching the waste-paper basket on top of the half-open door, or relieving the monotony of the class-room by keeping the home fires burning or following a long, long trail in melodious chorus. Such a boy is generally clever enough to keep on the windy side of the law. He is full of plausible excuses if discovered, and he does his best to make it hard to bring any very definite charges against him. His great delight appears to be to do as little work as possible without getting into trouble, and to be a thorn in the side of as many masters as are vulnerable. His ingenuity in both respects is admirable. He is not really a 'problem', for he is amenable enough if managed by a strong hand and with abundance of patience and good humour. There is nothing radically wrong with him except excessive

energy and sadly misplaced ingenuity, together with a love for the limelight. The chances are that if properly handled his energy and originality will go far towards helping him to make a greater success of his life later on than many a boy of irreproachable behaviour. ' Ne savez-vous pas, vous aussi, l'élève de Goethe,' says Bourget, ' que nos qualités futures se développent d'abord en défauts ? '

CHAPTER III

THE START

Early days—Strictness *v.* Friendliness—Aiming at popularity—Fear and respect—Friendship with boys—Justice—Discipline as a habit—Untidiness.

It is a trying moment for the newly-arrived master when he finds himself set down for the first time before a class of twenty or thirty boys, all carefully scrutinising his appearance, sizing him up, and estimating his potentialities for good and for evil. He is painfully conscious of the paramount necessity of creating a good impression at the beginning, and not making mistakes whose results shall follow him throughout his career.

He probably lays rather too much stress in his own mind on the crucial nature of the very early days. They certainly count for a good deal, but not for everything. Early mistakes can often be corrected and lived down later on—boys have short memories—even if in extreme cases it may need a change of school to accomplish this. (Incidentally it may be observed that a master who fails in his first school often becomes successful elsewhere. He

has gained his experience, and his first errors are not known.) Conversely, early successes can easily be neutralised by later mistakes arising from excessive self-confidence or from mere slackness, and this is a point which should not be forgotten. Boys, too, are cautious at the beginning, and the real trial of strength is often postponed. It frequently happens that a master's second or even third term discovers the weak points in his discipline, even more than the first. It is a case of familiarity giving birth to its proverbial offspring. Let him not, therefore, be either too elated or too disheartened by the vicissitudes of the first few days.

Now there are two main attitudes or points of view with which the young master may, consciously or unconsciously, take up his work. In the first place he may have been impressed by the advice to 'Be strict at first, at all costs; take care to begin as you mean to go on, and show them at once that you are not going to stand any nonsense'. In this case, which is most likely to be that of a man who is a bit doubtful of the strength of his own character and personality, he will be anxiously and sensitively on the watch for the slightest signs of derogation from his dignity and authority, intensely suspicious of wrongdoing, and in his lack of experience he will probably find it even when it is not there.

On the other hand, he may take a different line altogether. He may think—'good, easy man'!—that severity is a mistake and mutual hostility an outworn tradition. He determines, therefore, to start by making friends with the boys right away

and creating for himself an immediate popularity. He, too, is likely to be misled by what he sees.

These two attitudes are largely matters of temperament, but they depend also on training. The first is traditional and old-fashioned, the second is modern, if not futurist. The first may arise from memories of one's own school days; the second was born, perhaps, in a training college, the offspring of ethics and psychology. Truly, a little learning is a dangerous thing!

Of course the happy mean between these two states of mind is the best line to cultivate. But undoubtedly the first is more likely to succeed than the second. For one thing, it is easier to tone down excessive severity than to screw up, so to speak, a too easy-going disposition later on. But further—and here we reach one of the most important rules for a master to impress upon himself—aiming at popularity is the most disastrous mistake that a schoolmaster can make, not only at the outset but at any point in his career. This applies to the headmaster who strives to fill his house or his school by this means, as well as to the assistant who wants to be on friendly terms with everybody. It is not by any means to decry popularity or to discourage friendly relations between boys and masters. In the long run a good schoolmaster will probably be popular, and he certainly cannot claim the maximum of success in his profession unless he is on terms of friendship with his boys. But we are dealing here not with the finished product but with the master *in posse*, with the seed and not the fruit.

Friendliness and popularity are fruits of very slow growth, if they are worth anything at all, and 'the buds that are longest in blossoming will last the longest in flower'. Like health and happiness, they are by-products, ripening best when they are not deliberately cultivated and sought after as ends in themselves. Moreover, boys are quick to see when a master is striving for popularity, and it arouses their amused contempt and dislike. They dislike being 'sucked up to', just as they dislike the converse process, when a boy tries to ingratiate himself with a master. It cannot be too often repeated that boys are *not* fools.

Relations between masters and boys must be grounded on mutual respect—*mutual*, because respect for the boys is as important as the respect due from them. Once that basis is firmly established the rest may follow. Now boys will only respect a master whom they fear. There need be nothing derogatory to their own self-respect in this fear, and of course there should not be. Otherwise the master is merely a tyrannical slave-driver. But a healthy attitude of fear there must be as the ultimate ground of satisfactory relations. 'Without denying,' says J. H. Skrine, 'the contention of the individual mother that her boy can only be led by kindness, the uncongenial truth is, that, for boys in their collective capacity, fear is at any rate the *beginning* of wisdom.'

After all, why should boys make friends immediately with a master, merely because he is placed in authority over them without their having any voice in the matter? They must have time to find out

what there is in him. They are exacting in their requirements — more so, perhaps, than grown-up people. At the same time they are intensely shy, individually. It is only when supported by their fellows that they appear unabashed and undaunted. (If you come across a boy who is not shy, watch him carefully; he may cause trouble. A boy who can look you straight between the eyes without flinching is likely to prove untrustworthy.)

The fact is that friendly relations are scarcely possible, even if desirable, between boys and young masters, merely on the score of age and inexperience. The master is no longer a boy, and (dare we say it ?) not yet quite a man. He cannot meet with boys on equal terms, as one of themselves, because he is too old and his interests and outlook are wider than theirs. But he is not yet old enough to supply the sort of friendship that boys appreciate. They like to talk to a master as to a man, unlike themselves though sharing many of their interests. They have enough youthful companionship among their contemporaries.

We are far from meaning to advocate a sort of Olympian aloofness on the part of the young master, or to discourage his joining in all the games and other interests of the school. But he must steer a difficult middle course between too much boyishness and too much attention to his own dignity, without ever forgetting that he is a master and must behave and be treated as such.

Is it necessary at this point to utter a warning against sentimentalism in any shape or form ? ‘ The

relations should be paternal and not sentimental', writes a schoolmaster of great experience. The beginner would be well advised not to bother his head even about being paternal.

If it were possible to discover the opinions of the boys on a master they would be extremely valuable, if somewhat distressing to the man himself. Boys are by far the best critics both of teaching methods and of discipline, and when some small fraction of their views does get disclosed, as may occasionally happen, it should not be lightly dismissed. Needless to say, boys rarely have either the power or the desire to express themselves on the subject to any one to whom the knowledge would be of use.

It should not be necessary to say a great deal about the need for a keen sense of justice in the schoolmaster, for the requirement is very obvious. His fairness and impartiality must be absolutely unswerving, and so habitual as to become part of his nature. Without this he would do well to change his profession without delay. Boys are extremely quick to notice any approach to favouritism or differential treatment, and they have a strong objection to it. But a sense of justice is essential, and less easy of attainment, in other respects also, notably in the adjustment of punishments to offences. We shall have more to say about punishments later on, but it may be remarked here that in imposing them instinct is sometimes a safer guide than reason. The time-honoured maxim, 'Always give a decision promptly, but never give a reason for it', is still of great value. The decision will frequently be a right one, even though

it might be hard to give satisfactory grounds for it. In any case the reason is not necessarily to be given to the boys.

This is not to say that there should be anything in the slightest degree arbitrary about punishing, but that it is not always easy to explain the exact difference between different kinds of offences and their respective penalties. The difference, however, must be perfectly clear in the master's own mind, and to the boys themselves. Moreover, punishments should only be inflicted for quite definite and tangible offences. To punish a boy on vaguely general grounds, because he is a nuisance and has a bad influence in the class, without being able to give any more detailed account of his misdemeanours, is not justice.

It should be carefully borne in mind that the great object to be kept in view at the beginning is to create a habit of obedience and order. This is the normal and natural state of a class, and if it is absent there must be no intermission of effort until it is attained. It is natural even to the boys themselves, however strongly they may feel that *dulce est desipere in loco.* To quote Burke again : ' The people have no interest in disorder.' The temptation to rag when ragging is possible is too strong to be resisted, but none the less boys very much prefer a class where it is not possible. They like to be ' dragooned ', both in and out of school, so long as the dragooning is done in a good-humoured fashion ; and the martinet is far less unpopular than is often supposed. But they are the creatures of habit and of imitation, and though it is easy for a few wild spirits to obtain a sheep-like

following, yet when once the habit of order has been firmly established, it will not occur to them to break it. When that point is reached the problems of discipline will take a different form and become concerned only with exceptional and individual cases.

When a new master arrives on the scene the boys' first business is to explore his possibilities and see how far they can safely go in ragging him. This applies at any rate to the few wild spirits mentioned above, who are out for limelight and *éclat* among their fellows. For the first few days they are generally cautious—making their observations and drawing practical, though unexpressed, conclusions. When at length they begin to act on these conclusions, the testing time for the master has come. If he succeeds in the trial of strength, so far so good. But let him shun self-confidence like the plague, for the end is not yet, and if he grows careless or takes liberties with his own exertion of authority he may still meet with stern retribution.

The form that this trial of strength will take will depend on various circumstances, but largely on the age of the boys. It may be said generally that the more active and open forms of disorder and ragging will be confined to middle forms, the most difficult of all to deal with. Smaller boys will usually be content with talking aloud, which is harder to stop than it sounds. Senior boys, if they are too dignified for more active methods, will show their contempt for ineffective authority by slackness in work, lazy attitudes, and more or less quiet conversation.

This matter of attitude is one that needs emphasis,

for it is constantly overlooked. Along with it go such points as tidiness of dress and surroundings. A master may do his best work in an arm-chair, with his feet on the mantelpiece, and clad in a disreputable old jacket, replete with rags and pleasant memories of bygone days, but with boys it is not so. Slackness of attitude and slovenliness of dress and bearing are destructive alike of discipline and of good work. The same thing applies with equal force to untidy class-rooms littered with paper and nutshells, desks standing drunkenly askew, and disorderly movement in and out of the room. 'It is hard to escape something of the pig if lodged in a sty', wrote a wise headmaster many years ago. Opinions may differ as to the precise line to be drawn between comfort and smartness in dress. Some are advocates of sweaters and flannels and soft collars, and allow the wearing of games dress in school and the removal of coats in hot weather, while others draw the line at some or all of these delights. But there can be no question as to the great mental and moral influence of untidiness. Reasonable attention to dress (which does not include the meticulous parting of the hair or a fastidious taste in socks) is as necessary to the schoolboy as to the soldier. Needless to say, in all such matters a master should employ example as well as precept. An admonition to a boy to take his hands out of his pockets carries less weight, though it may appeal to the boy's sense of humour, if the master is addicted to the same evil habit himself.

The master must himself pay due attention to his dress—a costume which may be the *dernier cri* in a

university town is not necessarily the most suitable in a school. It goes without saying that school regulations in such matters as smoking should be strictly carried out. Punctuality is a worthy virtue in a schoolmaster, and the want of it is responsible for a good deal of disorder. A man who makes a point of always being a few minutes late for class is asking for trouble.

CHAPTER IV

CLASS-ROOM DISCIPLINE

Discipline before teaching—*Dolce far niente*—The voice—Variety — Vigilance — Suspicion and guilelessness—'Machinery'—Trust.

It may be that when the educational millennium arrives all problems of discipline will disappear, because the teaching will be of such enthralling interest as to make it unnecessary. A great deal obviously depends on the teaching method. But even so the schoolmaster of the present day is faced by the double task of teaching and maintaining order at the same time. And here the truth needs emphasising that he must always consider discipline *first*. Unless his teaching powers are very far beyond the ordinary, they will not avail to counteract weakness in other respects. It is a complete mistake for a tyro to think that by ignoring the earliest signs of talking or disorder and proceeding steadily with his lesson, perhaps raising his voice to drown the noise, he will gradually attract attention and talk down the swiftly-growing uproar. This method is doomed to failure. The only thing to do is to stop the lesson

completely and make the whole class sit perfectly still and do nothing, *literally* nothing, for a time. If the master is not strong enough to accomplish this he will assuredly not succeed by the other plan, and he will at least be able to devote all his attention to the point of discipline.

Teachers are often reluctant to adopt this method, perhaps because it seems an unwarranted waste of time. But in reality it is time well spent, for it saves much waste later on. The average boy finds it exceedingly irksome to sit still and do nothing at all, even for a few minutes, and so the process is an excellent form of deterrent punishment, as well as a direct assertion of the master's authority at the very moment it is most needed. Immediate application is a great advantage, for, as the master will soon discover, threats of future punishment are of little avail in such cases.

This form of punishment—what we might call the *dolce far niente* method—is a good one to apply to large numbers of boys when collective punishment is needed. It is as well for the master himself to remain silent as far as possible, as well as the boys, and not to utilise the occasion for 'telling them off'.

This brings us to the question of the voice and its proper use. Talking too much is a common mistake, and talking too loud is still commoner. A naturally loud voice is a misfortune—especially if it carries beyond the bounds of a single class-room. Even if it does not do that, it is bad for the boys. The aim should be to speak in the quietest voice that can be

heard distinctly by every one in the room. Elementary schools have been credited with cultivating a harsh and piercing voice, but they are far from unknown in secondary schools. The avoidance of strain on the speaker is to be considered, as well as the effect on the boys and on neighbouring classes; teaching is tiring enough to many people, especially at the end of the day, even if reasonable care is taken to economise one's strength.

Monotony in speaking is another thing to be avoided. It is trying to the hearers, making them either sleepy or restless. As much variety as possible should therefore be put into the voice. Here, as everywhere, the master needs to exercise his imagination and do his best to see and hear himself as he is seen and heard by others.

But this principle of variety applies to other things besides the voice. Many of its applications are rather matters of general teaching method than of discipline proper, but some of them may be mentioned here. If a master tries to put himself in the position of a small boy condemned to sit still for some forty minutes at a stretch, he will realise how welcome is any break in the monotony, even in very little things. For instance, let him (the master, not the boy) walk about the room sometimes instead of sitting or standing all the time. This not only breaks the monotony but has the added advantage of extending his area of observation. It is a well-recognised fact of psychology that moving objects attract the attention more than stationary ones. This makes yet another advantage.

The back of the room is an excellent position for the master on many occasions, especially while the class is engaged in writing or while a boy is working at the blackboard. It has a good effect on lazy or disorderly boys. If you face them they know if you are looking at them or not, and shape their course accordingly. If you are behind them they find it safest to assume that you are looking at them. One of the best teachers that the writer came into contact with in his school days invariably taught his classes from behind.

The practice of setting boys to work at the blackboard instead of doing everything there oneself has much to commend it. It interests the boys and at the same time sets the master free. It is difficult for him to see what is going on when he is at the board himself.

It goes without saying that keen observation is a necessary qualification in the schoolmaster. This is largely a matter of practice. It should be as unobtrusive as possible, but nothing should be able to elude it. The instinct of the scout is required, for example, in tracking down a note that is travelling across the room with incredible skill and secrecy, or to identify a boy who makes a whispered remark when the master's back is turned. This latter may be a matter of inference—an argument from probability—if he knows the boys well.

While constant vigilance is thus required—and it should become a second nature in time—it should not be allowed to degenerate into excessive suspicion. The golden mean between suspicion and guileless

innocence is not easy to acquire, but it is essential. To a large extent it is a matter of individual temperament, and some men need to guard against one extreme and some against the other. This applies particularly to the detection of dishonesty in work, commonly known as cribbing, where both extremes are especially dangerous. If cheating is allowed to continue unchecked, the evil spreads rapidly, with disastrous results. On the other hand, unfounded charges of dishonesty are scarcely less injurious. These matters require extreme care in investigating, if we are to detect the wrongdoer and pass over the innocent. Guilt or innocence may turn on such details as the colour of the ink in a written exercise. Cases should never be punished unless the proof of dishonesty is very clear and definite. A moral certainty in the master's mind, without tangible evidence, is not sufficient. And clear and definite proof is very often difficult of attainment.

There remains the question of prevention of such offences, and indeed of all offences, as distinguished from their cure. Much may be done by careful arrangement of home-work, etc., to lessen opportunities for cheating, though it is not easy to remove them altogether. Mathematical work lends itself more readily than other subjects to dishonesty, and if possible it should be arranged that all written mathematical work should be done in school, leaving only learning work to be done at home or in prep. All possible steps should be taken to make cribbing difficult, and the young master should not

be deluded into thinking such measures unworthy or undesirable.

This is one small instance of the value of organisation—of what Thring called 'machinery', and which he insisted on so strongly and so frequently. Here are his words: 'Machinery, machinery, machinery, should be the motto of every good school. As little as possible ought to be left to personal merit in the teacher or chance; as much as possible ought to rest on the system and appliances on every side checking vice and fostering good, quietly and unostentatiously.' Thring was thinking of school organisation and construction in a wide sense, in big things as well as small, but it is in small things that the assistant master will need to put the lesson into practice. The above words were written in 1858. The paramount necessity for 'machinery' is less in need of emphasis to-day than it was sixty years ago, when school organisation was of the most primitive description, but none the less it should not be overlooked by the modern schoolmaster. In the smallest details of class-work discipline can be enormously helped by careful and judicious organisation.

To take another and more trivial example: suppose our hypothetical novice wishes to collect the written work of his form at the end of the period. If he is careless and thoughtless he will say: 'Bring your work up here.' Result: a wild stampede to the master's desk, and any previous good order in the class largely neutralised at the end. If he sets out to collect the papers himself a somewhat similar

result follows. But if he instructs each boy to pass his paper to the boy in front of him he can collect them all from the front row without waste of time and without taking his eyes off the form. These are 'trifles light as air', but it is surprising how often they are neglected and how great is their cumulative effect.

Our young master may possibly object to the employment of 'machinery' on the ground that it is better to trust the boys. He may believe in giving them plenty of opportunities to go wrong, and feel that he 'cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat'. But while there is an undoubted danger in overdoing the 'machinery' and trusting too much to organisation, yet we are far from the point where boys are so safeguarded as to have no chance of going wrong. Trusting boys is one of the glories of our English schools, and we may well hope that it will always remain so. If any one finds it hard to reconcile trust with organisation, let him ponder these further words of Thring: 'Trust should be unlimited in action, suspicion unlimited in arrangement, and then there will be no need for it afterwards.' And Thring was no lover of 'a fugitive and cloistered virtue'.

The teaching of some subjects is, of course, harder from the point of view of discipline than that of others. It is easier to keep order in a class engaged in writing than when having to talk much oneself.

Generally speaking, the more the boys have to do themselves, other than merely listening, the easier will it be to manage them. Working at the blackboard is difficult to combine with proper watchfulness. Science work in the laboratory is a stringent test of a master's powers, and so is the teaching of singing to a large combined class of fifty or sixty boys. This may be necessary in a small school. In this case the work of the teacher is made lighter if he has some one to play the accompaniments for him and can give all his attention to the class.

The arrangements of the class-room as to furniture, etc., are largely beyond the assistant master's control, but wherever it is possible he should so manage it that the boys do not sit close together. The ideal arrangement would be for him to be able to walk all round each desk. Failing that, gangways between the files of desks are the next best plan. The boys should always occupy the same places, and these should not be chosen by themselves.

CHAPTER V

OUT-OF-SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Dormitory duty—Familiarity—Games—Preparation.

A MASTER'S duties and responsibilities are rarely at an end when he leaves his class-room. He will be required in most cases to supervise games, to take evening preparation, to be 'on duty' in the school grounds, to exercise supervision in the dining-room and the dormitory, to take boys to church or to attend the school chapel, and perhaps to take boys for walks. In some of these places his position is to a certain extent less magisterial, and the requirements of discipline slightly less rigid. Yet they offer many stumbling-blocks to inexperienced feet. The personal element enters more largely into out-of-school intercourse with the boys, and the man himself counts for more than his methods. The more free and easy nature of the relationship obviously gives more scope for the unruly spirits to express themselves. This is particularly the case when bedtime comes.

Dormitory duty is a trying ordeal to the beginner,

and perhaps the hardest task of those enumerated above. It is quite possible for a master to exert his authority with passable success in the class-room and to fail egregiously in the boarding-house. His business is to see the boys to bed and maintain silence in the dormitories thereafter. It is after they are in bed and the lights are out that his troubles become acute. Let him never think that a little whispering is immaterial. It is the thin end of the wedge. Absolute and unconditional silence in dormitories is the very bed-rock of house discipline, and no attempt at compromise should ever be made. One difficulty is that of identifying voices in the darkness. If the culprit refuses to own up there is nothing for it but to punish the whole room. Another difficulty lies in the fact that punishment cannot be immediate, and the prospect of retribution in the morning is not always a sufficient deterrent. It seems as if boys often discover some topics of conversation of vital importance immediately the lights go out—something that imperatively demands to be uttered at once, no matter what the cost.

Various circumstances affect the behaviour of boys in dormitories. In a well-organised school they should be sufficiently tired out by the day's work and games to be ready for sleep immediately. But any special cause of excitement will quickly unsettle them —a match, or an examination, or a Sports Day, or the approach of the holidays. Moreover, the weather is an important factor. Bad weather may prevent the normal expenditure of energy out of doors during the day, and the surplus has to be worked off before

sleep comes. Hot summer nights are also very trying, especially now that 'summer time' involves going to bed by daylight.

An inexhaustible fund of good humour in the master will go far to help him with these problems. He can display his human nature more easily in the house than is always possible in the more official atmosphere of school. Moreover, the boys have not as a rule to be dealt with in such large numbers as in the class-room, and are to that extent more amenable. Darkness certainly gives an added courage to the bold, but it takes away some of the infectious excitement that results from the proximity of one's fellows.

The discipline of the playing field and the walk requires little comment. But the beginner who finds discipline a hard nut to crack in school may be warned against relaxing too much out of school. Above all he must guard against being too hail-fellow-well-met with the boys. If he is not treated with due respect outside he will assuredly not be so inside. Let him beware of permitting the least approach to familiarity from the boys and never forget that fear must precede respect. Plenty of boys will try to 'get round' him, especially with a view to showing off before their friends, and the margin between familiarity and impudence is perilously narrow. He should never, by the way, address boys by their Christian names or nicknames.

The master who can join in the school games has a certain advantage thereby over his less athletic

colleagues, though less, perhaps, than is sometimes thought. It is even true that a bad disciplinarian may sometimes achieve great popularity and genuine liking if he is a good cricketer. But if so he must at the same time be a thorough sportsman in the wider sense. Such cases, however, are rare. It should not be imagined that prowess at games can compensate to any large extent for weakness elsewhere.

Supervision of evening preparation may be placed under the heading of out-of-school discipline, though the circumstances are much the same as in the class-room. It generally involves supervision and nothing else. The boys have their work to do, and the master has only to see that they do it. Yet this is not always as easy as it sounds. Small boys in particular have a provoking way of getting their work done (after a fashion) long before the proper time. The fault lies, of course, with the master who sets the home-work, but when it happens the best plan is to give the youngsters something interesting to do, a book to look at or a picture or map to draw, rather than to try to make them sit still and do nothing but disturb their neighbours.

Unless the master taking preparation is definitely instructed to give judicious assistance to the boys with their home-work, he will do well to refuse all applications for help or explanation. The habit of asking for it is one that grows on boys, especially the lazy ones.

If the master cannot maintain perfect silence and

order in preparation except by giving his whole time and attention to the boys, he should plainly not try to occupy himself with anything else. Otherwise it is a favourable opportunity for him to get on with his own work.

CHAPTER VI

PUNISHMENT

Organised punishments—Moral offences and school offences —Reporting to the headmaster—Impositions—Collective punishment—Sneaking—Treatment of senior boys.

In dealing with the subject of punishment there are two or three distinctions to be made at the outset. In the first place, a school may have a definite system of organised punishments, or the matter may be left, within reasonable limits, to each master's personal discretion. Under an organised system the master acts as judge and jury when an offence is committed, but not as legislator or executioner. He has to find the verdict and assess the degree of the penalty, but its nature is settled for him and its execution is left to others. For example, he may merely be required to enter the boy's name in a register for a certain amount of detention or punishment drill or what not, and the infliction of the penalty is then supervised by the master on duty for the time being. By the alternative method he chooses the nature of the punishment himself and is personally responsible for enforcing it.

A discussion of the comparative advantages of these two systems falls outside the scope of this book. But it may be said here that the first plan may be abused with fatal facility by an inefficient master. He finds it the easiest thing in the world to enter large numbers of boys for punishment, without any further trouble or responsibility on his own part, and is then inclined to think he has done his duty. The results of this are unequivocally bad. The machinery of punishment is liable to break down under the strain placed on it. The master is looked at askance by the unfortunate colleagues on whom falls the burden of his inefficiency. The punishment, like an excessive issue of paper currency, depreciates in value, and things go from bad to worse. Nor is the effect on the boys the same as when a man takes trouble himself over his punishments. If he has to enforce them in his own person he will be more cautious in imposing them and they will be of greater value.

Another distinction to be carefully borne in mind is that between moral offences and offences against school discipline — between sins and crimes. The schoolboy is in a somewhat similar position to soldiers and parsons in that he is subject like them to two codes of law. Soldiers and parsons are primarily citizens, and subject as such to the ordinary law of the land in common with civilians and laymen. But, in addition, soldiers have special liabilities and duties under the code of military law embodied in the Army Act, and the clergy are similarly subject to ecclesiastical law. In an analogous way the schoolboy is not

only bound like every one else by the laws of morality but he is also required to conform to such regulations as are essential to the carrying on of a school. Now, unfortunately for the master, he has to adjudicate in both sets of cases, and woe betide him if he fails to realise the difference between them. Courts-martial and ecclesiastical courts are concerned only with one legal code. But the schoolmaster has to administer not only school justice but a certain amount of moral justice as well, as he is in the position of a parent for the time being.

It is of the first importance that boys should be made to appreciate the essential difference between these two categories of offences, and their relative heinousness. They must learn that certain actions, though not morally wrong, are inconsistent with community life and the satisfactory working of a school. If they confuse the two kinds of offences, if they get to regard moral delinquencies like lying and dishonesty as being on the same footing as factitious offences such as talking and disorder in class, the result will be a weakening of their respect for the laws of morality. In some cases the converse process will take place. An exceptionally sensitive or conscientious boy, by ignoring the distinction, will come to regard school offences as of equal weight with moral ones.

This vital difference can to some extent be impressed on boys by judicious explanation, but it is made plainer to them by a careful differentiation in the punishments inflicted. No doubt it is often difficult or impossible to settle absolutely in which

class a given offence should be placed. There are bound to be border-line cases, but this does not obliterate the distinction. An action that would be culpable when committed elsewhere than at school is plainly a moral offence (setting aside cases of breaches of the law of the land, of course).

A great deal of the extreme difficulty experienced in eradicating 'cribbing' from a school arises from differences of opinion as to this particular offence. Boys are inclined to regard it as a school offence entirely, whereas masters vary in their views of its heinousness. It is probably a moral offence, though far less serious in its permanent influence on the character than many others.

The more serious nature of moral offences, then, should be marked by greater severity in punishing them. It may be advisable sometimes to make it a rule to report all such cases to the headmaster for him to deal with. In any event this plan should be reserved entirely for very serious offences. A master who reports boys for trivial crimes not only weakens his own authority but embarrasses the headmaster and gives him a poor impression of his capacity. At the same time it may be noted that the head probably knows far more of the weak points of his staff and of the happenings of the class-room than he is thought to do. Flagrant cases of personal disrespect to a master, though hardly to be classed as moral offences, are better dealt with by the headmaster than by the man himself.

Turning next to the nature of the punishments themselves, we need say little as to corporal punish-

ment. Opinions differ as to the necessity and advisability of employing it, and it is far less common than it used to be. Without going so far as to maintain that there are no cases in which it can be advantageously employed, we may at least say that they are less common than is often imagined, and that it is a method which needs very great care and consideration. Temperaments vary so much that it is not always easy to foresee its effect on any particular boy, and the ill-advised infliction of a thrashing may have very harmful results.

But the question is one which scarcely touches the junior assistant master, for in schools where corporal punishment is still retained its infliction is generally reserved for the hands of the headmaster alone. His assistants may well feel grateful that they are relieved from so serious a responsibility.

It should be unnecessary to state that unless this authority is expressly conferred on him no master is ever justified in using any kind of physical force as a measure of discipline. If such an action does not always bring summary dismissal it at any rate deserves to. A master who cannot keep his hands off a boy has made a mistake in his choice of a profession. Times have changed, even in a few years. Such mathematics as the writer managed to acquire in his school days was thrust upon him with the aid of a stout oak ruler. But both mathematics and method are changed to-day.

The most usual forms of punishment are detention and the setting of impositions. Should the latter consist of writing or learning work ? Though written

impositions are traditional there is much to be said for the learning by heart of passages of poetry or prose instead. Written work is likely to encourage bad writing and careless spelling, as from the nature of the case it is generally done in a hurry. The chief drawback of learning work is that it is difficult to adjust, as boys vary enormously in the time they take to do it. But if care be exercised in this respect, so that the slow boy does not get penalised for his slowness, the learning of speeches from Shakespeare, for example, is an excellent device. The school curriculum rarely gives sufficient time for much learning by heart, and it is more useful as a supplementary labour than the hurried copying of lines or working of elementary sums.

It should go without saying that every imposition must be examined or heard, as the case may be. Impositions set and not demanded are far worse than useless. So too are punishments set and afterwards remitted, or threatened and not carried out. The tyro in the throes of disorder is very liable to scatter punishments or threats broadcast in the vain hope of stemming the tide. Were he wiser he would reflect that if he cannot control his form now he is not likely to be able to enforce his penalties after school. If a boy does not do what he is told in class, why should he do the work set for him afterwards ?

This argument seems to point logically to the conclusion that the resort to punishment is useless to the weak disciplinarian, who alone has any need for it. Paradoxical as it may sound, this is very largely the truth of the matter. But it is in these early

stages, when a man cannot carry on without punishing, that organised punishments, enforced by another hand, may have a little value. Yet it must not be forgotten that good discipline is not based ultimately on punishment. The better the teacher the less he punishes.

The principle of punishing a number of boys collectively, a whole school or class, for the crimes of individuals, is one that needs careful consideration. As a labour-saving device, to avoid the trouble of singling out the offenders, it is obviously unfair. But it is justifiable when the community deliberately shields the guilty party by concealing his identity, and it is a valuable means of bringing home to boys their corporate responsibility. Of course if the object is to stimulate the community to do its duty in punishing the guilty themselves, then reasonable time and opportunity must be allowed for the purpose.

It may be objected here that this is to encourage sneaking. This opens up a difficult and delicate question. The schoolboy code of honour in this respect—the necessity of shielding the guilty—is neither to be condemned without careful consideration nor to be blindly upheld. To begin with, it is based largely on an obsolete, individualist view of society, a view which the school should do its best to eradicate, as it is gradually getting eradicated in larger communities. It dates from the period when hostility between boys and masters was the natural and normal state of affairs, and when public spirit in its best sense was yet undeveloped. At the same

time this schoolboy code *is* a code of honour. The business of the informer has always been regarded as detestable, and rightly so. Yet we must not be led astray by the objectionable association attaching to words, or confound things which should be distinguished. There are offences which it is undoubtedly a boy's business to reveal, if he cannot prevent their commission, particularly those, like bullying, which involve injury to others. In such cases the boy who looks on and fails to interfere plainly shares the guilt of the offender. Of course the best plan is to encourage the prevention of offences (and in some cases the punishment of them, if prevention fails) by the boys themselves, and community punishment is a means to this end. Fear of punishment is obviously not the highest motive for such collective action, but it assists the development of public spirit and paves the way for the building up of more worthy motives.

When information is received from a boy, or, as sometimes happens, from his parents, as to offences committed by another, the matter must be dealt with very carefully. The master must avoid any suspicion of giving encouragement to unworthy sneaking. He must refuse with scorn to listen to anything that is not clearly a justifiable case of information, but if he acts on the report he must see to it that the boy who makes it does not suffer at the hands of his fellows. If the boy who brings the matter to his notice is himself one of the guilty ones he should be punished equally with the rest. The system in English law by which a criminal turning

king's evidence has his punishment remitted should never be admitted in a school. The case of malicious sneaking for the love of it, or from a sense of pharisaical self-righteousness, is an entirely different one. Such boys—they are not often met with—should be unmercifully snubbed and taught a lesson that they will not soon forget.

Slight punishments inflicted on the spot are often useful, especially with younger boys. They can be made to stand up, or placed in front of the others, or stood in the corner, according to the nature of the offence. With older boys such methods are rarely successful. They will either treat the punishment as a joke or resent it as an outrage to their dignity. And their dignity must be considered. It is useless to impress upon senior boys their responsibility in the school and at the same time to treat them like infants. If rightly handled the majority of them will quickly respond to any attempt to get them to share the work of carrying on the school, and the greater this share can be made the better. This is a subject of great importance but outside the sphere of the junior master whom we are considering. Only let him beware of trying to manage big boys and little boys by the same methods. A relation of semi-hostility between masters and small boys is, in a way, reasonable and natural. It is at any rate natural for the boys to try to do as little work as possible, and it is the master's business to make them do as much as possible. But with senior forms the case is different. The boys there are old enough to know that hard work is in their own

interest, and coercive measures should rarely be necessary. Natural hostility should give way to help and co-operation, and the respect due to all boys, and particularly to the older ones, should never be neglected.

Cases are occasionally met with in which, paradoxical as it sounds, the best punishment is not to punish at all. There are boys whose craving for notoriety is such that they would rather be punished than ignored. They are not common, but when they occur they present a difficult problem to the master. The solution manifestly lies in devising some form of punishment, if they must be punished, which shall involve as little publicity as possible. But wholesome neglect may help to cure the morbid desire for limelight.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERSONALITY OF THE MASTER

Temper—Sarcasm—Humour—Things material and immaterial —Obstinacy—Praise—Relations with headmaster.

It may be useful here to give a rather fuller account of the personal qualifications requisite in the successful disciplinarian, though most of them will have appeared in the preceding pages.

It is obvious, in the first place, that an equable and imperturbable disposition is most essential. The ideal schoolmaster would never allow anything to ruffle his equanimity except his own volition. The man who cannot control his temper is impossible as a schoolmaster, and may even land himself in the gravest of difficulties, not only with the school authorities but with higher powers outside. But at the same time a capacity for controlled anger and indignation is a most useful asset. The vials of wrath should be filled with something stronger than milk and water. A too equable disposition is liable to degenerate into easy-going slackness and ineffectiveness, and to let loose the temper, as it were, judiciously and at the right time, without ever letting it get

beyond control, is not the same thing as to lose it. Anger should at any rate be there, in reserve, in sufficient strength to make boys hesitate to invoke it, even if it be really a factitious kind of anger.

This is not incompatible with the necessary sympathy with boys and their outlook and interests —not sympathy of a weak and sentimental kind, and still less a sort of patronising pity and amusement—but the fellow-feeling that one human being has for another. Remember that the boys are merely younger than you are—not inferior in any respect save in the accident of age, and probably superior to you in a great many respects.

A sarcastic man has in his tongue a weapon that is at the same time very useful and very dangerous. Sarcasm, if applied with extreme care, is often exceedingly effective, but it is not to be recommended to the beginner. Its effects for good and for evil, and the difference between the right and the wrong ways of employing it, will not become plain to him till he has had considerable experience. To begin with, it must be sufficiently mild and dilute to avoid wounding too deeply. Boys are far more sensitive than adults in this respect, and a young master with a taste for sarcasm will do well to curb his tongue very strictly until he has learned more about the vulnerability of youth. And it must be remembered that the boy cannot reply. He, too, may have a taste for sarcasm, but to exercise it on the master would be *lèse-majesté*.

Again, there must never be the least trace of malice or bad temper about one's sarcasm. The manner of

it is almost more important than the substance. Let the boys see that your satire arises from a sense of humour and that you enjoy it more as a good joke than as contributing to their discomfiture, and it may succeed. They will judge as much from your face as from your words.

In the third place, it is well to know your boys before you try sarcasm with individuals. Words which would roll off one boy like water from a duck's back will draw tears from another with a thinner skin. Public sarcasm aims at making boys ridiculous in their own eyes or those of their fellows, and to this most boys are very sensitive. Leave sarcasm alone, then, till you and your boys are better acquainted. A master who is thoroughly well known and liked can afford to say things to them on occasion which a newcomer certainly cannot. 'The officer who consults his men's comfort before his own, who takes an interest in their games and amusements, who shows a practical sympathy with them in trouble and sickness, may "tell them off" with impunity.'

A sense of humour is, in school as in life, a most valuable possession, if not a *sine qua non*, both in the limited sense of being able to see a joke and in the wider one of viewing things in their right proportion. With regard to seeing and appreciating jokes, neither teaching nor discipline should be too solemn and serious a business. Let the boys enjoy jokes when they meet them. There is abundance of merriment to be got out of some school subjects, and a good teacher can extract humour from the most

unpromising material. A joke shared with one's class is a powerful bond of union and solvent of little difficulties, and boys should not be allowed to get the impression that a master is an inhuman freak with no taste for the common pleasures of life. Incidentally it may be remarked that a boy's sense of humour is not quite like that of an adult. For instance, they will solemnly read many of the most comical passages in Shakespeare without the ghost of a smile, whereas they will laugh uproariously at things whose humour is hidden from the master. You can rarely be quite sure as to what will tickle them.

Merriment in class can, of course, be easily overdone, and the master should be careful not to let it get out of hand. But a good laugh, at the right time, will hurt nobody, besides helping to impress things on a boy's memory.

So much for a sense of humour in the narrower sense of the phrase. The wider one—a sense of perspective and proportion—is still more important. It means an ability to distinguish between essentials and accidental details, to know what to pass over and what to insist on. The true doctrine on the subject is well expressed in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson: 'Be soople, Davie, in things immaterial.' Let the schoolmaster, especially if he is inclined by nature to be querulous or suspicious or careful about too many things, imprint these words upon his heart and keep them ever before his eyes. They are the best short definition that can be given of the elusive but indispensable quality of *tact*. The man who can distinguish unerringly between

the material and the immaterial, who knows exactly when to be 'soople' and when to be as obstinate as a mule, will be a successful ruler, whether in a class, a school, or a still wider sphere. Suppleness alone and obstinacy alone are alike fatal weaknesses, but in combination, and the right combination, they are irresistible.

This leads us to say a few words about obstinacy. The schoolmaster must not only know when to put his foot down firmly and decisively, but he must also have the power of keeping it down. Occasions sometimes arise when a trial of strength is necessary in this respect between him and his boys. Some hidden offence, perhaps, has to be brought to light, or some ideal of good order attained. The process may take a long time, and it becomes a question whether the master will stick to his guns or give in. If the point at issue is not an 'immaterial' one he must hold his ground at all costs, and his ultimate victory will have a profound moral effect. A reputation for always carrying out one's intentions is well worth acquiring.

A master once had occasion, towards the end of term, to threaten a form of boys that he would keep them at school after the rest had gone home for the holidays if he failed to discover a culprit for whom he was seeking. That night some of them were heard discussing the matter in their dormitory. 'Do you think he'll really make us stay behind?' said one. 'If he says he will, he will,' said another; 'he always keeps his word.' One moral of which is, Never threaten what you cannot carry out.

A master needs to be on his guard against getting into the habit of always finding fault. He must distribute praise as well as blame whenever it is required. The attitude of 'Go and see what Tommy is doing and tell him not to', is to be deprecated in the school as much as in the nursery. After all, boys do sometimes work well and behave well, and they should be told so whenever the memorable occasion arises. It is a much better way of encouraging them and stimulating them to further exertions than to be constantly blaming them.

The subject of relations between the assistant master and his chief is scarcely relevant, but a few words may be given to it. It must be remembered that school government is of necessity autocratic — neither a democracy nor even a constitutional monarchy. The headmaster is supreme. If he is wise he will always be ready to listen to suggestions from his staff, but the responsibility for governing the school is his and his alone, and what he ordains must be loyally and whole-heartedly carried out. The inexperienced master will at the same time be well advised to cultivate a becoming modesty in the matter of suggesting improvements in method and organisation. What may seem to him a brilliantly novel idea has probably been thought out by the headmaster many years before, if not by many previous generations of headmasters as well. But let him not, on the other hand, be afraid to be enthusiastic. If his chief is really keen on his profession he will welcome enthusiasm in his colleagues as much as any other quality, and will turn down their un-

workable suggestions gently in consequence. He will not expect to find old heads on young shoulders. Real keenness in a master will cover a multitude of sins, for it is a great step on the road to efficiency.

THE END

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*