

CHAPTER ONE

*Introduction**Discipline and disciplina*

THIS little book is a protest to educators against the modern doctrine of “do as you please.” It is at the same time a plea that they will lay a little less stress on interest, and a little more on the fighting spirit, the will to win the battle between the higher self and the lower.

When a young teacher is for the first time in front of his class, the sheer necessity of keeping order brings out plainly, albeit in a crude way, one essential factor in education. The foundation of his work, upon which depends the stability of all the superstructure, lies in the truth that the teacher must be, in the fullest and deepest sense of the word, a master. His will must be law. Any theory of education that assumes a fundamental postulate opposed to this is doomed to failure.

A logical proof of the dogmatic statements in the preceding paragraph is neither necessary nor possible. Only experience can show up the evil which inevitably follows when boys are allowed to have their own way, when their lower selves, in the absence of a master mind, become

the dominating factor in the school or in the class-room. To say this is not to imply that boy-nature is essentially bad, nor that the master ought to be a domineering tyrant. Fear and repression are not the only weapons in his armoury. Sympathy and understanding will go much further than such deterrents in securing power of leadership, without which he cannot hope to succeed. But it is implied that we are the heirs of a possession won by toil and suffering; that we ought no more to let this go than we would carelessly lose a material inheritance; that in the nature of the case a boy cannot appreciate this inheritance, but is under the influence of his crude and often animal instincts; that he must be brought to see his true interest, and trained by habituation to achieve it. The conflict is not between his own wishes and those of his elders; it is between his lower and his higher self, between the pleasure of the moment and the realisation of an ideal. It is the teacher's first and supreme duty to see that this struggle is carried to a victorious issue. Many educationists maintain that, given a suitable environment, boys can be trusted to develop the best that is within them if allowed a free hand. This is a half-truth which has done incalculable harm to the cause of education. What is meant by a "suitable environment"? If it be a purely passive thing, it cannot produce the result we all

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desire; but if beside its passive merits it contains some active uplifting force, some compelling personality, then the contention that a suitable environment is sufficient for the best possible development may be accepted as true.

Life, for which education is, or should be, a preparation, is a struggle, an upward struggle towards something higher and better. It is not the gratification of the interest of the moment; it is not the elimination of the unpleasant. All education based, consciously or unconsciously, upon this elimination is bound to end in disaster. Teachers of all grades must resist the attractive but insidious forms in which the doctrine presents itself—interest, self-determination or what not. Pleasure, interest, self-determination, are all good things, and in their highest sense¹ may represent the supreme goal of human endeavour; if, however, we take their lower manifestations as our educational aim, we are going backwards instead of forwards. A lofty purpose, to which our immediate desires are strictly subordinated, is essential for all progress, whether in school life or in the world. Education is a fraud unless it not only sets forth clearly such purposes, but also develops in the minds of the scholars a feeling towards them which may be summed up in the two words “I must.” The compelling influence

¹ I refer to the feeling of satisfaction that comes from successfully trying to do our best.

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of the categorical imperative, commonly called a sense of duty, is a factor without which education is not only useless but dangerous.

But the feeling "I must" rarely grows by itself; usually, if not always, it springs out of "thou shalt." This is the reason why a teacher should also be a master. He it is who by his influence turns "thou shalt" into "I must"; in other words he changes an external discipline into a discipline from within. His work should be judged by his success or failure to effect this change.

The view here put forward is not retrograde¹; it is not content, as the old schoolmaster was content, with an external discipline. Nor does it demand too much from boy-nature; it merely insists that every scholar shall consciously and intelligently do his best, in all his activities, with a higher purpose than the immediate gratification of his likes and dislikes. On the other hand, a protest is made against all extremists among modern educationists who have reacted so far from their predecessors that for "thou shalt" they have substituted "do as thou wishest."

In brief, a plea is put forward that education should result in enlightened self-discipline. To say this is not to define education, nor to limit

¹ The retrograde policy is to allow children to do "as they please." This is to employ the crudest methods of evolution, which are quite out of place in education.

its scope and function; but a rule or standard is given whereby educational management may be tested and guided. This short preface should be regarded as a preliminary warning that a first principle will govern all subsequent discussion of the aims of education, of its methods, and of the forces that control it.

Discipline has been defined as the training of the will. How far this definition is correct may be seen from an examination of discipline in one of its simplest forms, that of military training.

The fundamental principle underlying military discipline is the subordination of individual wills to one controlling will. Its essential factors are implicit obedience and constant practice. Behind these lies some powerful emotion, which is not without an element of not necessarily dishonourable fear. In certain matters blind and unintelligent obedience is demanded; in others scope is given for the exercise of ingenuity and for the adaptation of means to a given end. In all forms of discipline we find these factors: subordination, obedience, practice, emotional stimulus, and more or less scope for initiative.

Discipline, then, is more than the training of the will. It is the merging of self-will in the social will, and the turning of a part of the self into a machine. In return for the sacrifice of his self-will the individual finds satisfaction for his social needs; and his becoming in part a machine

frees his will from distractions and permits it to concentrate on the more important tasks of life.

The justification of discipline is its necessity. Without discipline any society—even a society of anarchists—must fall to pieces, and no aim requiring concentration of effort can be achieved. Discipline is in itself un-moral; morality enters the question only when the ethical value of the object in view is taken into account. “Good” discipline is effective discipline, “bad” discipline is discipline which fails in its purpose.

The coercion of discipline comes partly from without and partly from within. All “good” discipline tends to develop an internal restraint out of an external one—the motive force of the discipline rises gradually to a more spiritual level—and in this way is evolved one form of self-discipline. Self-discipline thus occurs when the individual organises the various habits, impulses, and desires of which his personality is composed into a unity under one will, with the lower parts restrained for the greater liberty of the higher.

The efficacy of discipline depends largely upon the degree of compulsion employed. The beautiful drill of a regiment of Guards is made possible only by the strict methods adopted to secure it, and a college boat will hardly improve its place on the river if training rules may be ignored. But there are many kinds of compulsion, and

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the strongest are often those behind which the physical constraint is the weakest. Shylock did not realise this when he asked:

On what compulsion must I? Tell me that

But Portia knew better. She knew the power of the instinct to show mercy, but also that this instinct must be felt before the force can manifest itself. So too there is no compulsion of a physical kind to make the martyr cleave to his convictions, or the mother sacrifice herself for her child. Yet conscience and mother-love have a driving force which will work miracles.

These spiritual forces are not without their element of fear, though it is refined and sublimated into the noble fear of falling short of one's best; it is the dread of feeling shame before one's self. But their truest ally is enlightenment. The deeper the insight into reality, the clearer the understanding of the consequences of one's acts, the greater the intelligence of the agent, so much the firmer will be the devotion and so much the more useful will be its exercise. The ignorant mother is deprived of many ways of showing her love, which is therefore correspondingly dwarfed and starved; she may also do her child positive harm by stupid actions. The martyr, again, if his convictions be not enlightened by understanding, becomes merely a "conscientious objector."

We see then that the compelling power of a

spiritual force is greatly increased by enlightenment. It reaches its maximum when this enlightenment includes a comprehension of the moral ideal at which discipline aims. Ignorant mother-love will make mistakes. Intelligent mother-love may rear a bad citizen. But a love reinforced by both intelligence and moral insight cannot fail to mould the character of a child into the best form of which he is capable.

The best discipline is that exercised by a spiritual force, and the best spiritual force is one enlightened by intelligence and moral insight. It is because the English word "discipline" has associations which over-estimate the element of restraint, and under-estimate the elements of intelligence and morality which ought to be the basis of that restraint, that I have chosen the Latin word *disciplina* to denote what I take to be the chief function of an educator. All that uplifts a man is included in that term, and it emphasises the often-forgotten truth that training and learning are essentially one.

Concentration, restraint of disturbing factors, obedience to law, are not sufficient for progress; they are merely the machinery with which the progressive spirit works. To appreciate this truth is to understand why progress brings with it two apparently incompatibles—better discipline and greater liberty. Men will not neglect, if they are wise, the machine which has enabled them to

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advance, and the advance itself brings with it wider scope for the exercise of initiative. Discipline and liberty are complementary; *disciplina* and progress are almost identical.

Certain factors in discipline are static. It is obviously the dynamic factor, the spirit moving the whole, which is the chief concern of education. The child at first is not capable of the highest. First comes physical constraint, which ought gradually to give place to the nobler forms of compulsion, issuing finally, if he be capable of it, in self-mastery based on intelligence, sympathy, and love. How the change can be effected will be described in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER TWO

Education and Discipline

IT is now possible to give a definition of education. In its widest sense education is the influence which, consciously or unconsciously, society as a whole exercises over the development and conduct of its individual members. In a narrower sense it is the influence exercised by one particular society, the school, over the development of the young, in order to prepare them for their adult life.

So far all are agreed. Differences of opinion, however, at once appear when the questions are raised: what direction should this development take? For what kind of life should the young be prepared, and what should be the means employed? In other words, there are different views about the Aims and Methods of schooling.

Roughly speaking, we may say that the aim of education is fixed by public opinion, while the methods are determined by schoolmasters themselves. Public opinion may choose well or ill; it may, or it may not, be influenced or modified by discussion and argument. But ultimately the educational ideal, like all other ideals, is apprehended intuitively. If public opinion demand