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TO
F. M. R.

P R E F A C E

ONE who for nearly twenty-five years taught in secondary schools cannot find a better summary of the lesson impressed upon him there than a few sentences from a work of W. J. Long:

There, as with children, the first and strongest instinct of every creature is that of obedience. The essential difference between the two, between the human and the little wild animal, is this: the animal's one idea, born in him and strengthened by every day's training, is that, until he grows up and learns to take care of himself, his one business in the world is to be watchful for orders and to obey them instantly; while the child, by endless pettings and indulgences, by having every little cry attended to and fussed over as if it were a Caesar's mandate, too often loses the saving instinct of obedience and grows up into the idea that his business in the world is to give orders for others to obey. So that at three or five and twenty years, when the mischief is done, we must begin to teach the obedience which should never have been lost, and without which life is a worse than useless thing.

When one turns to the animals, it is often with the wholesome, refreshing sense that here is a realm where the law of life is known and obeyed. To the wild creature obedience is everything. It is the deep, unconscious tribute of ignorance to wisdom, of weakness to power....And one who watches the process with sympathetic eyes...can only wonder and grow

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thoughtful, and mend his crude theories of instinct and heredity by what he sees....

Tenderness and patience are here too, and the young are never driven beyond their powers.... One thing more: these interesting little wild kindergartens are, emphatically, happy gatherings. The more I watch them, teachers and pupils, the more I long for some measure of their freedom, their strength of play, their joyfulness¹.

The question suggests itself: Why are obedience and happiness associated among the lower animals and dissociated among human beings? Why has the new principle of education, which bids us “follow the child,” been no more successful than the old system founded on fear and repression?

I have tried to give an answer in this little book, which, whatever its faults, is the outcome of my own failures and disappointments. Any truth it contains was learnt by suffering.

It has not been my object to discuss the curriculum, the training of teachers, teaching and learning, and so on, at any length. I have merely tried to show how these parts of educational theory are connected with my conception of *disciplina*.

I have intentionally limited my remarks to secondary education (with occasional references to the University) and to boys. Nothing has been discussed of which I have not had a long personal experience, and so I rarely refer to

¹ *School of the Woods*, pp. 14–18.

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primary education and never to the training of girls.

I hope that critics will criticise, not the faulty exposition of my thesis, but the thesis itself, which is just this: *Although the development of interest in subjects themselves is of great educational importance, the development of life purposes, to which separate interests are subordinated, is of much greater importance. Interest alone may enable us to learn (say) French; something more is required as the foundation of a good character.* It should be remembered that in practice a mere liking is often mistaken for a genuine interest.

I wish to thank my colleagues, Mr C. Fox, Mr R. S. Williamson, and Mr Roy Meldrum, for many corrections and for invaluable criticism.

W. H. S. J.

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