THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

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BEDALES SCHOOL, PETERSFIELD, ENGLAND

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I am asked to contribute to the pages of the *Elementary School Teacher* a short description of my school as now working at the close of the twelfth year of its existence and the fourth since we moved into our new quarters—planned and built for the purpose—at Petersfield. It is a pleasure to accept this opportunity of speaking to teachers among whom I have found many friends, in a country where education is studied and practiced with such enthusiasm and such readiness to follow out principles to their logical conclusion in practice; and I cannot begin without saying how much I feel we owe to American inspiration and example, even though our problems here are so different that in some respects we may seem to be following different lines. For example, it must not be forgotten that in England class distinctions are so deeply ingrained that, however much we may wish to break down these barriers in education, it is at present practically impossible to do so; and that, just as the so-called public schools represent the educational ideal of one social class, so there are various other grades of schools representing different grades of middle-class education, varying according to the scale of fees and the age at which the majority of the pupils leave the school. In order, therefore, to gain any clear idea of an English school, it is necessary first to know to which of these grades it belongs. And this is not in any way a question of its size or age, but of the class from which it draws

its pupils, and the length and purpose of its educational course. From this point of view Bedales may be reckoned along with the English public schools, with this proviso that, in respect both of purpose and of cost, it appeals rather to the professional and business man and manufacturer than to the moneyed, landed, and aristocratic classes that support the greater public schools; and the course of training here given is intended for those who will earn their own living in similar professions—in most cases after a further course at the university or technical college. The school is, therefore, intended for those who will later on be leaders, either in their own private concerns or in a more public capacity, and for those only who will be able to remain at school until seventeen or eighteen, or even longer, before they actually begin the special training of their profession.

In the second place, it must be remembered that such schools in England are usually boarding schools, drawing their pupils, not from the locality in which they are, but from all parts of the country. This fact has set its stamp, whether for good or ill, on English education. There is, no doubt, much to be said against it; but, on the other hand, it need hardly be pointed out that it adds immensely to the opportunities of the educator who realizes that school is a place for the training of habit and of character no less than of mind; and, further, that it is at the present time, in most cases, a necessity, if children are to be brought up in the country rather than the town—a point, the importance of which it seems to me hardly possible to overrate.

We start, then, from these conditions. Bedales is a boarding school, in the open country, numbering some one hundred and fifty boys and girls, most of whom will remain at school till the age of seventeen, eighteen, or even nineteen, and then receive some further course of professional training, and most of whom will in the end have some share in the direction of the lives of others. Of other conditions and vexed questions in English education at the present time I say nothing, because we are here happily free from them, being unhampered by any external authority. The school is free to follow its own aims in its own way. As long as parents continue to send their children here, we

have nothing else to consider than the good of the children and the needs of the time. And though we ask for inspection by other educational bodies and by the government, we are in no way under any external or government control. In fact, one may regard Bedales as an educational laboratory for testing principles and their applications in various methods. But this must not be taken to mean that the school has no definite principles and no fixed aim. It represents the attempt to work out in practice a complete and all-sided educational course, subject to the conditions already laid down, of which I need say no more.

But we have stood long enough on the doorstep explaining what the school is. Let us go inside and see what is doing. We enter a quadrangle, partly roofed to serve as a play-ground and drill-ground for bad weather, partly open to the sky so as to admit the outer air freely to classrooms and living-rooms, all of which open on to the cloisters that surround it. If it is an interval between classes, this quadrangle will be alive with noise and movement, and you may have to dodge the flying balls; but now the players are streaming off to the various classrooms, and we will follow them. Some classrooms, you see, have numbers on the doors; these are the "form-rooms" of the junior classes, not only for work, but in free-time as well. Others have names on them; these belong to the teachers of special subjects, to whom the senior classes come at their allotted hours. We will look into one and another as they chance to come. Here are some juniors discovering the center of gravity of cards of various shapes by hanging them up. Here again are some plotting the curve represented by an algebraic equation. Here they are learning how to set to work to translate a Latin book; the master is "preparing" it with them, getting from them their suggestions and discoveries, and keeping them on the track. And is this a game going on in the next room we enter? Yes, a game of "Tell me what I have thought of," but all in French. They have just guessed the object, and now comes a French song before they go. This is the library, and here, when we look in, are several of the older boys and girls at the various tables, preparing work by themselves. And this is the physical laboratory, in which a senior class is at work dis-

covering for themselves the principles of mechanics, with the help of apparatus mostly made in the school workshop. Two things will probably have struck you in all these classes: first, that the rooms are small—for classes number only twelve to fifteen in each—and that all are bright and clean, with pleasant-colored walls and plenty of pictures—for they are not used for class work only—and with beautiful views of the Downs from all the windows. We believe, as you see, in the *unconscious* influence of the child's surroundings, buildings and works of art, and the beauties of nature; and, secondly, that in all the work there is very little teaching in the old sense of "telling," but a great deal of discovering for themselves. Initiative, the power of tackling problems as they arise, we regard as of more value than book-knowledge. Our part, therefore, is not to lecture or to demonstrate at the blackboard, but to start problems and let the children demonstrate to each other and to us.

But you have probably seen enough of such work by now. Let us go back to the quadrangle—noticing on the way the board on which the weather records for the month are entered graphically by certain juniors each morning in rotation—and see the clothes inspection going on; for boys as well as girls have to learn to look after their clothes to some extent, and at least to keep them clean and tidy. Then we will go over to the gymnasium to see the class there at their Swedish drill; and look in at the girls' house on the way at the juniors' sewing class, in which you will not be surprised, I hope, to find boys sewing with the girls; for in the earlier stages at least we want to make no needless distinction, but let the boys share the sewing and cooking, and the girls the wood-work, though later on they will take different lines.

And now the morning classes are over, and when we get back we shall find boys and girls lined up for dinner inspection, while the prefects see that hands are clean and hair brushed. The gong rings, and all file into the hall, where we will follow. They sit, you see, by age, at the different tables, boys and girls together, with a member of the staff at each table in turn for a week. No rule of silence here; and by the time the meal is over you will be

A CLOTHES INSPECTION

able to judge how far the healthy freedom we aim at is attained. Now they go off to change into their outdoor dress, as they must every afternoon, whether for games or manual work. Today is a "whole-school" day, so presently we shall find them scattered over the whole estate, at different kinds of work. Some are in the studio doing free-arm work on the blackboard, or making brush-work studies of plants to be used afterward for design, or drawing from the cast. Others are in the workshop, making a scale drawing of the joint or object they are then to make in wood. Others again are in the forge, for some new fencing, perhaps, has to be made for the poultry run. Some are at work in the school garden or orchard; others over at the farm doing the dairy work in their turn. Some are down shooting on the rifle range; some are surveying a part of the playing-fields where leveling is needed. The games captain you may find driving the horse roller to get the ground ready for the match tomorrow, while others are busy putting up a new wire fence to keep the cattle off it. Some are building a store-shed, or finishing off the roof of the dressing-shed around the new open-air swimming-bath. And this is the afternoon when the older girls are having their cooking lesson, preparing the evening meal for the staff.¹

And now it is tea time, and all are changed back into their house clothes. The hall looks emptier, for the staff is away enjoying, let us hope, the meal you saw being cooked, and the prefects sit around at the tables in their place. After tea there is an hour's class—this is the time given each day throughout the school to history and literature; then singing, in which all take part together in the hall—just now they are taking Stanford's "Revenge"—followed by half an hour's quiet reading; and then they separate for various occupations. Some of the older will put in another hour's work; but most will be doing bookbinding or carving, or some other chosen handicraft; or it may be the evening when the various school societies meet, and you can listen to their papers or debates, or look on at the fencing, or find

¹ It must not, of course, be supposed that everything here mentioned can be seen going on *at the same time* on any one day. I have brought together, to form a "specimen day," various things that I happen to have seen at one time or another during the past week.

the hall cleared for dancing; or, if it chances to be one of the monthly "merry evenings," we shall all meet there for recitations, songs, readings, or perhaps a home-made play. But by half-past eight the boys in charge have arranged the hall for prayers; we all join in a brief service, there is a handshaking all around, and the day is over. The girls go back to their own house, the boys go up to their dormitories; and you may like to come into my study for a little and question me as to the meaning of all you have seen.

It means, as I said just now, an attempt to give a complete and all-sided education, in which equal importance shall be given to the training of body, mind, and character. A few words, then, as to the plan on which we work with regard to each of these.

The training of the body is not only a matter of physical drill, nor even of those outdoor games and sports that play so large a part—too large a part, perhaps—in our modern schemes of education. These have their place, especially if they are not confined to two or three games like cricket and football, hockey and tennis, however good; but include also swimming, and such sports as boxing, fencing, etc., which furnish so admirable a training for other qualities besides the skill of hand and eye they require. But all these things may be overdone, until play becomes enthroned in the mind as a more desirable object in life than work, and even leads to contempt for other forms of manual skill. For this reason, no less than for the healthy training both of body and mind, there must be a large amount of time that would otherwise be spent in games given to various forms of manual training, whether in wood or metal workshop, in garden or on farm. To such work we assign at least two afternoons each week, and do not let games monopolize all the time set apart for outdoor exercise. But apart from such definite physical training, even more importance we believe attaches to all the everyday matters of hygiene, such as food, clothing, short and varied hours of work, and work in the open air, fresh air indoors no less than out, the freedom of life in the country—in a word, the practical teaching of hygiene in the habits of life no less than in the classroom. With this object the buildings are planned and the time-table arranged—with considerable difference, I need

FREE-TIME OCCUPATION — BOOKBINDING

IN THE SMITHY

hardly say, between the length of working hours for younger and older, as well as between the kind of work done at different stages of development.

To this we may now turn. The fact that we are not bound by any external scheme leaves us free not only to employ in the classroom whatever methods we may think best, and to carry on experiments in teaching, but also to make the attempt to plan a complete course unaffected—at least until the final stage—by external requirements of public examinations. In this way we can refuse to allow what seems to us premature specialization in any direction; and though for most the external examination must come in the end, we do not allow it to affect our work until all have been through the general course that we think necessary for the training of the various activities of a human being, as distinct from the special requirements of the later career. Up to the age of sixteen, therefore, or fifteen at the earliest—for development is not always directly according to age—all follow the same general course, from the kindergarten on; but after this point is reached, we leave it to personal bent, which by then should have discovered itself, and the choice of the career, to decide the special lines of work to be followed in preparation for the coming special training, technical or professional, whatever it may be. It will not be possible to do more than give an outline of the work done during these two stages. The earlier or general course, in which there is little or no option, comprises the following subjects:

1. Language: the mother-tongue, one modern language, and — from the age of twelve — a four-year course of Latin.

2. What may be called the humanities *par excellence*: history, first of our own country, then of classical times; literature linked with and, as far as possible, corresponding to the history; and geography.

3. Science, beginning with nature-study in the garden and fields, and the science of every-day life, connected again with the classes in cooking and hygiene, and so leading to the more systematic study of physics and chemistry.

4. Mathematics, taught not merely for commercial utility, but rather as a training subject, and based largely on practical measurement.

5. Manual work, including, for all, various branches of art work, a course of wood-work and of gardening, and, at one stage or another, such things as cooking, sewing, dairy work, the care of poultry and bees, etc.

6. And, lastly, music, in the form of classes in sight-reading, etc., and daily singing for all.

I am tempted to stop here and fill in this outline, for there is much that might be said, both as to the reasons for including so wide a range of subjects, and the proportional time given to each, in order to escape the many-headed Scylla of unwise dissipation of energy in obtaining a smattering of many things, without falling into the Charybdis of over-pressure and an overcrowded time-table. But to do this would require a treatise, and I must pass on.

So much, then, for the general course. After the age of fifteen or sixteen, as said above, the special lines of work are largely optional and examination requirements are considered. Thus, for instance, the main course followed may be classical, with Greek in place of science; or modern, with Latin giving place to German; or special lines in science may be followed—metal-work, for example—and mechanical drawing being taken as preparatory for the technical training of the engineer; or more time may be given to practical work in workshop or on farm, or in domestic economy or art; and due preparation made in each case for matriculation and other examinations necessary for entering on the further stage when school is left. But whatever the special lines followed, in all cases some common work is still done, especially in modern history and literature—the necessary elements, as we think, to broaden and harmonize all branches of training.

Before leaving the subject of mental training, a few words must be added on two points. It has just been said that we take no kind of external examinations until the final stage is reached. But examinations have their use for the pupil, and, still more, for the teacher, if they are true tests, well applied. Each year, therefore, we ask some university or some educationalist of note to inspect the work of the school and to conduct an examination in

IN THE DAIRY

TAKING CONTOUR LEVEL

CLASS IN COOKING

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concert with ourselves. By this means we insure that the children are tested in work they have actually done; and, while we do not have to conform our course to any other standard, at the same time we get an impartial judgment upon the work done and its results. The other point is one that specially concerns the boarding school—the provision of occupation for leisure time and the encouragement of hobbies that may become the pursuits of a lifetime. With us, times are set apart, especially in the evening, for reading and music, for handicrafts of various kinds, for dancing and lectures and debates, and for the meeting of societies classical, scientific, etc.; and the summer half-holidays in particular for expeditions in pursuit of interests in natural history, archæology, and so forth, for which we are here particularly well placed, in a country studded with relics of the Roman occupation, and within easy reach on one side of Saxon Alfred's capital, and on another of the home of Gilbert White. But however much I should like to emphasize the value of such interests, the by-products of a real education, here again I must not linger, for I have yet to say something about the means of character-training.

All educators are agreed that this is not so much a matter of precept as of habit; it depends on the child's environment, on the daily routine of his life, the rules that he has to obey—let me say in passing that they must be as simple as possible, and the main reasons for the keeping of them made plain to all—and still more, I think, on the opportunities given for self-government, and the constant claim that he shall not only obey rules, but act upon his own responsibility. Of one part of this environment, as I have called it, of the daily life at Bedales I need say little to American teachers, to whom coeducation is a familiar fact. Here we are only carrying it a step farther in making it one of the factors in the life of a boarding school—where, as I venture to think, the good results are even more certain, owing to the still closer and more constant intercourse, and the difficulties much less than is commonly supposed. Not that there are none. But, if, as we believe in this country, the life of the boarding school, with its freedom of self-government on the one side, and on the other its countless opportunities for bringing influence to bear on the indi-

vidual, affords a fine training-ground for character, it is all the more so when boy and girl have to work out their problems together, and when among the influences at work are ideals and traditions that broaden the outlook and touch the conduct of either sex.

A word too about religion, as taught at Bedales. Of the teaching of forms and creeds there is nothing, nor is any corner rejected on religious grounds. In questions of private belief and forms of worship each is free to do as he has been taught at home; only he must learn the practical lesson of toleration of those who think and worship differently. In our own religious gatherings we neither wish to teach one creed nor to undermine belief in another; but to show that, whatever the outward differences, there is something beneath each that is common to all, and that this, as shown in the daily life, is the main thing that concerns us all alike. And especially we try to bring all to see and grasp, according to their ability, the opportunities of social service of which school life is so full, and which, to my thinking, are the best of all that a school has to offer. But this side of our work it is not easy—least of all for one engaged in it—to describe; any more than it is easy to gauge its results, for the greater part lie beyond the school. Our hope is that the life lived here will not end when the school days end; and that foremost among the lessons here learned and carried away will be that summed up in our school motto: “Work of each for weal of all.”

I feel that the above brief outline can give but a confused impression of what we are trying to do at Bedales. Let me, however, add that if any into whose hands this may fall wish to make closer acquaintance with the school, I hope that if ever they are in this country, they will find their way to Petersfield. They may be sure they will be welcome. Few things have given us more pleasure in our work here than the interest taken in it by others, and the links it has established for us with fellow-workers in other lands, and especially in the one where education is most believed in, and therefore is most living.