

# A LETTER

ON

## THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS,

ADDRESSED TO

### SOME OF THE PRIESTS

OF THE

## DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK.

BY

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# A LETTER,

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REV. DEAR SIR,

In the course of fulfilling my duty as Inspector of the Schools of the Diocese year by year, it often happens that I am asked by the Priests of the different Missions for advice on various points connected with School management. And as on such occasions there is frequently very insufficient time and opportunity for answering such questions adequately, I venture to hope it may not be unacceptable to some of my reverend brethren of the Diocese, if I address to them a few hints on different points of School discipline and management, in answer to the questions which are so often put to me. The courtesy and kindness with which my fellow-clergy have on almost all occasions treated me, leads me to count on their receiving my efforts in a friendly spirit.

Let me say at the outset, that I do not propose to enter into any profound speculations on the subject of education generally, nor to speak of what might be best in the abstract, or in another age or country or state of things, but, keeping my eye fixed on the circumstances in which Priests in this Diocese ordinarily find themselves with reference to their Poor Schools, to make some remarks on what I suppose to be a practical way of meeting the acknowledged difficulties of creating and maintaining efficient Schools. Experience of a good many years in establishing and conducting Schools, both in town and country, has led me to have a lively sense of these difficulties :—

*Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.*

And I must add, experience—not my own merely, but that of many others—shows that these difficulties are yet not too great to be overcome by pains and exertion. All, it is true, are not yet

awakened to the exceeding great importance of providing really good Schools for our poor children—for the future of the Church in England mainly depends on it; but still so many of my reverend brethren are now taking up the thing in good earnest, that I am the more anxious to be of any assistance that I can to them, and more ready to believe that they will take my efforts in good part.

*What is a good School?*—As I have spoken of good Schools, let me explain before going further what I mean by the term, that we may be agreed as to what we should aim at. I can suppose a state of things in which the influences of home and of society were so powerful for good, that Schools would be wanted more for simple *instruction* in knowledge than anything else. But such is not the state of things *we* have to deal with. The homes of our children are as often places of evil influence as of good, and the influence of society, as our poor Catholic children meet with it, is simply the influence of one of the three great enemies of their souls. Hence, while we may sigh for those good old primitive times, when children were virtuously reared under the ancient institution of good fathers and mothers, yet in practice the School is found to be the only means the Pastor can count upon for the training of the children of his flock in virtue and religion. The Schools of the present day, then, must be places of *education*, i.e., of moral influence and training, as well as of instruction. The best of our children have to be so brought up as to keep their innocence, and to learn how to preserve their virtue and religion amidst temptations to which both the one and the other must sooner or later be exposed; whilst in a great proportion of cases, the influences of School are moreover the only hope, not for preserving their innocence, but for reforming their character. This, then, is the great undertaking in which our Schools are engaged:—to compete with the continued bad influences of the streets, and often of home too; and to succeed in attracting the children so powerfully to the love and practice of virtue, as to outstrip them in the race.

Now who can suppose that this is to be done by instruction only? There is, indeed, a sort of tradition of the times when

parents paid a penny a week extra to have their children "taught morals;" but we have come to regard this now more as a joke than anything else, and Priests at least will understand that children reading "moral lessons," or writing moral slips of copy, has scarcely the remotest tendency to influence their character and conduct; that there is but little chance of counteracting the powerful influences of bad example, bad associates and strong temptations out of School, by any mere inculcation of precepts of duty within it. There must be some more effective machinery than this.

Sometimes, indeed, it is objected that it is not the School, but the grace of God, which is to do this work of preserving innocence or strengthening the children against temptation. But how little we can do in bringing children within range of the influence and means of grace, except in and by the School, may be estimated by seeing what becomes of those children who are not brought up in a Catholic School. How many of these is the Priest able to get at? How many of them can he look upon with satisfaction?

Since, then, our aim is to bring up our children so that they may turn out good, indeed, as members of society, but above all, good Christians, and as our only ordinary means of effecting this is through the influences which can be brought to bear upon them in School,—a good School is not merely a place of instruction but of education; that is, a place in which children are to be brought under the influence of all possible motives to virtue, and trained to its practice.

*Good Teachers.*—It is a maxim in School management, that as is the Teacher so is the School. Not because the Teacher is by any means the only influence brought to bear on the children, but because all others so come through and depend upon him, that if the Teacher is a good one, the School cannot easily be a bad one; and if the Teacher is a bad one, it is impossible that the School should be good. What then is a good Teacher, or what are the qualities we are to look to in making a choice of one?

A good Teacher is one who succeeds in his work; and there is no simpler rule to go by than to choose a Teacher as we should a

housekeeper or gardener, by the recommendations of those who have tried them ; then to try them ourselves, and to keep them if they succeed, but not if they fail. In obtaining good Teachers, I confess I see no way of avoiding the trouble and unpleasantness which we have to encounter in obtaining good servants for the work of our houses. We must enquire of our acquaintances or advertise in the paper ; or, if we do not insist on having one who has already been tried, we can write to the Superiors of the Catholic Training Schools at Hammersmith for Masters, and at Liverpool and S. Leonards for Mistresses. But when this has been done, there is still the responsibility of examining recommendations and testimonials, of deciding on who seems the most eligible, of giving them a fair trial, and—the unpleasantest part of all—of dismissing them, good and amiable as they may be personally, if they cannot do their work, and setting out once more on a fresh voyage of discovery.

And as it is so painful a thing to dismiss from their situation persons whose living is perhaps dependant on it, especially if it is more their misfortune than their fault that they cannot succeed, it may be of use to observe that a great deal of this pain is avoided by putting things on a right footing at the outset. It is well for a Manager to give a Teacher clearly to understand that the object he has in view is *the good of the School*, and that he must in conscience make the comfort and well-being of the Teacher but a secondary point to this. A Teacher is more likely to exert himself, and to succeed, if he knows that his superior has this view of things ; and if success is beyond his reach, it prepares the way for a change without so much risk of misunderstanding.

But since it is necessary sometimes to make choice of Teachers on one's own responsibility, and that in cases where we cannot decide by the success they have actually achieved, let me say something of the special qualities belonging to a good Teacher. Now the qualities that go to make a really good Teacher are high and numerous. Natural abilities, cultivated by a thorough education ; tolerably strong health ; unvarying good temper, united to firmness of character ; personal goodness and piety ; devotedness to his work ; and not least, a real love for and interest in children ;—

these are some of the most important points. Where shall such paragons of excellence be found? A union of so many good qualities must needs be rare. Some think, indeed, that by obtaining Religious for their Schools, they can secure good Teachers. But a religious vocation and training, while it generally ensures good temper, self-control, devotedness and perseverance, does not at all guarantee those natural gifts which are, after all, very essential for success in educating. And this is especially so in the cases of religious bodies in which the education of children is not the primary object of the institute. As, however, it is impossible to know, without considerable acquaintance with a person, whether he possesses the union of so many qualifications, and extremely difficult, moreover, to find such persons, it is a more practical thing to lay down some simple rules which may guide in the selection of good Teachers, or at least in avoiding bad ones. Such are the following:—

1. Never to choose a Teacher as an act of charity. A writer on School management says, most truly:—"It is a common mistake to appoint Teachers, or to keep them, *out of charity*. Let the good people who do this reflect for one moment on the injustice done to the many children put under the charge of an incompetent teacher. Are not they of infinitely more concern? and is it not a bitter injustice done to them, for the sake of a single individual, thus undeservedly pensioned, at the sacrifice of their highest interests?" If a Protestant could write thus, a Catholic cannot surely say less.

2. A Teacher should not be chosen for any qualifications, however valuable, which are beside the mark. There is often a temptation to appoint a Master or Mistress because he or she can play the harmonium, or conduct the choir, or be useful in the church or sacristy, or fulfil some other office besides that of teaching the School. In fixing one's attention on these lesser points, the far higher qualifications of a good Teacher come to be overlooked; and further, the Teacher so selected is generally found to apply himself principally to that employment for which he was in fact chosen, to the neglect of the severer and more wearisome duties of School teaching.

3. There are certain qualities without which teachers *never* seem to attain success in influencing the children. The most important of these is a disposition which children can sympathize with. Even in its simplest form of a fatherly or motherly love for children, and interest in them, it will command a certain amount of success; and still more, if it is accompanied with that sort of cheerful, lively, energetic temperament which children delight in. On the contrary, a person who does not like children,—who is bored by them,—who complains of their tiresomeness, and has to do with them simply as a matter of business and work, is to be shunned. He will never succeed. In *this point* children themselves are almost infallible judges; put the new Teacher among them, and in a few hours they will have come to a decided view as to whether he is a “kind” man or not.

4. Yet it must be said that a kind-hearted Teacher will effect little with the children beyond being himself loved by them, unless he possesses firmness and strength of will, and this is a quality much more difficult to discover. It is the rarity of this quality, coupled with gentleness and kindness of heart, that makes effective Teachers so scarce. But it is also very seldom that strength of will is united to a noisy, blustering manner, to much threatening, or violent punishing of the children. For, in fact, these outward demonstrations are resorted to by Teachers to make up for a deficiency in that quiet firmness of will and persistency of purpose, before which not children only, but every one gives way. A month’s trial would suffice for it to be a received idea in the School respecting such a Teacher, that as children say to one another, “if *he* says a thing you must do it.”

5. I have put these two qualities first, because, however good a man may be personally, *as a Teacher* he will do nothing without them. But if he is only able to influence the children at all, it is of the greatest importance that they should see in him the pattern of a good Christian, worthy of their imitation in every respect. Yet it is well not to be deceived by the notion that it is the first thing to have a pious devout person to conduct the School. That the Teacher must be a person of good moral character is taken for granted, but a pious devout person may, nevertheless, be so dis-



qualified for being set over children, that the effect may be either to give the children a thorough distaste for piety, or, what is not of infrequent occurrence, to make them snatch at scraps of the counsels, or follow the excitements of devotion, to the neglect of the primary duty of learning to please God by keeping His Commandments.

6. All this regards the primary point of being able to *influence the character* of the children for good. To be able to bring them on well in learning, nothing is of greater consequence than that the Teacher should be patient, good tempered, simple and earnest in his manner, and that he should have been trained and brought up to know his business; since the organization of a School, and the methods of teaching different subjects and different classes is an art of itself, and there is as little chance of its being done efficiently without being learnt, as in the case of any other art.

7. And this brings me to give one more caution. Acquiring and possessing knowledge is something so distinct from the power of imparting it, that the former does not so much as give a presumption of the latter: and, what has a practical bearing on the matter, if we come across a Teacher who is vain of his acquirements, and prides himself on being able to teach "the higher branches,"—one who seems only to condescend to teach little children, but whose abilities and acquirements entitle him to a higher employment—it will be a safe rule to let him go in quest of something higher, for he will never succeed in educating the poor children of our Schools.

*School-room.*—Having obtained a good Teacher, the next most important step is to provide him with the facilities for doing his work. Needy Teachers may be found who, for the sake of obtaining or keeping a situation, will be ready to undertake to carry on a School under any circumstances. But generally, the better the Teachers are, and the more earnestly they are bent on doing their work, and doing it well, the more anxious will they be to have all the means and appliances and conditions for efficiently carrying on their difficult task. This is so true, that in making an engagement, many Teachers consider the character of the School-room, and the

prospect they have of being sufficiently provided with requisites, as much as the amount of the salary. And this desire to have all the means and facilities for their work is surely a thing to be encouraged, though the degree to which we can do so much depends on circumstances. We may at present safely incline to the side of giving way too much, rather than too little, to their demands. It is quite worth while, if we can find an earnest and efficient Teacher, to humour him in little things, and to go to some trouble and expense in letting him have everything very complete, and his School in first-rate trim.

But as in this we must be guided not merely by what we wish to do, but what we have the means for, it may be well to observe that some things are indispensable conditions for a successful School, others are important but not indispensable, and others are neither the one or the other. If a teacher desires to have a particular system of rewards, to have one set of reading books or of maps rather than another, or large slates in preference to black boards, it may be well to let him have his own way as an encouragement, but it is not a matter of importance. To have the School well furnished with a sufficient number of desks suitable to the sizes of the children; to be well provided with books and maps; to have a playground—these are important things, but not absolutely essential. But there are some things absolutely essential, I will not say to a School, but to a good School, and it may be well to particularize them.

(1) And, first, is the necessity of having School premises *some-what* proportioned to the number of Scholars. This is necessary both for the sake of the health of the children and the organization of the School. For once or twice it does a strong person no great harm to stay in a close room; but when it comes to being in it several hours day after day, it really affects the health, and even if it falls short of doing this, it makes the children restless and uncomfortable, and the Teacher nervous and weary. This is found, in fact, to be of so much importance, that the Government refuse assistance to any Schools in which there is not sufficient room for ventilation. It is better to have the School cold through the doors and windows being open, than to have it ill-ventilated; but this is

not of itself sufficient where the roof is not open, and the ceiling low. There must be a certain allowance of cubic feet of space for each child. Nor is it less necessary for the sake of organization. Not to speak of having room for writing desks, for marching children about, and for grouping them in standing classes, it is impossible to divide the children into classes at all, if they are all huddled together into a room inconveniently small for so large a number. Let any one try for himself how very difficult it is, under the most favourable circumstances, to keep up the attention of a number of children. But unless the class that is being taught one subject is separated off, either by being in another room, or by some small distance from classes that are engaged on other subjects, the noise and distraction to the children is too great to allow either them or the Teacher to attend to their work. But the greatest difficulty of this sort is found in Schools consisting of both infants and elder children together; for the instruction and exercises appropriate to infants are quite different from those fitted for elder children. Young children can only be kept quiet for a length of time by the most violent measures. The instructions, therefore, given to them must be short, and varied by exercises in marching, singing, &c.; as the object of their being at School is not to give them much intellectual exercise,—for which their brain is at present too tender,—but to train them into habits of order, discipline, and obedience, which can best be learned very early. The whole management, therefore, of “infants” will be such as to interfere very materially with the arrangement of the classes of the elder children. And hence, in a School where there is any considerable number of infants and elder children mixed together, it is absolutely necessary to have a class-room, or else a division of the School-room itself, so as to admit the possibility of the Schoolmistress obtaining the undisturbed attention of those she is instructing.

In saying this I am, I think, fully aware of the difficulties that too often exist in the way of obtaining adequate School premises. But this difficulty is not greater than the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of a Teacher succeeding in premises wholly insufficient. And one difficulty does not extinguish another. In any

case, therefore, in which proper premises cannot be obtained, the Teacher cannot succeed, and the children will either be withdrawn or remain without proper education. Yet the many cases in which I have seen the difficulty of obtaining premises overcome, leads to the supposition that it can be in others also. It may tend to diminish the difficulty, if I observe that architectural beauty and good external appearance is not essential to a School-room, and where this has been given up, it has in many cases been found not impossible to find funds to enlarge an existing School, to throw out a class room, or to convert an outhouse, a workshop, a loft, or a barn into an adequate, though perhaps unsightly, School-room. A common expedient is to rent a building for this purpose; and the objection of the expense is answered by the fact, that for the most part the increased outlay is made up by the increased income which a good School can command. There is no School which is so expensive as a bad one. When a School is carried on efficiently, it obtains more support from the subscriptions of those interested in it, higher grants from public sources, and increased income from School pence. But, without a certain amount of air, light, and space, the School cannot be carried on efficiently.

(2) In parallel importance to adequate premises is a sufficient amount of assistance to the Teacher. A School of twenty or thirty children may be managed by a single Teacher. When it comes to forty, and especially if the children are of very different ages, some help in the work is needed. A good Teacher will manage by some little rewards, or extra teaching out of School hours, to secure the assistance of one of the most advanced of the children to keep one class in order, while she is teaching another. But a School of fifty or sixty children absolutely demands an assistant of some sort. It is beyond the ordinary power of any man or woman to instruct and look after so large a number. And so it will be found that when it is attempted, something or other is sure to go wrong. The most common and most fatal effect is that the Teacher applies his attention to the elder children as the most interesting and most likely to be examined, and neglects the younger classes, who soon fall into disorder, and come to hate the School and learning.

Additional work is in this way soon made, for where the younger children are neglected, the Teacher has not only the more to do with them when they get older, but he has, what is harder still, to reform them; to *undo* the effects of early neglect. Sometimes (and this is the smallest evil that can happen) one or two subjects become entirely neglected; the children learn reading and catechism, but writing, ciphering, or needlework are, one or more of them, left to take their chance. Sometimes the whole School will be in a state of disorder, or only kept at all quiet by an unmerciful use of the cane, and there is always a reaction from a reign of terror. It is not the way to make children love either religion or learning. In some cases a Teacher of extraordinary energy will manage for a time to achieve a little success, but as it is beyond his strength, he soon breaks down, and either resigns his post, if he is a conscientious man, or acquiesces in not attempting any longer what he has found he cannot succeed in. What is *never* found is an efficient and successful School where a large number of children are under the care of an unassisted Teacher.

But this difficulty is not hard to be got over. In the case of insufficient premises there is no way of avoiding an outlay which it may be difficult for the Manager to provide. But it is not so in this case; for by putting the School under Government inspection, sufficient grants may be obtained, under ordinary circumstances, to meet the expense of apprentices or an assistant Teacher. A perusal of the "Revised Code" of Regulations under which grants are now made will show that the conditions are very fair and reasonable, that they do not at all interfere with the management of the School, and that they are not difficult to comply with. The great advantages of the system of Pupil Teachers or Assistants is fully acknowledged by those who have tried it, while the difficulties and objections arise entirely from those that have not done so. In the Dioceses where there are the largest number of Catholic Schools and children, the instruction is mainly carried on by the large body of apprentices and assistant Teachers who are paid out of the funds provided by the Privy Council grants. A visit to some of the Schools carried on under this system will show how efficient it is.

Another advantage of the system of Pupil Teachers is, that it

encourages the children to exertion, when they know that they may be rewarded by being themselves selected for apprenticeship. But it is extremely important that they should be selected with great care; for to promote a child who is not edifying in his conduct to be over the others, because he is a favourite, or a relative or pet of the Teacher's, or from considerations of interest, or because he is nice-looking, is a direct contradiction in deed, to those lessons of justice and virtue which have been inculcated by word of mouth. And children are guided by what they see done much more than by what they hear said.

The most essential qualifications for good Pupil Teachers are that they should be—1st. Good examples in their own conduct. 2nd. That they should be found to be able to manage and control a class; for this is a natural gift that does not follow either on good conduct or intellectual ability, but is a talent that God has given to one and not to another. 3rd. The third thing necessary for a Pupil Teacher is good abilities, as without these it will be difficult for him to pass his own examinations.

*School Management.*—Having spoken of the three most important points to be attended to, in order to set up a good School, I must make a few remarks on the less essential points of the management of a School. A really good Teacher is essential; and if such a one has been obtained, it will be best in minor points to let him have his own way. Questions occur about the best arrangements for the desks and classes—what books and maps and apparatus are the best; about the most convenient hours for the School, and the kinds of rewards and penances that will produce the most effect. As to these and other questions of detail, it is best as a rule to follow the plan and wishes of the Teacher; for besides that a trained Teacher is often possessed of a practical knowledge which experience in the actual work of School teaching can alone give, it is not always that which is best in itself that is best under present circumstances. Moreover, the work of educating poor children is so difficult and wearisome, that we may well consent to humour in these little matters any Teacher who perseveres in his work with a spirit of devotion. The best Teachers have

generally ways and ideas of their own, and it will be wise not unnecessarily to thwart them in these; for a certain amount of freedom of action, in having things as they like, and doing them in their own way, is essential to their success.

Yet, on the other hand, it is often quite as dangerous to fall into the other extreme, and to avoid interfering with the Teacher's work by keeping altogether out of the School. *Medio tutissimus ibis*. And to discern the point in which the mean lies, requires all the more judgment, because it is not the same in each case. Some Teachers—even good ones—rest a great deal on feeling that their efforts are appreciated, and it will powerfully support and encourage them to go frequently into the School, to enquire into what is done, to hear or examine the classes, and to note defects or progress. Others, indeed, can be left much more to themselves; though there are none who do not feel it a great discouragement, if the School is never visited or their exertions noticed. But the proportion of able and zealous teachers is small, and though these may sometimes be left a good deal to themselves, others cannot, without a certainty of mischief. Many require to be kept up to the mark in punctuality and attention to their work by the eye of a kind Master, but one who is, notwithstanding, wide-awake, and who would come heavily down upon them, either for neglecting their work, or (what is more frequent) giving their chief attention, not to the more solid part of it, but to matters of mere taste and fancy. Oftentimes Managers of Schools, out of modesty in interfering in matters in which they have but little experience, are shy of directing Teachers in their duty. This is reasonable where the Teachers are both skilful and zealous; but we are still suffering grievously for want of a greater supply of such treasures. The Managers who will go frequently into their Schools and attend to what goes on there, will soon find that plain common sense is an excellent guide in most questions of their management. They may perhaps find cases of children set to learn tasks which as yet they *cannot* learn; of children who are themselves ignorant and disorderly being set to teach others, and even allowed to use the cane at discretion over their fellows; of grammar and history being taught to children who cannot yet read, or compound rules of arithmetic

to those who are more than imperfect in notation and simple addition; of fancy work to girls who cannot do plain sewing; or children caned for careless writing or blots, while downright sins escape censure; or, that most common of all faults with inefficient Teachers, excessive severity of punishment on all occasions, when, after all, the children are not so much in fault as the Teacher himself, in his want of skill, of patience, and of good temper. Now many Teachers who fall into such faults as these, and are not good enough to be left to themselves, may nevertheless be made to do fairly well when supported, corrected, and well looked after by the Manager.

As to the question, then, of how far in School matters the wishes of the Teacher are to be followed, this must be regulated by the circumstances of the case, by such considerations as those of expense, of how far we can place confidence in the judgment of the Teacher, and of the particular circumstances of the locality and of the School. But there are one or two questions connected with the discipline of the School, for the settlement of which the Manager's authority is constantly appealed to, and which I will therefore more especially notice.

*School Discipline.*—A good School—such as will effect what has at present to be done with our children—is not one in which mere instruction is skilfully conveyed, but one which works upon their forming, but as yet unformed, character, and fixes it for good. But how is this done? In a small—but a very small—degree, by the precepts, the instruction, of the Teacher. In a much greater degree, by his example and character; *i.e.*, not by what he says, but what he does. But the great means of influence is the spirit of the School—that is, the tone of feeling and habit of acting that prevails among the mass of the children. We all know the almost irresistible influence of the society in which we live. A saint would not be safe in continual intercourse with bad company. The worst people will be improved by the society of the good. But children's characters are especially open to the influence of others; they are like metals in a state of fusion, still soft and warm, but daily growing more cold and hard, and settling down into a per-



manent form and character. This form will be decided by the character of the society into which they fall; it is the mould of which naturally they must take the shape. The great object, therefore, to be sought for, is that the form or mould may be a good one; that the influences which the child is under at School may be so powerful for good, as to counteract the evil influences which he is under elsewhere.

Now the tone of feeling and spirit of a School depends, as I have already said, on the Teacher. It must be created and kept alive by his influence, his example, his teaching, and the exertion of his power. Such as the Teacher is, so will be the School. The discipline or moral government of the School depends, and must depend, on him. But there are certain points closely connected with the discipline of the School, in the exercise of which the Teacher will need to be supported or corrected by the authority of his superior, who will therefore be often appealed to by one side or the other, and should therefore be prepared with some principles to guide his decision. These points are—the admission and expulsion of the children, the degree and kind of punishment that may be used, and the means of reward and encouragement to be given to the good.

*Rules of Admission and Expulsion.*—As regards the admission or expulsion of children, it will be found, I think, a good plan to keep this power in our own hands. It is no doubt troublesome to give an order for admission in each case, but it secures results which cannot easily be secured otherwise. The parents seldom value or respect a School which their children can run in and out of as they like. And they are not far wrong; for it is almost, if not quite impossible, for any Teacher to instruct or bring into order children whose attendance is capricious. It breaks the continuity of any series of instructions or any course of discipline, so that the lesson which was learnt or inculcated to-day is unlearnt before the child appears again. It greatly hinders what is one of the most important things, the formation of *habits* of regularity and order, and is injurious, by bad example, to the other children whose parents are careful about their regular attendance. The objections made to

this plan are, that besides the trouble it gives to the Manager, it must exclude many children who could and would attend sometimes, and so get some good. But it may really be doubted whether any appreciable good is attained by children attending a School irregularly; whereas, the mischief done by allowing it, is considerable. This mischief is done first to themselves; for this is the way the thing works. If the parents of such children are conscientious people, they the more easily go on permitting their children to stay away, or keeping them for their own convenience, because the irregularity is under the sanction of authority; and they are apt to suppose that their children are deriving profit from this irregular attendance at School, when in fact they are not. If, on the other hand, the parents are negligent about their religion and about the education of their children, it is often the first step towards making them sensible of their neglect, to allow them to be under no delusion about the matter. For such parents often excuse themselves from looking after their children, on the plea that the latter are attending such and such a School; whereas, if the children were excluded from such an irregular and useless attendance, they would be more alive to the fact that they were flagrantly neglecting them. Motives of shame and worldly interest, as well as of religion, would be more likely to awaken them to a duty which was being palpably neglected. But if it is thus indirectly for the good of these children themselves that they should be excluded from anything but a regular attendance, still more is it of importance for the general welfare of the School. For as this irregularity must seriously interfere with the good order and efficient instruction of the scholars, to allow it, is in effect to sacrifice the welfare of the good and regular for that of the irregular. Now it is no doubt right to care for the negligent and erring and disorderly, and to endeavour to reclaim them; but not before and at the expense of the well-ordered. These have an equal, not to say a greater claim on our care. Well-ordered families understand and value a School in which that regularity is maintained which is the rule of their own conduct; they make a sacrifice of their means and convenience, to get their children on; and it is a real hardship to them, if the only place to which they can as Catholics send their

children, is one where habits of order, regularity and punctuality are not enforced, or where their progress is interfered with by the attention that has to be paid to those whose parents are not making the sacrifices that they are for the welfare of their children. That this strictness does not interfere with the welfare of a School, is shewn by the fact, that when such regulations are made *and adhered to*, in a little time such Schools become the best attended. This is found, in fact, to be the case. *Ceteris paribus*, a School where punctuality and regularity is enforced will not perhaps fill sooner, but keep full better, than where they are not. In the long run the parents value such a School much more, where they value education at all.

It is certainly some trouble to give admission by orders only; but this is nothing very heavy, if a particular time is appointed for the purpose. It is an efficacious and innocent artifice to make a little fuss about admitting children to the privileges of such an excellent institution as we have made our School; and if the children forfeit their membership by irregularity, it obliges the parents to come and face his Reverence again, and explain the cause, and gives him an excellent opportunity of enlarging on the importance of the duties of parents in this respect. The trouble of coming up repeatedly for orders—for these orders should not be granted to the children themselves—acts as a salutary check on irregularity of attendance.

But if it is of importance that admission to the School should be by the Manager's authority, still more so is it that by his authority only any child should be expelled. Such a punishment should of course be avoided altogether, if possible; but in some cases it cannot. For as one diseased sheep will taint a whole flock, so, if there is a badly disposed child in the School, and it is beyond the Teacher's power to reform him, he must be expelled for the sake of preserving the rest. It is better to lose one than many. A School is intended to be a place for training children in habits of virtue and religion; and anything that would interfere with its accomplishing this end, must at all costs be put down. Yet, while the consequences are too serious to leave this power at the discretion of the Teacher, on the other hand, his position must be

upheld in the School by the Manager's authority, when such an act of severity becomes necessary. He could no longer maintain his influence in the School, if children whose bad propensities he could not restrain were liable to be thrust back on him.

*Punishments.*—But there is no point in which the Manager's supervision is more required than in the kind of punishments that are made use of in the School, and the manner in which they are administered. There are no doubt some Teachers who have so much good sense and judgment on this point, that the Manager's duty consists only in upholding their authority. But such valuable teachers are not very common. For the most part they err either by excessive severity—punishing for every little breach of order or fault of carelessness—or worse still, through their own impatience and ill temper—or else they are persons of soft, indulgent natures, who cannot bring themselves to acts of severity at all, and pass by faults of so dangerous and grievous a nature, that the character of the School is lowered and the welfare of the children is sacrificed. Now both these errors are very dangerous; and it is therefore of the highest consequence, that in the use of punishment the Teacher should be watched, and if need be, controlled, so as to guard against them.

One or two principles may serve to assist one's common sense in the matter. One of these, it seems to me, is to insist on a distinction being made between penances and punishments. One of the principal things that we aim at in instructing children is to fix in their minds a clear idea of right and wrong. When they come into our hands, this idea is as yet indistinct and undefined; and we desire that they should leave School with a sharp and clearly marked understanding of the line of right and wrong—a love and loyalty towards the former, and a horror of the latter. To effect this, we have not merely to instruct them about the laws of God and the nature of sin, but to give a practical tone to our precepts, by actually reproofing and punishing sin, and encouraging, rewarding, and showing the example of virtue. It is not what is told them, that makes a deep impression on children, but what they see done. They must see that in the Teacher's own conduct vice

is avoided and virtue practised, as opportunity offers. But besides vice and sin, there are a number of lesser faults which children are continually committing; faults against order, against cleanliness, against good manners, against the rules of the School—that carelessness, thoughtlessness, inaccuracy, inattention, which may be at the outside venial sins, or may be none, and which yet it is necessary to cure and keep down. How are these to be treated? If they are punished as sins, the effect is the child never comes to have a clear notion of what sin is. The broad distinction between such imperfections, and wilful breaches of God's law, is never drawn. The child sees both visited with similar if not equal punishment, and as he observes that all the children fall more or less into such faults, and feels that he cannot avoid it himself, he comes to look upon punishment not as the consequence of his own act, but as either a matter of chance, or dependant on some higher law of which he is at present ignorant. It is then most important to distinguish in our method of treatment between moral faults and mere faults against rule and good order. The latter may be met by different little penances, light in character, and involving no degradation, but sufficiently disagreeable in their repetition to stop the mischief, or at least keep it from spreading; while we should insist on serious punishments, and especially corporal punishment, being reserved for serious and moral offences,—not to be left to junior Teachers, nor to be inflicted in the excitement of the moment, nor without due consideration of circumstances, in order to avoid all chance of injustice, and so that the culprit may not be able to draw any other conclusion but that of his own serious delinquency.

As to the kind of punishment that is best, this must depend a good deal on circumstances, but for grave faults the old-fashioned remedy of the rod possesses unrivalled advantages. It is sharp and stirring, and does not generally lead to that sullen brooding over punishment which is often the effect of silent and long continued inflictions. It has the great merit of powerfully influencing those who witness, as well as him who suffers it, and dissuading them from a like course of action. It is above all a humbling punishment. There is, perhaps, nothing that is so effective a humiliation to a child, who is giving himself airs, as to be reduced to a state of

thorough funk,—to be seen and heard roaring for mercy. Ridicule and shame too, are very efficacious punishments. Ridicule is a sort of lesser shame, and may be profitably used in a good natured way as a correction of little faults against good order. Shame is so sharp an instrument amongst children that it should be used very cautiously. Most children are more sensitive to it than even to bodily pain. Hence if it is used to punish faults of inaccuracy, inattention, or weakness, it is very apt to obliterate the distinction between such lighter offences and moral faults. It ought only to be inflicted for the latter.

One other remark may be made on this subject. The temperaments and characters of children are so different, that it is a matter of some consequence to adapt the punishment to the particular case. A punishment that is suited to one will do injury to another. And yet it is of no less consequence that the Teacher should both be, and to be seen to be, perfectly just and impartial in visiting offences, or else his influence over the character of the children is at an end. To combine these ends it is useful to have an alternative of punishments, so that while the Teacher is most just in punishing serious faults without any favour or partiality, he may be able to choose out of equal penalties that which is most suited to the particular delinquent.

*Other Means of Influence.*—But while at the first formation of a School it may be necessary to show strictness and determination by somewhat frequent punishment, an efficient Teacher will soon bring his School to a condition in which but little of this is needed. Little faults will constantly require to be checked by trifling penances, but when once a proper tone of morality and feeling is established, the children, as they enter the School, come to be guided by it as much, or even more, than men are ruled by the usages of society or the custom of the country. Watchfulness is of course needed to prevent the tone of the School from deteriorating, but so long as it remains, children form their habits and principles from those around them, and are deterred from vice and sin, not so much by the fear of punishment as by the example of their fellows. However, this proper tone and spirit in a School is not mainly

established by punishment, but rather by motives of love and hope, which are much stronger in children than those of fear. The most skilful Teachers always gain the affections of the children. They work on them by kindness. They study their characters, and endeavour, not to do the impossible work of changing their natures, but, to turn their natural dispositions into a right direction. Children are distinguished by a love of activity, of excitement, by curiosity, and a love of knowledge when within the grasp of their intellect; they are easily roused to compassion or emulation; they have a keen sense of justice. Good Teachers appeal to and work on these feelings, and train the children to good by means of them. And it is in this work that they need to be encouraged and supported, for their success must, in a great measure, depend on their being seconded in their endeavours, and supported with a sufficient supply of the necessary help. It may seem a trifling thing, but a playground is one of the most important instruments which a valuable Teacher uses for influencing the children. Here he comes to know the children, he discerns the character and tendencies of each. Here, too, he comes to be known by the children and understood to be a real true character, who, in fact, practices the lessons he teaches, and corrects the faults he reproveth. Here he encourages and rewards the good, and makes the children see that fun and amusement do not belong exclusively to the bad boys and girls whose company they are forbidden to seek. The approval and love of a kind and sympathizing Teacher, the hope of little indulgences and rewards, the expectation of being able to succeed in some little contest of skill, or to carry off some little distinction,—these are the sort of motives which successful Teachers employ to work on the eager and hopeful minds of children.

*Rewards.*—But here it is plain that very much depends on the interest and support given by the Manager. It is not merely that his favourable notice is often looked up to as the highest proof of virtue and success, or that the very existence of feasts, prizes, holidays, games in the playground, and all other such nice things, depend almost entirely on his indulgence and exertions; but still more, his frequent visits and personal interest in the School encourages and supports good Teachers, keeps the slothful and easy-going

up to the mark, and has a tendency to deliver the children from the calamity of being left under bad ones. Not to dwell on the two last cases, let us suppose that by great pains or good luck we are possessed of a good Teacher. I do not know whether we have any right to expect that he should be able to go on without any human support in his arduous work, but certainly if we do expect, it is but seldom that we shall not be disappointed. The work of *educating* children can never become a mechanical one. It must always imply special attention, continued exertion, and even some amount of care and anxiety. Even the greatest skill and hard persevering efforts cannot in all cases ensure success. When success has been achieved, the Teacher leaves one set of children but to begin afresh with another batch of the raw material, that has again and again to be skilfully worked up. To carry on this arduous, wearisome work, not merely for a season, or in times of excitement, but painfully and conscientiously, and year after year, is a labour that deserves real admiration; and when, as in most cases, the Teachers are not Religious, who have particular helps and graces to support them, it is but reasonable that their Superiors in the School should give them all the encouragement they can. It gives Teachers energy and courage if they see their work looked into, and their exertions commended. They come to realise that they are doing good and giving satisfaction, and this gives them heart and hope in their arduous work.

*Religious Instruction.*—But while the good discipline of the School, its tone and spirit, must ultimately depend on the character and power of the Teacher, there is one department of the instruction, the efficiency and responsibility of which must, we feel, depend on ourselves. Some of my reverend brethren go further than I do on this point, and maintain that the Teachers of the School should not be permitted to give religious instruction at all, as this is the duty and office of the Priest alone. However this may be, yet certainly in populous Missions it is often impossible for the Clergy to attend adequately to the religious instruction of the children by themselves; and if in this work they are to be assisted by any lay people, there are none so safe as Teachers who have been carefully trained in religious knowledge, and whose accuracy has been tested



by examination. Yet if the Priest cannot always take the religious instruction into his own hands, he might always take the direction of the religious instruction. And his doing so is of the greatest consequence; for as there is no subject to compare with it in importance, this importance is impressed on the children's mind if they see the religious lesson treated differently from all others, looked after, and in part given by the Priest himself. Moreover, in this subject the Teachers and Apprentices are almost sure to take their own lessons from those which they hear given by the Priest. And this would seem to be the legitimate duty of the lay Teachers, to carry out in detail and repetition the lessons given by the Priest. There may be some danger in leaving the entire instruction of the School in the hands of lay Teachers, but there is no reason why these should not undertake the more routine part of the work, teaching the children those things they have to learn by heart, explaining hard words, and repeating over and over again the explanation of the subject which they have learnt from their superiors. The Pupil Teachers too, and often the most advanced class, require fuller and more accurate explanations of Christian doctrine than an ordinary Teacher can give, so that they especially demand the attention and supervision of the Priest. If these are well brought on, it will generally lead to the religious instruction being well attended to and cared for throughout the School.

The most important points to attend to in religious instruction are to insure, first a great interest in the subject. What is related of a certain preacher is in point here. It is said that he asked a celebrated actor how it happened that the latter contrived to obtain the attention and sympathy of his audience while speaking of unrealities, while he, the preacher, though addressing *his* audience on matters of such tremendous reality and consequence to themselves, yet failed to gain their attention. "Why," said the actor, "I speak of fictions as if they were realities, and you speak of realities as if they were fictions." Now, in truth, religious instruction is *in itself* the most interesting of subjects from the intimate relation which its truths have to our own life and prospects; so that if, as often happens, the children show little interest in it, it is because of the dull and unreal way in which it is taught, not as a subject of special concern to themselves, but as so much of

“lessons” which must be got through like the rest of the day’s drudgery.

The way in which it will be made interesting is taking care that it is taught simply and easily, so that the children are not called to keep up their attention to what is really above their capacity, but to what is suited to their powers of comprehension. Another thing which powerfully helps to the interest the children will feel, and which is of extreme importance in itself, is that they should see it treated with reverence, and not as a common subject. I speak with some diffidence, but it seems to me that Teachers often make a mistake in aiming at devotion in the children rather than reverence. For to make all people devout is not in our power, and to aim at it is dangerous, as leading, in some cases, to a sort of reaction against religion altogether, and in others to a sort of excitement which is taken for devotion, but which has no solid foundation. But it is a proverb that “without reverence there is no religion,” and there are no dangers attending the inculcation of this. On the contrary, it is the atmosphere which will still continue to support Faith, even when morality is weakened. It is a strong foundation for devotion, and will influence the wild and headstrong when nothing else can turn them. It should then be ceaselessly enforced both by word and example, and it should, and if it exists, must appear in the manner of giving religious instruction.

It will help, too, to make religious instruction interesting, if care is taken to bring out the practical character which it really possesses. Some of the things which children learn may never be of any practical use to them apart from serving to cultivate their minds, and it is anyhow difficult or impossible to make the children see what they have to do with them, or why they should care for them. But this is not so in respect to religion, which teaches them truths which intimately concern them, their practice in this life, their prospects for the next. There is no part of religious instruction which does not directly or indirectly bear on some duty. It either teaches us what God requires of us, or supplies us with the motives or the means for fulfilling it. In other things, the children are instructed in what will or may concern them; but in religion it is what does concern them. Hence it is not difficult, and at the same time most important, to give a practical turn to religious

instruction ; illustrating doctrine by God's actual dealings with us, by what happens in the world, by what the children see done by their superiors, by what they are required to do themselves. The unskilful and unpractical manner in which Catechism is often taught is enough to explain the want of interest shown in it.

*Plan of Religious Instruction.*—It may be useful to mark out a plan for religious instruction such as, notwithstanding the varying circumstances of different Schools, it will on the whole be useful to follow. For religious instruction to be given efficiently, the children cannot be separated into less than three great divisions. (1) The infants, *i. e.* children up to the age when they come to the use of reason ; (2) from that age to the age of nine or ten ; and (3) the elder and more advanced children. Each of these divisions will require instruction of a peculiar character.

*Infants.*—And first as regards the infants. However it may be accounted for, it seems to be an indubitable fact, that the deepest impressions are made on children's character before they come to the use of reason. Hence it is of supreme consequence that the religious instruction given to them should be suitable to their age. To make them learn by heart chapters of the Catechism which they cannot possibly be made to understand, is simply to weary and disgust them with the subject. The only thing they should learn by heart is their prayers and some hymns, not as an exercise of their intellect, but that they may gain the habit of saying them, and that carefully and reverentially as a duty they owe to God. With this they should receive short *oral* instructions on the great truths of religion, made as simple as possible, and on only one point at a time, and illustrated by stories from the Bible and elsewhere. Explanations of doctrine little children cannot take in. And they can do without explanations, for they have no difficulty in believing anything they are told by those they look up to. But facts—great facts and truths—illustrated and pointed at by the wonderful events of sacred history, these they take in with eagerness and awe, and so deeply that the impression still lives in them for years after, when, perhaps, innocence and devotion are gone, and faith itself is dimmed. How often do we find not only good men

ascribing their character to their earliest impressions, but even bad men reclaimed from, or held back in wickedness by the strong feelings implanted in them, not by, but before the use of understanding. In default of good religious parents, this must be done in the Infant School, or it is not done at all.

*2nd Division.*—In the 2nd division the children begin to be able to learn the Catechism and to comprehend its meaning. So many children leave School after ten years of age, that these two or three years are the only time that can ordinarily be reckoned on for learning the Catechism. And here I would stoutly advocate the old-fashioned plan of laying a sound foundation for religious knowledge in an accurate knowledge of the *words* of the Catechism. And yet the words are only the foundation. They serve as a basis and text for instruction, and they preserve the knowledge of Christian doctrine, if, but only if, instruction in the meaning of the words has accompanied them. What is most essential is not any deep explanation or entering into theological distinctions, but a simple yet practical exposition of Christian doctrine, that the children may carry into life a clear notion of what they believe, what they have to do, and the means of doing it, in order to save their souls. Some persons of experience advise that *before* the words of the Catechism are learnt, each lesson should be explained two or three times, as this both greatly facilitates the learning, and makes the child attach from the first an interest and meaning to the answers. It is also of great assistance to giving an interest and reality to the instructions for them to be illustrated by stories from sacred history. Often children are so short a time at School after they have learnt to read, that there is but little opportunity for teaching them much sacred history. In these cases it would seem best to be content with making them know the Gospel history, the life of our Lord, His miracles and parables. For this is both the easiest part and that most practically useful to them; since it illustrates and enforces what is taught them in the Catechism, it teaches so many practical lessons of Christian virtue and perfection, and helps powerfully towards that personal knowledge and love of our Lord which goes to make up the character of a good Christian. Nor should the words of the Catechism be only explained by illus-

trations, but also made as real and practical as possible, by enforcing what it teaches in the case of the very children who are taught; that it may be well brought home to them that it is not a science, but an art, that they are learning. The children must see and feel that in School at least the teaching of the Catechism is not a dead letter, that the Teachers really mean what they say.

*Elder Children.*—In so many of our Schools children are taken away at an early age, that the essential part of religious instruction has to be secured without loss of opportunity. But wherever there are children able to remain to the ages of eleven and upwards, it is very desirable to form from them a third class or division; for not only is it suitable that they should not be contented with a meagre knowledge of necessary things which is perhaps all that is possible with the other children, but their progress in the knowledge of secular subjects may become a positive harm to them, unless it is accompanied with a corresponding knowledge of religion. For a taste for reading, and an acquaintance with subjects of history and science and art, brings them within the reach of all those temptations against faith and morality which are so profusely suggested by the literature of the day. To keep back our children from being as well instructed as others is dangerous to attempt, and often impossible to succeed in. To keep them from the mischievous literature which is brought to their doors is often equally so. The only thing in our power is to arm them as far as possible against the danger by forewarning them of it, and supplying them with strength to repel it. This is most efficiently done, not by making controversialists of them—far from it—but by making them thoroughly acquainted with their own religion. Controversy and the arguments of objectors are apt to weaken the strength of a truth in the child's mind; clear and positive knowledge more than anything else render him proof against the assaults of heresy or unbelief.

This thorough knowledge of their Catechism is a great security to the faith of the children in more ways than one. It is so because many of the arguments or insinuations against religion only arise from ignorance of it; and the answer to many more is very obvious to those who are well instructed. It is indeed

instructive to observe how large a proportion of people's difficulties on religion arise from sheer ignorance of it. But it tells in another and more important way. A single truth may be impugned, and we may be unable, humanly speaking, to withstand the force of the arguments or insinuations made against it; but if this truth is but part of a system connected with and depending on other truths, it is supported by them and by the strength of the entire system. It is easy for an isolated truth to be weakened or disturbed, but not for a body or system of truths. Hence, in the present day, when children as they grow up are so liable to be exposed to all sorts of dangers, not only to their virtue, but their faith, it is more than ever desirable to give them the additional security of a thorough and ample knowledge of their Catechism, as teaching a system of Christian doctrine. Our upper classes of children may be led to see how one doctrine follows from another; how what the Catechism teaches of God is illustrated by Scripture history; how what it teaches us of man is witnessed in the world and in ourselves. They may get to know the meaning of the feasts and devotions and practices of piety, which they have ever been accustomed to observe, and how they are but exemplifications of the doctrines which are now explained to them. And especially they may be shown the connection between faith and practice, and how what they are called on to do is but a reasonable duty following from that which they believe. In this way Christian doctrine comes to be understood by them to be, not merely a series of difficult and even unpalatable truths, as the world and the devil would lead them to suppose, but a system and body of living and practical truth—a complete explanation, not indeed of mysteries which are above our comprehension, but of all that God sees fit to tell us at present—“all things that appertain to life and piety.”

*Means of Maintaining Schools.*—A few words may be said, in conclusion, on the means of maintaining Schools. The average expense of a School is at the rate of 30s. a year for each child in daily attendance. In many cases it may of course be done for much less; but it is not good economy to lessen the expenses of the School by underpaying the Teachers or their Assistants. Let us suppose a School of 70 children on the books, with a daily attend-

ance of 50. The support of the School would cost, at the average rate, £75 a year. If there is no endowment, the ordinary resources must consist of (1) the pence of the children; (2) the allowance from the Committee of Council on Education; and (3) subscriptions or collections. Under ordinary circumstances, the School pence might be made to bring in at the rate of 2d. a week for each of the 50 children, for 46 weeks, or £19 3s. The amount to be obtained from Government is 15s. a head; but various causes, it is estimated, will make it difficult for an ordinary School to obtain all of this. Let us say 10s. a head, or £25 a year. These two sources, then, provide £44 3s., leaving a little over £30 to be obtained by subscriptions and collections. And where the poverty of the Mission is such as to make it impossible to obtain so much as this, and there is no endowment, an application to the Catholic Poor School Committee will almost always succeed in bringing some help from it.

Objections are indeed sometimes felt at receiving Government Grants, and to insisting on School pence. With regard to the latter, there are always supposed to be insuperable difficulties in the way until it is tried. But wherever it is tried it is found to succeed. I could cite instances, both in town and country, where it was said to be quite impossible: "the children's parents were the poorest of the poor;" "the neighbourhood abounded with free and proselytizing Schools;" "the children would be running about the streets, because they had not the money or had spent it." But, *solvitur ambulando*, wherever the case has been tried, and a good School has been opened, and payment insisted on, it has come in. In a great many cases the parents do not value or respect a School for which payment is not needed. They seem to think that what they can get for nothing must be worthless. It may, indeed, like anything that is new, take a little time for the people to get into the way of it; and there are individual cases, I do not deny, that really call for exemption, or what is the best method, for occasional help; but it remains a fact, that ordinarily the Schools in which payment is insisted on are not worse, but better attended than those that are free.

As regards Government Grants, it is unnecessary to enter into discussion of particular objections, because nearly all those objec-

tions relate to a state of things that has now passed away. Under the Revised Code which has just come into operation, it may be more difficult to get such large grants as before, but on the other hand, the grants are left almost entirely to the disposal of the Manager, less is required in the way of knowledge, except in the most elementary subjects, and the interference of the Government is limited to enquiring whether the School is a fit place for education, and examining into the progress made by the children in these elementary subjects. A perusal of the Revised Code, which can be purchased for 3d., will explain the conditions of the different Grants.

*School Books and Furniture.*—It only remains to say a word respecting School Books, Furniture and Apparatus. Formerly, our School Managers and Teachers were under special difficulties about procuring these, from there being no Catholic School Depository, so that they were obliged to have recourse to Protestant Depositories, to make selections there for themselves, and to go elsewhere for Catholic books. Now, all this trouble is saved them by the establishment of S. Anselm's Society, and its Depository at 17 Portman Street. It is not, indeed, a School Depository, but as it contains a department for School Books and Apparatus, and has a Supplementary Catalogue of these things, it completely answers the purpose. A visit to the Depository will enable Managers to see the best Books available for Catholic Schools, and to select from them; and by a small subscription to the Society, they are enabled to obtain all they require for their Schools at a reduced price.

I remain, Rev. dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. G. WENHAM,

*Ecd. Inspector of Schools.*

*Mortlake, Feb., 1863.*