

An Essay on Education

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PREFACE

This book is offered in general to all those who are interested in the upbringing of children and in particular, with deep respect, to the members of the most conservative and most devoted profession in the world.

The first and last chapters do not form part of the main argument. The first chapter is a limbering up, an attempt to set out what seems to be a good frame of mind in which to approach educational problems. The last chapter, which may help to amplify the main theme, was originally written as a private letter to a friend who had been appointed to a headmastership, and was subsequently published in the *Preparatory Schools' Review*, to the editor of which I am indebted for permission to reproduce it here in a somewhat altered form.

I do not think that there are many original ideas in the book. All I have done is to try to assemble ideas and outlooks which have been in the air for the last 25 years – some of them, indeed, for nearly the last 25 centuries – in a way that shows them to be pointing in a direction that seems to me to be important. Those who are familiar with his work will recognize the predominating influence of Professor John MacMurray. I would like to acknowledge this debt but feel diffident about doing so because I have no permission from him and he might well be grievously shocked at my distortion and misapplication of his ideas. With the same diffidence I would also like to acknowledge the influence of the late Arthur Clutton Brock, of Dr E Graham Howe and of George Lyward. Any ideas beyond those derived from these four are probably absorbed from fellow teachers, notably J H Badley and the later Cecil Grant.

The theme of the book is the importance of growing up. Whatever else is important this must always come first. I believe that, if we could only produce a generation of really grown-up people, most of the problems of our age, which cause us do much anxiety and to which we have to devote so much of our time and strength, would not arise.

The question may reasonably be asked whether there is any evidence that the educational outlook set forth in these pages is successful in practice. It is a difficult one to answer. In education there cannot be controlled experiments as there can be in the exact sciences. No one may use a child as a guinea pig. No one may apply to a child any treatment other than that which he honestly considers to be the best he can devise for its welfare. And, in any case, the success or otherwise of any educational plan can only become fully apparent long after the child has left school. The only criterion which it is possible to apply during school days is whether or not the child seems to be proceeding normally and smoothly from one stage of development and interest to the next. When there is a check in this progress it is an indication that something has gone wrong. Judged by this criterion it can honestly be said that in the school where an outlook of the kind described in this book was current over a period of 20 years, success seems to very proportionately with the courage displayed in clinging to it. Other schools in which similar ideas are held would probably confirm this conclusion.

Finally I would just like to make clear the liberties I have taken with the meaning of three important words which occur on every page of this book:

Teacher. A person of either sex dealing with children of school age. I would not presume to include teachers at university or other higher education level.

Child. A person of either sex up to the end of adolescence. If this should ever reach the eye of any 18 year old I apologize to him or her for calling her or him a child. And so,

He. A person of either sex, whether referring to a teacher or to a child. This seems to be the only way to deal with the lack of a singular personal pronoun of common gender.

Selborne, December 1953.

Chapter 1

FRAME OF MIND

When historians come to survey our civilization they will be more impressed by its achievements in the realms of science and technology than in those of the arts and of human relationship. Little as we may understand it, we are all today science-conscious both because of the enlargement it has brought to our understanding of the universe and because of the improvements it has brought about in our standards of physical comfort and well being, and perhaps most of all because we are uneasily aware of the potential dangers of its atomic discoveries. We have come to regard the scientist not so much as a seeker after truth as a wizard who can produce a formula for the solution of any physical problem from the cure of cancer to the production of faster-than-sound aircraft.

Our admiration for the achievements of the scientists leads us to wonder whether the methods of science would not be applied to the solution of human problems. But here is a difficulty. The scientist, *qua* scientist, is incapable of applying his methods and techniques to human problems and the student of human relationships is apt to misunderstand the method and scope of science. Seeing, as he does, only its material results he is apt to think of it as a process of producing formulae, and inevitable he goes on to crave for formulae for the solution of human problems. This suits us all: no thinking, no responsibility, no demand on affection – just the application of the formula. In attributing the craving for a formula to the influence of science it may well be that we have fallen into the common error of assuming that anything which comes forcibly to our attention is peculiar to our own age. The craving was not unknown in former ages. “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” is a clear demand for a formula for the solution of a human problem. Nevertheless, whatever the causes, it still seems impossible to walk down the street without constantly bumping into people who are frantically searching for formulae for solving political, trade and international disputes, for reducing their weight or their overdraft, for keeping themselves healthy or curing their diseases, for increasing their efficiency or for attaining happiness and contentment.

There may be many spheres in which reliance on a formula is the most efficient and most economical method of approach but there are some in which it spells disaster. Jesus was always resisting demands for a formula and it is interesting to observe that whenever established religion has succumbed to the temptation to provide its adherents with a formula for salvation it has laid itself open to grave danger or degeneration. Whenever the artist comes under the spell of a formula, with his own or someone else's, his work loses its virtue.

Education has not been free from this deadening influence of the formula. During the past 30 or 40 years there have been many interesting and valuable reforms in educational technique and method which have helped to lift education out of its rut. Every few years a new formula, the product of a lively and constructive mind has emerged and its inventor has been hailed as a prophet: the Montessori method, the de

Croly method, the Dalton plan, the project method, and so on. Each has had its undeniable merits and has made its contribution to educational thought. But each method in its turn has been reduced to a formula at the hands of earnest disciples.

How difficult it all is, for in any school there must be some sort of system in the organization of its teaching! There must be some community of outlook and purpose among the teachers and some co-ordination of their efforts. This cannot be unless they work to a common plan. In the sphere of the class room we must submit to this application of the formula so long as the teacher does not become blind to the purposes which underlie it and so long as he remains alive to its dangers. In the sphere of the teacher's personal relationships with the child it must be banished entirely.

An experience common to most teachers may serve as an illustration. Faced with some problem or other in connection with a child's development we had hit on a device for solving it which has appeared to meet with some success. Meeting a similar problem subsequently we have made use of the same device, but this time it has been a complete failure. The explanation is that we have applied a formula instead of using our minds. We have all heard questions such as, "What do I do with Johnny when he won't do what I tell him?", or, "When he tells lies?", or, "When he comes home from school and calls be a -----?" It would be so easy if we could just produce a simple cookery book recipe, but we cannot. The only thing to do is to train ourselves to ask the right questions. To the mother whose child will not obey her we have perhaps to say, "Ask yourself why you attach importance to being obeyed and why you are upset when he won't do what you tell him?" If you can answer with some degree of honesty you will have achieved an attitude of mind favourable to establishing a more satisfactory relationship with him.

One of the first needs of anyone who has to do with children is to form the habit of asking the right questions. One of the pairs of categories into which we could divide people is those who are satisfied with themselves and the way they were brought up and those who are in revolt against their up-bringing. The former, in dealing with their own young, tend to make use of the techniques which were applied to them in their own childhood without ever questioning themselves about their purpose or validity. Because of their rebel attitude the latter adopt exactly opposite methods. Both are making use of assumed and untested formulae instead of asking questions. Neither is destined to be very successful.

But what are the psychologists going to say about all this? Will they feel that they are being tilted at? Does not much of their work consist in reducing human problems to something very much like formulae? Perhaps we must hope that one of them catch sight of this. But, as a matter of fact it is possible that a large number of them might give their approval to our contention. It appears to the layman that their procedure is to observe, classify and analyse mental and emotional states with their consequent behaviour and to relate those to their causes. This has resulted in the development of a system of diagnosis which is rapidly achieving a scientific validity comparable with that of the diagnosis of physical disease. But it is noticeable that the more they learn about diagnosis the more they tend to eschew anything in the nature of a formula for treatment. Paradoxically it is

this very integrity on their part, this disclaiming of a knowledge of all the answers, which discredits them in the eyes of so many. In truth a very good criterion by which a layman might judge them could be the extent to which they tend to make use of formulae.

The relationship between the psychologist, who meets the child at intervals and for a specific purpose, and the parent or teacher, who lives in daily close contact with him, is an important and interesting one and it is a help to be clear about it. As is so often the case with anything new the laymen are sharply divided in their attitude. One section, at present probably larger, expresses itself volubly as "having no use for psychology". It becomes vocal in letters to the press every time questions such as corporal punishment, prison reform or juvenile delinquency are in the air. Its weakness is that it is composed largely of people who never question their assumptions and cling to traditional techniques without ever exploring their reason or function. The other section consists of people who usually label themselves as progressive, are often bent on self-improvement and are inclined to identify what is good with what is new. How would they like to have an appendix or even a tooth removed by someone whose competence to do so rested merely on having read a book about it?

The establishment of a sensible working relationship between the parent and the teacher on the one hand and the professional psychologist on the other is a matter of great importance to the future of our children. It would not be too much to say that most of the real advance during the present century in the understanding the treatment of young people is due, directly or indirectly, to the psychologists. During the next half century the debt will be greater still provided that the results of their work can be used in the right way. The uses made of the contributions of medical science would seem to point the way. We are all encouraged to learn a little about first aid and home nursing. It is considered a good thing that we should be able to recognise the symptoms of the childhood illnesses and have some idea as to when it is advisable to call in the doctor. Beyond this we do not attempt to go. We place ourselves in the hands of the doctor. And apart from illnesses we rely on the medical profession for ruling and advice about keeping ourselves in health, on matters of diet, hygiene, exercise, rest, and all the routine for healthy living.

The parallel hardly needs pointing. The person who tries to be an amateur psychologist is as great a menace as would be the person who tries to be an amateur doctor. Apart from the fact that his interpretations of the child's behaviour are apt to be faulty it is essential that anyone in daily contact with children should spontaneously display the reactions appropriate to such a relationship. The person trying to adopt a psychological attitude fails to do this. There are various reasons why doctors do not normally treat the members of their own families. One is that the doctor-patient relationship is irreconcilable with ordinary family relationship.

The positive side, however, is perhaps important. Just as we can learn from the doctors that conditions for maintaining physical health so the psychologists from their experience can teach us much about the conditions for achieving and maintaining mental and emotional health. In medical practice there has been in recent years an interesting transference of emphasis from the curing to the prevention of disease. It is barely 20

years ago since the matron of one of the great London hospitals stated that she would not dream of encouraging one of her nurses to accept employment as a school matron. So it seems likely that the contribution we shall exact in increasing measure from the psychologists is their experience of the conditions favourable to mental and emotional well-being. The healing side of their work commands our interest and respect, for it is, indeed, from the study of breakdown that they derive their knowledge of the conditions for prevention. But that does not concern us teachers and we must leave it to them.

Chapter 2

THE PURPOSE OF A SCHOOL

There seem to be two ways by which a merchant can be successful in selling his goods. He can either supply what his customer needs; or by persuasion supply what he happens to have in stock. In the sphere of educational salesmanship there is evidence in recent years of a healthy change of emphasis from the latter to the former, though the process is far from complete. Until the closing years of the last century the only thing the schoolmaster had to sell was his knowledge of the particular subject he had studied at university and perhaps a certain skill at outdoor games. So it was accepted almost without question by university, school and parents that the child became educated through acquiring proficiency in these academic studies or at least by developing the intellectual equipment for doing so. A substantial advance was made during the second half of the nineteenth century when somebody invented the term "character-building". This widened the schoolmaster's conception of his job and has been one of the cornerstones of our educational thinking from the days of Arnold and Thring almost up to the present time. Educators during the present century have recognised that it was part of their concern to foster the development in their pupils of such virtues as hardihood, courage, integrity, loyalty and religious piety.

The methods for this character formation, mainly devised in the public schools and percolating to the day schools, were emphasis on outdoor games and military training, on public spirit and tradition, on the prefect system and the house system, and on the school chapel. These methods were highly successful in developing the qualities aimed at. The products, which include all of us who have been at school during the present century, have, we may say with all modesty, much to commend them. They are in the main simple hearted (the greatest of all virtues) and straightforward; they have a high sense of obligation and public duty; they are kindly and decent and lovable.

But we must not be blind to their shortcomings. They (or should we say "we"?) are usually unimaginative and often complacent, their morality, the faith by which they live, can easily become a code and not a vital spirit, so that they live second-hand lives and are emotionally adolescent or even childish. They have helped to make our country and empire what they are, and this is something to be proud of. But are they capable of making them what they might be?

Something more than character-building is needed, and so for some time now we have, with increasing urgency, been asking the question, "What do we want for our children? What do we want our schools to do for them?" If we travel in a bus or a train and look round at our fellow passengers it is impossible to escape the feeling that in all but a very few cases life seems to be passing them by. A really serene, happy, lively countenance is a rarity. Many look tired and careworn and dispirited. Many carry the marks of a sort of drab unawareness. Among the more prosperous looking there is too

often in the man an appearance of smug complacency and in the women of an artificiality that is infinitely saddening. Reflections crowd in upon us. Again it is hard to escape the feeling about nearly all of them, "How far this person seems to be from what, as a baby, he had it in him to become". And yet, if we could get to know them, we should discover in very many cases lives of devotion, self-sacrifice and even heroism that would command a humbling respect. And next comes the reflection, "It may be assumed that I look the same to these people as they look to me. In fact, I am seeing myself in their mirror. After all I am only capable of seeing in other people the traits which somewhere deep down I am conscious of possessing myself. Life is passing by and I am not making of it what I might. I am not extracting from the simple sights and sounds and relationships of the daily round the savour and enjoyment that they hold. For that is what makes fullness of life".

So we are driven on to the question, "Why is this so? Are we going to be content for ever with this pigmy existence provided our material standards go on improving? Will improvement in these standards automatically produce an awakening in the side of us that does not live by bread? Must that side wait upon the raising of material conditions of life?" This is, without doubt, partly a social and political problem and as citizens we must not ignore that side of it. But as educationalists the question for us is, "How much of this state of affairs is the result of the treatment we received as children and what can we do to see that the children in our case have the chance to get more from life than we are getting?"

And so we come to the question, "What is the business of a school?" It would be unwise and even dangerous to formulate too precise or rigid an answer but the question must be asked and it must be carefully pondered. The alternative is to assume that one knows. No engineer would set out to construct a piece of machinery without first making a careful study of the ends it was intended to serve. Yet many teachers go through their careers without ever questioning the purposes of the system they operate and the techniques they apply. In the world of business and of science the innovator is welcomed, in education he is too often labelled a crank. But, in fact, the really dangerous person is the one who assumed that he knows the answers – answers to questions it has never occurred to him to ask. The teacher must start by asking this question and the parents who entrust their children must ask it too, "What do I want most for my child, what do I want the school to do for him?"

The answer will have to be a multiple one. There is unlikely to be much disagreement about its main constituents though there be some about the degree of emphasis to be placed on each. Before turning to specific tasks it may be helpful to look at the problem, in this way. The child has from birth been absorbing from his whole environment the accumulated experience of the race. A school must help him sort, analyse, select, reject, fill in gaps and store; in other words, make sense of all this, so that the experience may be accessible to him in a form in which he can make use of it. Much of what he takes from the environment will have been absorbed without his being aware of it, especially that part of it which is unpleasant or damaging. It seems likely that unless this dump of rubble can be brought to the surface and so dispersed a person's efficiency as a human being is reduced. There does not seem to be anything that the

teacher can do about this – and above all he should avoid meddling – but he must remain aware of it as a problem. In some spheres of human activity, if a problem will not admit of immediate solution it may be as well that it should be put out of mind. In education it is more important that we should see problems aright and keep on asking the right questions than that we should know the answers.

One of the responsibilities of a school is to ensure that its pupils acquire the capacity and the qualifications for earning a livelihood. The extent to which purely vocational training may claim a place in the time-table is a matter for constant consideration and adjustment. The claim for subjects which have a vocational bearing had importance for they often have more significance for the child than the more abstract and academic subjects of the traditional time-table. But it would be a sad thing if the introduction of typewriting or machine drawing into the curriculum caused the teacher to forget that he had more important things to do than to turn out efficient wage earners or even cabinet ministers or bishops. The academically minded teacher may contend that Johnny will ultimately become a better engineer by spending his school time on Latin rather than in the metal-work shop. There is much to be said on both sides, and in any case the school curriculum had long been due for a major overhaul.

One of the first calls on us is to fit our young people into careers in which they can make best use of their capacities, which they can approach with enthusiasm and from which they can derive a full satisfaction. The value of the work done by the careers masters and mistresses now found in nearly all our schools is beyond estimate. It is to be hoped that as this work develops and, as is inevitable, becomes more highly organized, it will remain, as it is at present, a task in which human considerations predominate, and will escape the danger of being prostituted to the needs of industry and national life.

Much has been heard in recent years about education for citizenship. Interesting work is being done in the majority of schools to develop the child's capacity for leadership and his sense of public obligation through his activity within the microcosm off the school community, and through Civics classes to develop his awareness of the complex social and political structure in which he will have to play his part. All this is valuable and important. We could not regard a school that neglected it as doing all that it might for children. But it must not be given first place. That would be elevating the state above the individual. There is a higher destiny for human beings than just to be good citizens.

We are justified in demanding that the school shall do what it can to make the child's brain an efficient instrument. Within the sphere of his interests he should, by the time he leaves school, at least have made a start at being able to distinguish what is important from what is unimportant, what is new from what is old dressed up, what argument is valid and what is fallacious, what is genuine and what is fake. He should be able to convey intelligibly to others, both in speech and writing, what is in his mind, and some effort should have been made to inoculate him against slogans and mass suggestions. We are right, too, in requiring that the gateway to the main branches of our culture in literature, drama, music and art should have been opened to him and that he should at least be aware of the significance of science in the modern world. Quality of

life is not wholly a matter of aesthetic culture but no-one will deny that it plays a part. It is some part of the business of every teacher to keep an elastic and exploratory mind about the techniques for achieving all this. Experience would suggest that we should be cautious about developing over rigid or elaborate techniques and that if we keep our minds turned towards our objectives, ways of approaching them will be constantly suggesting themselves in the course of our daily work with children.

No duty would be doing its duty if it did not give the fullest possible attention to its children's physical health and development. This is being so well attended to in all schools today that it needs no comment. It gives rise, however, to one important question for the teacher in this particular connection and in certain others. Physical care is largely a matter for experts. In this sphere the ordinary teacher is a layman. What is the relationship between the layman and the expert? Are we laymen to accept all the experts tell us or may we put up our uninformed judgment against theirs? It is tempting and easy to evade responsibility by adopting the former course and there can be a considerable wastage of human effort and efficiency through lack of humility implicit in the latter. And it is not unknown for experts to disagree. What then? The problem of holding the balance between the person who has training, knowledge and experience in a specialised sphere and the person who, whether he wishes it or not, cannot escape responsibility for final results is one which the teachers shares with members of most other callings and he could do worse than study how other people approach it.

The functions of a school so far suggested, and they are by no means exhaustive, are not to be underrated. But they are not the most important. The primary function of any school is to create an environment favourable to growth. This conception is of such fundamental importance – indeed everything else in education hangs upon it – that it requires elaboration.

All living creatures are born into the world with certain potentialities. The more primitive the creature, that is, the more limited its capacity for development, the more nearly it approaches the highest it has within it to become. The ordinary fish or bird or wild animal, and even the ordinary domesticated animal, when fully developed falls very little short of its maximum potentiality. The shortcomings which it displays – susceptibility to disease, lack of defensive power, lack of adaptability – are failures in potentiality, not in development.

The human being, with his infinitely greater potentialities, falls woefully short of achieving them. "Made in the image of God" is not an empty phrase. We have it within us to become godlike and we remain pigmies. The shortcoming is not in our intellectual development but in the sphere of our emotions and our personal relationships. Our intellectual development has outstripped our emotional development so that with all our scientific and technical and material achievements we remain emotionally immature. A tragically large proportion of the people we meet give us the impression that their emotional attitudes are those of a 14 year old. They are easily offended, easily upset when unfairly treated, rationalizing their own shortcomings while showing intolerance of those of other people, covering up with all sorts of pretences and insincerities to avoid facing their own inadequacies. These frailties are venial, laughable, even lovable, but

they are also sad, making human life and relationship a travesty of what it might be, causing reserve, disharmony, mistrust, antagonism, and all because they have failed to grow up. We may laugh at it all, but the damage it causes is incalculable. We all have a certain store of emotional force. That part of it used up in false directions is unavailable for truly creative purposes, for fuller and richer living. It is only in extreme cases that we notice these failings but they are present in greater or smaller measure in all of us, otherwise we should not be aware of them.

The causes of this wide divergence between our mental and our emotional development may be presumed to lie in a civilization of increasing complexity and artificiality. They need not all be attributed to our education in the narrower sense. But education cannot repudiate all responsibility, and wherever the fault may lie in the past it is to education that we must look for making some improvement in the future. Our educators in the part have set about to turn out pupils with a sound intellectual equipment and a solid character, and their achievement has been a substantial one. But they thought of character building in terms of “moulding”. They envisaged a pattern of the kind of person they wanted to produce and they set about moulding their pupils to that pattern, and so too often they produced people who lived by a code. That conception must go. It is only in the last quarter of a century that the importance of educating the emotions has been generally realized. Unhappiness, breakdowns in human relationships, crime, war and much disease occur not because people think wrongly but because they feel wrongly. The educator of the future is going to devote himself to the production of a full, whole, mature person who can think clearly, efficiently, and adventurously and can feel rightly and simply and spontaneously.

The education of the emotions is clearly a much more difficult and subtle and indirect matter than the education of the mind. The techniques for educating the mind are centuries old and have reached a high degree of efficiency. There are no accepted techniques for educating the emotions; we do not know how to begin to do so, and experiment has to be wary. Consequently, because we do not know how to tackle the problem, there is a great temptation to say either that there is no problem or that, if there is, it is not our concern. But we must not turn our backs on it. So many more human failings are manifestly due to emotional than to mental causes that until we succeed in bringing our emotional development to somewhere near the level of our mental development we shall have no chance of producing balanced, whole persons. But we must not expect quick results. It may well be many generations before much is achieved and in the meanwhile we can make our contribution by continuing to define and clarify the problem. We must not lose sight of the importance of it and we must treat with an open mind, but with some reserve, the people who claim that they know the answers.

There is perhaps this difference between the approaches to mental and to emotional development: the one is positive, the other negative. The mind is in the main cultivated positively, that is by exercising it, while the integrity of feeling that we desire is something that would perhaps grow naturally in all human beings if it were not vitiated by flaws in the environment, so that all we have to do is to protect the child against external harm, a form of negative action.

The gardener analogy, if not carried too far, may be suggestive. The accepted procedure in schools until recently was to take any number of children of widely varying heredity, ability and interests and put them all together through the same mould to turn them out to a preconceived pattern. The gardener who sowed a packet of mixed seeds and tried to rear them all to flowers of a single type and could be regarded as a madman. The procedure he adopts is that he prepares a soil as favourable as he can devise for particular seed he is going to sow and having sown it he nourishes it. He also does what he can to protect it against external enemies, such as weather, weeds, disease and the onslaughts of the animal world, and he sometimes provides a stake to support it until it has the strength to stand alone. Having done so much he leaves it to grow into the finest flower it has the capacity within itself to become. It is interesting to notice that he adopts two ways of protecting the young plant against external ravages; he establishes barriers, physical and chemical, to prevent the enemy from reaching the plant and he does what he can to strengthen its power of resistance. And he does not adopt the former method until he has done all that he can with the latter.

The teacher of today follows very much the same methods. He prepares the best soil that he can and then gives the child space and freedom to grow. And whenever he encounters a difficulty he could do worse than ask himself what the gardener would do.

One of the values of an analogy is that it leads us to contemplate not only the similarities but also the differences between the objects under comparison, for it loses its force if its limits are not recognised. In this case the exploration of the differences between the nature of a plant and that of a child may well serve to increase our understanding of the child. For example, while the life of the plant is purely functional, that of the human being is also personal. His life as a worker, a craftsman, a technician, a scientist, a citizen, a unit in society is mainly, if not entirely, functional, but in addition he has a life as a person, a life of personal relationship with his fellows which has nothing to do with the function. It is in this aspect that he rises above the animal world and realizes and expresses himself as a human being. In times when the struggle for higher material standards of living, and, indeed, for very existence, is severe, it is only to be expected that there will be pressures on teachers from all sides to educate the child in terms of function. The prevalent cry is that the country needs more and better technicians, let the schools and the universities see to it. On the day that these lines are being written letters are appearing in *The Times* pleading for a revitalized teaching of English in order that we may have better engineers. The teacher must ignore these pleas. Education for function is an essential part of his job. But his primary task is the education of the child as a person, his education with a view, not to what function he is to perform, but to what kind of person he is to be.

A parallel way of looking at this question of the fundamental and personal aspects of our lives is to regard it in terms of means and ends. There is always a danger that we may become so much preoccupied with those things that are the means to ends in life that we lose sight of the ends. In education it sometimes seems that we devote so large a proportion of our energy to providing children with the resources for coping with the means of life that we neglect equipping them to realize and to enjoy the ends. Is it possible that we are turning out people who can create a lovely garden and lack the

capacity to sit in a deck chair and enjoy it? The fact that we cannot differentiate precisely between means and ends, that, for example, the creation of a lovely garden may well be a sufficient end in itself, that climbing a mountain is certainly a more real end in itself than sitting on top and feeling pleased with yourself about it, does not invalidate the general contention. There is a great collect in the *English Prayer Book* (4th Sunday after Trinity) which finishes with the phrase, “that we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal”. In modern idiom this might be rendered, “that we so manage to dispose of the means in life that we do not lose sight of the final ends”. Means are not to be neglected; ends cannot be attained without them, but the primary task of the teacher is to direct himself towards those things which are the ends in life, that is to say with the child’s life as a person.

There is not necessarily any conflict between the two purposes, and the borderline between them is not in practice a clearly defined one. They may often overlay, they may often coincide, and, where there appears to be a conflict, the teacher, before abandoning one way or the other must try to see whether this conflict can be resolved. It is very possible that in setting out to teach brighter English in order that we may be better served by our young engineer we end up by making him a richer, fuller person. It may also well happen that the studies or activities we present to a child have more significance for him if they appear to have some bearing on his future occupation in life. The child himself, thank goodness, is not interested in the kind of person he is going to become; he is often intensely interested in the kind of job he is going to do.

But after making all these allowances the teacher must always remember that his first job is to turn out whole, mature persons, persons who have the capacity to live and laugh and love fully, joyfully, intensely. And the way to bring this about is to give the child scope and freedom to grow up. In all the little arrangements and decisions which the teacher has to make in the course of his daily work he should always apply the test, “Is this an aid or a barrier to the child’s growing up?”

Chapter 3

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GROWTH

In the last chapter the plea was made that while full weight had to be accorded to other claims, the primary concern of the teacher should be with ends in life rather than with means, with the kind of person the child is going to be rather than with his function in the community, with aiding him, in fact, to become a grown-up person. It is indeed likely that if he can achieve a measure of success in this main task many of the others will solve themselves or at least become very much easier. The grown-up person, for example, will naturally become a good citizen, and a real one, not a synthetic one.

But what can be done about this growing up? We can all recognize and appreciate that comparative rarity, the fully grown person, when we meet him, and we can all recognize the more extreme cases of failure to grow up. But we know so little about the processes of growth than anything we try to do so aid it is bound to be very much a matter of groping, of trial and error, of hit or miss. And not even this, because in childhood the gauges of progress in this sphere are lacking. If a pupil can translate an ode of Horace or can write a piece of Latin prose without howlers and with some pretence of idiom we know that we have taught him some Latin. But what we do to aid his growing up may not be apparent until long after he has passed out of our care. Nevertheless we must not therefore give in to the temptation to assume that it does not matter and devote our energies to those spheres in which we can see results. The first and foremost thing for the teacher to do is to bear in mind all the time that the child's growing up is his vital concern. Something, at least, and perhaps more than we would suppose, is achieved just by maintaining that frame of mind.

Fortunately it is not necessary to have a profound knowledge of the mechanics of growth. It is enough that growing up is in the nature of human beings and that growth will occur if it is not impeded. This provides us with two lines of approach; we have got to surround the child with a feeling of space and freedom and security and we have got to do what we can to remove the impediments.

So much has been said and discussed about these two words, freedom and security, that we are all a little tired of them. This is a common fate of pregnant ideas which are allowed to become slogans. Our efforts to define and to apply them have often been misdirected. For example, in talking about freedom, we may have tended to confuse the freedom needed for a child's growth with our ideas about political freedom, and so the conception has suffered disrepute. But they are still cornerstones of our educational fabric and we must continue our efforts to define them in their capacity of conditions for human growth. Although their main importance is in the personal and spiritual sphere, that is to say in the sphere of the child's relationships with other people, the physical aspect is not to be ignored. The child has a need for space and for freedom of movement and for freedom from restraint in a purely physical sense.

A practical problem which presents itself to every parent and teacher in trying to make a sane application of their ideas about freedom is that of the degree to which they are justified in accepting risks. It is not possible to bring up a whole person without accepting risks. This means that occasional casualties will occur. For the parent it means that his child may be the one who is maimed in order that the ninety and nine may grow up. Courage is required to face this fact. For the teacher the situation is almost equally anxious. An accident takes place at school. There is a public outcry and sometimes even a prosecution. Criticism is flung about, lack of discipline, lack of proper supervision, and so on. There is only one answer to be made. It would be possible to take measures by which the risk of accident would be very largely eliminated. The cost of these would be that no children had a real chance to grow up. If they are to grow up we must have the courage to accept risks for them, to let them explore and climb trees and ride bicycles among the traffic. These are examples of physical risks; there are others in the moral and spiritual sphere which may be even more significant. No-one but those who have deliberately accepted these risks can know the strain which they involve.

One of the difficulties in trying to eliminate risks which we do not feel to be justifiable is that it involves not only the forbidding of certain hazardous activities but the implanting of fear by warning children about danger. Everyone who has had responsibility for children has been at times aware of this dilemma. How much, for example, is a girl, at the various stages of her development, to be told of the dangers of molestation? If she is left without any warning, she is left more open than she otherwise would be to the danger of some disagreeable and damaging shock. If she is warned without infinite carefulness she is liable to a damage which is even more serious. So what are we to do?

We must ask the question but there is no formula for its answer. All we can do is to apply the test, "Which course appears to be the greater barrier to growth?" There is no justification for any restriction on a child's activities unless its full outcome and implications have been thought out. Every teacher and every parent has to ask himself the question, "What are the types of activity on which restriction is proper?" And it is right to remember that there are others beside the child who are entitled to consideration and that as a part of his growth the child must sooner or later accept this. It is interesting to notice that so long as the question is squarely faced it very often emerges that there is not so great a conflict as at first appeared between the interests of the child and those of the people who have to live at close quarters with him. Indeed the appearance of a conflict, such as is created by manifestations of destructiveness, aggression or over acquisitiveness, is often a useful danger signal that something is wrong and that a remedy is called for more fundamental than the mere imposition of a restriction.

The problem of security is so familiar to every teacher that it need not be laboured here. The plant does not grow unless it is firmly rooted, and neither does the child. The child must feel that he is loved, that there is a home to which he belongs, that there is some pattern in his life, that his environment is not limitless and that, as he goes on his journey, the goal for which he is making does not appear to be beyond his reach. Much can be learned about the importance of an attainable goal by watching a group of young children playing a game like "Puss in the corner".

But just because of the universal acceptability of the idea there is one point against which we must be on our guard. A problem is not solved just by giving it a name. We have all had the experience of the doctor who puts a name to our malady and then goes away looking pleased with himself and leaving us feeling much the same as we did before. It is true that in education we are not under the same pressure as the doctor is to find solutions. Our first job is to ask the right questions in the right way. This involves us in a continual process of readjustment. Directly we attach a label we are in danger of crystallizing our ideas, of permanently accepting the outlook which the label implies, and do of hindering that delicate process or re-orientation of approach which has to be maintained.

The task of removing impediments to growth is not an easy one. The objection may be made, and with some foundation that, if we are ignorant of the processes of mental and emotional development, we are in no position to say what are impediments are what are not. All that can be said in reply is that this uncertainty cannot be made an excuse for inaction and that to act on a reasonable probability is better than doing nothing. But in acting on a probability we must remain humble, sensitive and elastic. The educational principle is that the child should grow up. If we elevate to the status of sacred and inviolable principles the techniques by which we try to aid this process we are cranks. We ask the question, "What is it that is impeding this child's growth?" Possible answers could be parental fixation, or fears of one sort or another, or faulty assessments and expectations of the child on the part of grown-ups, or the influence of adults who are themselves not grown-up or are over-dominating, and so on. We have to examine and weigh these possibilities and do what we can about them. It may also help if we ask questions about our past products. "Why does this young man at the age of 25 still go about with a Boy Scout attitude?" "Why does this man continue to call himself 'Major' years after a war is over?" "Why does this man at the age of 40 still flaunt the old school tie and adorn his study with the oar with which he made six bumps or with the photographs of all the teams he ever played in?" "Why does this lady of advancing middle age continue to behave like a kitten?" In all such cases it may be that there were impediments to their growth which were not removed at the appropriate time. What can they have been?

But when we have done all that we can think of to clear the ground and to remove obstructions we are still left with a feeling of dissatisfaction if we are not doing something positive. This feeling has its dangers but we can do no harm by making a little exploration on the positive side. The following tentative suggestions are made, not with the idea of developing definite formulae or techniques for aiding the task but as possible ways of improving our orientation towards the child.

No-one can become a grown-up person without making certain acceptances of life. The first is what we may call the logic of circumstances. The fact that effect always follows cause; "Things are what they are, their consequences will be what they will be". The inexorable fact of "either, or"; you cannot have your cake and eat it; if you have sixpence to spend you can spend it on this or on that but you cannot spend it on both. You cannot reach the top of a mountain without climbing. There are no short cuts in life and the attempt to make them leads to disillusionment and disaster.

All this has to be fully accepted. The person who tries to cut corners is living not in the real world but in one of his own making, and he has not grown-up. When we come to think of it the factor common to almost every sort of crime is the attempt to make a short cut. Or, to come nearer home, it is interesting to notice what a large part the short cut plays in those moments of fantasy to which we all revert at times. A little illustration may serve to make the point clearer. Take a simple statement of cause and effect such as, "If you put your hand in the fire it will get burnt", and notice the reaction of various types of people to it. The ordinary, timid, unadventurous person, such a most of us are, will say, "Very well, I will under no circumstances risk putting my hand in the fire", thereby losing a lot of fun. The intelligent modern adolescent, growing up normally, will say, "I have no grounds for doubting the truth of the statement but I must be allowed to test it by my own experience". The spoilt child, the ungrown-up person will say, "Other people get burnt but I must be allowed to put my hand in the fire without getting burnt". The fully grown-up person will say, "There may be objectives in life for which a burnt hand is not too high a price to pay; I must decide in each case whether the end in view justifies the price to be paid".

Dozens of occasions arise every day in which the parent or the teacher has the opportunity to help children to face and to accept this logic, this reality in their surroundings. The child must be helped to accept the consequences of his own actions, not only deliberate but also accidental. A too easy replacement of a broken toy or a lost possession, or too much help in overcoming difficulties, may well be barriers to growth. The sure touch which so many of our skilled nursery school teachers seem to display in knowing when to stand aside and when to lend a hand is something that would repay more careful study by those who have to handle children at the later stages.

And we have to go further still. It is not only the hard logic of events that has got to be accepted. It is only the grown-up person who can accept the buffets of chance. The ungrown-up person is distorted and twisted by them. The teacher has many opportunities to help the child to absorb these buffets in a grown-up way. Here again he had to hold the subtle balance between protecting the child against what may be more than he can withstand and taking the risk of exposing him to something which will strengthen his growth if only he can cope with it successfully.

Another acceptance which the child had to make is that of adult fallibility. When he is very young his parents and even his uncles and aunts and teachers are perfect in his sight. As he grows older he becomes aware of imperfections in them. But mere awareness is not enough. There has got to be complete acceptance. If this does not take place growth is checked. Everyone can call to mind among his acquaintances the type who expects perfection of behaviour in those with whom he has to deal and gets upset if he does not meet it. This is a sure indication of failure to grow up. Everyone can remember family quarrels, or breakdowns in negotiations, which have been due to failure to accept shortcomings in the opposing party. Few arguments can reach a satisfactory conclusion if either side sets out to demand a completely logical position in the other. Incidentally the person who cannot accept shortcomings in others is incapable of loyalty. The adult who cannot confess ignorance to a child, or admit himself to be in the wrong, is placing a serious barrier in the way of the child's growth. Fortunately among teachers

such people are rapidly becoming rarer. One of the primary tasks of the teacher is to sell the child his imperfections. The question as to whether it is advisable to manufacture artificial occasions for doing so does not arise. No-one has any need to do so.

Yet another acceptance, allied to this last one though hardly identical with it, is what may be called, for want of a better term, the acceptance of unfairness, that is, of the attitude suggested in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. The infant child receives from his environment food, warmth, comfort, love, and his attitude towards it is dictated by the extent to which his need for those things is satisfied. He comes to expect them to be satisfied and he is upset if they are not. If he is to grown up he has to undergo a conversion from an attitude in which he regards his environment as being there for the purpose of supplying his needs to an attitude in which he has ceased to make demands on it. He has to change from an attitude of expectation to one of simple reality.

So long as a person regards the various constituents of his environment, both animate and inanimate, from the point of view of how they affect him and his interests he cannot see them as they really are. So long as he deeds other people from the point of view of how they serve or thwart his interests he is not in a relationship with them in which it is possible for him to see the real persons. So long as he regards people from the point of view of how they ought to behave towards him and gets upset when he is not treated as he thinks he ought to be treated he is not being a grown-up person.

We have all met examples of this. "She didn't have no call to speak to me like what she did". There must be few of us who have not been aware of an upsurging of the same sort of thing in ourselves. We can remember occasions when we have been overwhelmed with the realization that someone with whom we had been in competition had, at any rate for the time, not been to us a fellow human being but merely an obstacle to our achieving an objective. We have all at times had the experience of childish pique when we have not been treated as we considered out due. All this is part of our immaturity, and until the conversion is made from an inward to an outward regarding attitude, from the attitude of seeing people and things as aids or hindrances to our interests and desires to an attitude which makes no demands on others, we can only see the universe as it affects us and not as it really is. We cannot see life whole when we only see it with ourselves as centre. When Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God", he was not offering a reward for what we now call purity, he was simply stating a fact. It is only those people who have become so completely simple that they have ceased to be inward regarding, have ceased to see the universe as it affects them and have ceased to have any expectations of it, who can see it as it is and so be utterly certain of its significance and goodness.

This conversion is not a sudden affair not can there be any finality about it. The person who supposed that his conversion was complete would not have begun; he would not know what it was. It begins in quite early childhood and continues throughout life. But it is very certain that the person in whom the process has not started, and, indeed, gone only some way, cannot grow up. The school which had not set the mass of its pupils on the road to this conversion by the end of adolescence would have to regard itself as a failure, however brilliant its successes in other directions.

How to start about achieving it is a very different matter. It is not one of those things that can be put down in the timetable. It has to be included among those things which are helped or hindered by the way in which we deal with the innumerable crises, great and small, which crop up in the daily life of a community. If the teacher is convinced of the importance of it and if his own conversion is proceeding, his handling of the little daily crises will be informed in a way that will aid progress.

One of the most important things in life to the pre-adolescent is his sense of fairness, and his development is heavily dependent upon the use which we make of this. It can be used, and it must be with great circumspection. It is desperately easy to create barriers to growth by trading on it. The child's sense of fairness is the foundation of justice, one of the cornerstones of the social fabric. But it has to be remembered that justice, which belongs to the sphere of social relationship, is no substitute for love which is at the heart of personal relationship. It is all too easy to condone our lack of love by dwelling on our respect for justice. In some way the child has to learn that there are more important things in life than fairness, especially fairness towards himself. This is just a tentative way in which a start could be made and should, perhaps, be accompanied by two warnings. It is important that the idea should be sold to the child without moralizing about it, and it is important that the teacher himself should have an adult attitude about it. A teacher who himself is upset when unfairly treated, and very likely rationalizes his emotion as his "British sense of fair play" is unlikely to be able to help the child very much. It is not necessary that he should have achieved a perfection of attitude – who has? – but he should be aware of his deficiency and be willing to laugh at it and to share the joke with the child.

The last acceptance to be included is the child's acceptance of himself. It is a fundamental condition of growth that the child should come to know himself and to accept fully all the implications which that knowledge reveals. Every teacher has encountered the troubles which arise with a child who had not been wisely informed about the fact that he is illegitimate or adopted, and those which can so often accompany physical disability or mental slowness or any variation from the standards of normality recognized by his contemporaries. Any one of these situations causes him to put up a pretence or façade and it is this that causes hindrance to growth. As long as the child is wearing a cloak, acting a part that is not himself, his spontaneity is being dried up and growth is being impaired. As long as the child is being spontaneous, growth is taking place; as soon as spontaneity is checked, for whatever reason, growth is checked.

The preservation of spontaneity is one of the teacher's most difficult tasks. The young child is naturally spontaneous in his behaviour. As he grows older and more complicated he loses much of this trait; in adolescence it has largely disappeared and is only rarely seen in adults. So universal is this pattern that we are tempted to assume that it is a natural and inevitable development and that spontaneity belongs only to the uncomplicated stages of early childhood. But the assumption is not a necessary one. Both teachers and parents can give the maintenance of spontaneity a high priority. Its diminution, accompanied by indications such as self-consciousness, affection, or any form of unreality can be taken as a signal that the child is ceasing to accept himself and that something in his environment calls for examination.

The problem of aiding the child to accept himself is another delicate one which calls for some finesse. If we could just say to the child, "This is what you are and it is a very good thing to be and you may thank God for it and make the most of it", the matter would be fairly simple. But it is much more difficult than that. In the first place it is always possible that we do not know what the child's true self is. We have all seen examples of the harm done by labelling, "the fool of the family", "the musical one of the family", and so on. A faulty assessment may well lead the child into adopting a role that is utterly alien to himself and so departing still further from his natural self. And in the second place we have to avoid encouraging introspection. The degree to which his acceptance of himself has to be established at a deliberate and conscious level and the degree to which it can take place at a lower level is a matter for careful study. The safe course for the teacher is to find ways of holding up the mirror to the child in such a way that the child sees and accepts his own reflection without that reflection being distorted by the teacher's own impressions. A difficult task, but a worthwhile one. Every teacher can, at any rate, make a start by not disclosing to the child his own preferences for any particular types of personality, character or ability.

While it is true that a person does not grow up unless he makes certain acceptances of life we must nevertheless avoid the logical fallacy of assuming therefore that inducing the child to make them will ensure growth. "You might as well say that, 'I see that I eat', is the same thing as, 'I eat what I see'". You don't as a rule influence a cause by trying to suppress its effects. And yet we spend a surprising amount of time in schools in tackling symptoms rather than diseases. There is usually little harm in that so long as we are not unduly complacent when we have made an apparent improvement by removing or covering up the symptoms. Whenever dealing with a symptom seems to be removing an obstacle to growth it is worth trying.

Chapter 4

THE CHILD – ADULT RELATIONSHIP

We have defined the main purpose of a school as the creation and maintenance of an environment favourable to the child's growth. By far the most potent element in this environment is the grown-ups with whom the child comes in contact, and it is therefore important for the teacher to give some thought to the nature of the relationship between himself and the child.

This relationship is complicated by several factors, chief among which is the fact that it is a double one. In everyday life relationship between people can be divided into two kinds, functional and personal. The relationship between master and servant, employer and employee, buyer and seller, and that between members of any community or association in which people meet for the pursuit of common interests, anything from the House of Commons to a local chess or football club, is a relationship of function. Our activities as members of society are functional and the fact that they are by no means entirely dictated by self-interest, that current moral standards conflicting with self-interest play a large part, does not alter their essentially functional character. In all of them we are entering into an association with other people for some purpose other than the mere pleasure of being with them. Our relationship with them is a means to an end. But there is an aspect of human relationship which is purely personal. We enter into it, not for the purpose of serving any end but just for the enjoyment of the other person's company, just because we want to be with the other person. In each other's company we can express and be our whole free selves. This is personal relationship; this is what we mean by friendship. The line between the two is not as clear cut as an arid definition would make it appear. Personal relationship can, and more often than not does, arise out of a functional association, and the two aspects are very often closely interwoven as, for example, in the relationship between a husband and wife. Nevertheless the distinction is a valuable one and the relationship between the teacher and the child may easily get on an unprofitable track if it is not borne in mind.

In most businesses and professions the functional relationship between the people concerned in them is the predominant one and, if personal relationship enters in, it is mainly if not wholly incidental. In a school, while a great part of the teacher's relationship with the child is purely functional, he is there to train, to instruct, to discipline him, there also has to be a personal relationship between the two. The functional relationship is something that can exist between the teacher and a number of children as a group. The personal relationship is something which by its nature must exist between the teacher and each child individually. The teacher cannot confine himself to his job of training and instructing the child to develop his personal relationships among his own family and contemporaries. If he is to do all that he might to promote the child's growth as a person he must enter into a personal relationship with

him. He clearly fails in this purpose if he remains the only adult in the child's immediate surroundings who does not have a spontaneous and intimate relationship with him.

But here comes a paradox. If a relationship is entered into for any purpose other than itself it is functional and to the extent that the consciousness of an ulterior purpose survives in it it ceases to become personal. In so far as I am friends with anyone for any purpose whatever other than simple friendship, for example, for what I can get out of him, or even for what I imagine I can give him, our relationship fails to be a true friendship. So if I make friends with a child for a purpose, however estimable, it cannot be a genuine friendship until the purpose is submerged and forgotten. It is possible that this difficulty is more theoretical than real. It is, at any rate, tempting to avoid the dilemma by convincing ourselves that this is so. And so long as we do not lose sight of the fact that the difficulty is there it seems that the only thing to do is to try to forget about any idea of purpose and make friends with the child because that is the simple and human thing to do.

It may well be that the merging of the functional and the personal elements is no more marked in the relationship between the adult and the child than in any other sphere. But the fact that the child's whole development depends more on the establishment of a satisfactory relationship with his surrounding adults than on any other single factor would seem to make any effort worth while to see the situation more clearly.

One or two examples may be helpful. The child is a hero-worshipper and it is important that there should be a natural outlet for this. Whether he likes it or not, the teacher in his functional capacity – the lord of a little classroom kingdom, the person who knows a lot, who has no difficulty about spelling and can do clever tricks with chemicals or translate difficult passages from a foreign language – is apt to become one of the child's heroes. If the teacher can make any showing at all at cricket or football his prowess will be exaggerated. This is not wholly to be deplored. It is important that there should be for the child objects and people outside himself to which and to whom he can give unstinted praise and admiration. The person who loses the capacity to worship, that is the capacity to lose himself in giving unstinted praise to something outside himself, ceases, at any rate in a large part of himself, to grow. He becomes like a tree with a dead branch. So it is important that the child should be given opportunities for the natural outflowing of an impulse which, if happily directed, will become one of the foundations of his religion. But equally he ceases to grow if the object of his worship is not an expanding and growing one. Therefore the teacher's business is to do all in his power to transfer by suitable stages the child's adoration from objects which are static, such a himself, or the local centre forward, or the tough guy in the "Western", to objects on the social, aesthetic and religious spheres which are capable of indefinite expansion, keeping pace with its expanding comprehension of them.

But this is not the end of the difficulty. Any looking up that has to be done must be confined to the functional side of the relationship, and even here it must be closely watched. It would be easy for it to assume proportions damaging to growth. In the sphere of personal relationship there can be no looking up. A friendship is vitiated if either party to it looks up to the other, and it makes no difference if the looking up is

mutual. Lovers do not know what real love is until they have ceased to put each other on a pedestal. This is a hard saying and it may help to make it more understandable if we look at it geometrically. In a functional relationship the parties may or may not be on the same plane. In a personal relationship it is unthinkable that they should not be. The association will contain elements of trust, confidence and respect, but these will be on the same plane. If two people facing each other both look up, neither sees the other. The personal relationship between the adult and the child cannot be an exception to this; it has got to be naturally and spontaneously on the same plane. In so far as the child looks up to the adult he is not seeing the real person but a figment of his imagination, and so there can be no real contact. Similarly the relationship can be vitiated in those cases, fortunately very rare today, in which the adult carries about a sentimental idealization of childhood.

No-one will underestimate the difficulty of establishing a true relationship. He attempt to do so exposes us to a number of pitfalls. The adult is, or should be, no longer a child. He has lived through the stages through which the child is now passing and his emotions and his interests are different from those of the child. There is a big gap between them. Any attempt to establish a personal relationship between the two without a full recognition and acceptance of this fact is doomed to failure.

The difficulty seems almost insuperable – to recognize the gap and still meet the child on the same place. It is often because we realize the importance of bridging this gap that we go wrong in our approach to children through adopting an attitude that is artificial. Everyone has, at some time or other, encountered the lecturer or preacher who “talks down” to them, making use of slangy turns of expression which he imagines to be theirs but which do not fit him; or the person who sentimentalizes the relationship, “My daughter and I are real pals”.

A common problem, which we have all had to meet at times, is that of making natural contact with the child when he is going through the stages of interest in excretion or sex. If we are normal people we have passed through those stages and have now got these things in perspective. So we cannot with integrity, either pretend to the child that our interest in the matter is still the same as his, or pretend to him that in our own childhood, when our supreme idea of a joke was someone sitting on a drawing pin, our own interest in lavatory or sex was free from vulgarity or dirtiness. And even now there must be very few of us who do not at times have thoughts and attitudes about sex which we would not confide to our dearest friend and which oppress us with a sense of guilt. But although this may enlarge our sympathy with the child it does not help to bridge the gap because however distorted our attitudes may be they are not on the same plane as his. It would, for example, be very hard to find a joke about sex which could be shared whole-heartedly by a fully grown adult and a child. And it may be noted in passing that the child would be profoundly shocked if he felt that the adult enjoyed the jokes which at his stage give him so much pleasure. Many of us must at times had had the experience of finding that we have shocked children by expressing opinions which in their view were over tolerant or too broad-minded for us. This is not just wrong headed on their part. It is a part of their security that they should be surrounded by a wall of grown-up opinion which in their view is old-fashioned compared with their own more liberal and

enlightened outlook. How can they feel modern if there is nothing against which they can measure themselves, and how can they go adventuring if there is no base to which to return if necessary?

An interesting problem in relationship arises when the child makes a deliberate attempt to shock us, usually by trying out on us the latest swear word he has collected. Are we to play up and be shocked, which seems artificial, or are we to display a bland indifference, which may be lacking in the touch of humour so essential to such an occasion? There can be no formula; each case must be dealt with on its own merits; but from the point of view of our relationship with the child the integrity with which we act may have important results.

This comparatively trivial illustration brings us back to the main theme. In all our contacts with children, both personal and functional, there can only be one guiding principle; we must at all times behave and act spontaneously as our true selves. We must not pretend about our feelings. And we must not be deterred from this by any fear of revealing our shortcomings. If we are surprised, indignant, hurt or shocked about his behaviour we do well to let him see it. If we are not, but perhaps think we ought to be, or think the child thinks we ought to be, we must not pretend to have feelings which in fact we have not. The remedy is to do what we can about ourselves, not to pretend about it. It may be helpful to remember that when we pretend we usually put up a show of perfection, or, at any rate, of something which we imagine to be better than we really are, thereby depriving the child of a valuable opportunity of accepting our imperfection.

But the worst of laying down a general principle of this sort, which arises from the heart rather than the head and is not susceptible of logical proof, is that a host of difficulties, objections and claims for exception immediately present themselves. They must not be lightly brushed aside. We all like some children better than others; and it happens occasionally with some teachers, and frequently with others, that there are children whom they definitely dislike. Does this principle demand that we should not do what we can to designate such feelings? For there is no doubt that once a child has got it into his head, even erroneously, that a grown-up dislikes him, that grown-up cannot be of much further help to him. There can be no simple answer. If a teacher is a person who has strong likes and dislikes among children it would be better if he sought an occupation unconnected with children. And for the rest, there seems to be no escape from pretence as the lesser of two evils in this case.

Another question which may occur is whether the principle applies only to those feelings which arise out of our relationship with the child or whether it must also apply to the feeling aroused by circumstances unconnected with that relationship. The leader of any enterprise, great or small, is under the necessity of sustaining morale by disguising from his followers any feeling of fear or anxiety which may beset him. Few people, either in a home or in a community, are entirely free from strain or worry, financial, administrative or personal. Is it to be demanded that these should, as far as possible, be concealed from children? The answer has to be that it is right to conceal them. Children cannot but suffer from contact with grown-ups who are labouring under strain. But it may be well to remember that, if we are under strain, we cannot, try as we will, conceal

the fact wholly from children; or, at any rate, we cannot prevent them from suffering damage from our condition.♦

Many other justifiable grounds for pretence about our feelings could be produced. When they emerge they must be faced. The more we encounter, the more we have to be on our guard against allowing them to weaken our hold on the general principle that pretending to children about what we feel is damaging to them. To say that a pretence about our feeling under certain circumstances is justifiable is not to say that under those circumstances it is not damaging. It is merely conceding that it is the lesser of two evils. In every case it is of the utmost importance that we should make very sure that it is the lesser.

The adult's relationship with the child can only achieve its maximum value if it is linked with his sense of the importance of growing up. It is possible to attain pre-eminence in most spheres of human activity, from a champion boxer to a nuclear scientist, without growing up. It is not possible to become a whole person. It is only as persons that we grow up and human personality develops through the medium of personal relationship. The distance which any child travels on the road towards becoming a fully developed person depends almost entirely on the nature and quality of his relationship with the adults who surround him. An attempt had been made to hint at the difficulties and complexities of this relationship. As far as the adult is concerned its quality depends on his having a philosophy which will guide it aright and is so integrated a part of him that his attitude to the child has lost all traces of being studied and has become completely unselfconscious and spontaneous.

♦ A corollary of this is that it behoves all those responsible at higher levels for education, boards of governors, education authorities and so on, to take all the steps in their power to ensure that the people who are in actual contact with children are not working under any avoidable causes of strain. Understaffing, meanness over secretarial or administrative help, the demanding of countless records and returns, necessary as they may be, all react to the detriment of the child. It is fantastic that a headmaster or headmistress who may be presumed to have been given the responsibility because of some experience or expertise in the handling of children should have to spend three quarters of the day in an office doing work which could be done by someone who has never been near a child. Strain and overwork are unavoidable under present day conditions, but for the benefit of the child it is better that these should be added to an already overburdened education office than that they should emerge in the school. But when everything possible has been done there will still be strain and there will still have to be some pretence in the attempt to conceal it. All that can be said is that the less there has to be the better.

Chapter 5

WAYS AND MEANS

So far the main preoccupation has been with aims. Discussion of techniques has been, as far as possible, avoided, partly in a desire not to cloud the main argument, partly because there are others far more competent to discuss techniques, but chiefly, perhaps, in order to try to keep clear the important distinction between principles and techniques. Educational aims, although their expression may need periodical redefinition, have an element of permanence. Techniques require constant overhauling, adjustment, adaptation, and reference to the purposes they are intended to serve. Once we become wedded to a technique we are lost; and there are probably none of us who are free from the danger of accepting traditional and current educational techniques without sufficiently relating them to their purposes. It is therefore with hesitation that suggestions are made about ways and means of aiding growth, and it has to be understood that they are no more than suggestions to indicate a way of approach.

It is no great exaggeration to say that our education is at present standing on its head. It is not hard to understand and to sympathize with the way this has come about. The sturdy individualism of the nineteenth century has given way in the twentieth to a universal emphasis on service to the community. This has been an important and healthy advance but it has carried, as many good things do, certain seeds of corruption which may have been slow in revealing themselves. One of these is that we are in danger of regarding our young people, not from the point of view of the life they are going to live, but from the point of view of the use they are going to be to the community, a transference of emphasis from the personal to the functional.

Those engaged in higher education are all the time beset with appeals for more and better scientists and technicians, more young people with gifts of leadership for filling the higher executive posts in industry, or trained for the innumerable social services which the community requires. Each plea carries its own specifications and the university or college is under great pressure to work towards these. The secondary school in its turn makes its specifications which have to be satisfied by children entering from the primary school, and the same process occurs in a minor way throughout a child's progress up the school. During the whole of its education the child is being dressed to comply with the requirements of the next stage.

If this could be confined to the purely functional aspect of its education it would be bad enough, but it is almost inevitable that teachers who are having to work to a specification on the academic side should fall into a similar frame of mind in the sphere of the child's personal development. Without realizing that we are doing we make a picture of the sort of person we think a child ought to become and try to turn him out as near to our picture as we can. We are constantly hearing from the lips of even our most eminent educationalists phrases such as, "The kind of person we want to produce is ...".

Is it surprising that the great majority of the products of our education are lacking in originality, freshness, spontaneity and reality? And if we have the courage to be properly humble about it we have to confess that those who have retained something of these qualities have done so, not because of, but in spite of our ministrations.

If our children are to grow up we must have the faith to believe that God knows better than we do what kind of a person each one of them is to become, and that our function must in the main be limited to the provision of room and freedom to grow and to the patient discovery and removal of impediments. It is our lack of faith, manifested in our Lilliputian arrogance in assuming that we know better than God knows what kind of person the child is to become, that is the chief impediment to growth. We have in theory rejected the Victorian concept of the “moulding” of character – we nowadays only hear the expression from the lips of Speech Day VIPs – but in our making of pictures of “the kind of person we want to produce” we are still clinging to many of its implications. Until we have succeeded in ridding ourselves of this attitude of mind towards children the majority of them are likely to remain second-hand, second-rate and unreal. It is our Christian duty humbly to explore and try to interpret the mind of God, but not to claim that we know it.

But here a doubt assails us. If we do not permit ourselves to form any kind of picture of the kind of person we want to produce, what means is there of our knowing what are the impediments to our aims. The term is meaningless except in relationship to some particular object in view, and an impediment to one objective may not be so to another. The difficulty is real and is not to be lightly ignored, but it is not insuperable. The solutions we try may have to be largely empirical and must therefore be subject to close questioning and revision. And this is not altogether a disadvantage as it compels us at every step to return to our basic question, “Is this an impediment to growth?” If we ask ourselves what are the impediments to the free growth of a plant we can answer with reasonable certainty, poor soil, drought, climatic conditions to which it is not accustomed, various pests and so on. We should feel that by removing any one of these we were improving the plant’s prospect of growth without curtailing its capacity to remain itself. Similarly there are things which would occur to most of us as impediments to the growth of a child, though there would be far less unanimity about them. There is much healthy disagreement, for example, about the influence of such things as comics, the films, wireless and television. This, however, does not matter so long as such influences are considered as possible obstacles to fitting the child to a preconceived pattern.

This habit of picture-forming is an impediment in another way which is hardly less damaging. If we see a child with a picture in our mind of what we want to make of him, the kind of person we want him to become, as material for our shaping, so to speak, we not only destroy his reality, but we become incapable of seeing him as he really is, with the result that our personal relationship with him is clouded. We are not in relationship with the real child, but with a child or our imagination, and that is an unsatisfactory relationship with a child or anyone else. Not the least of the damage is that the child may well try to conform to our picture and so become something that is not himself. We all encounter, from time to time, the person who seems to be playing a role to such an extent that he – or is it somehow more often she? – has lost all reality. There

is an almost nightmarish feeling that we are talking to some kind of mechanical doll; we do not seem to meet on any really personal plane and we become exhausted. It is all too probable that many of these tragic creatures are the result of picture-making and misguided ambition on the part of the grown-ups who influenced them in their childhood. These are the extreme cases, easily noticeable, but there are probably few of us who have not in some degree been influenced by our upbringing in the same way.

There is another way, rather more severely practical, in which the picture-forming habit militates against growth. In theory and intention we watch for a child's aptitudes and encourage them. But to the extent that we have conceived ambitions for the child in any specific direction – and all ambitions tend to flow in specific channels – we are in danger of noting the aptitudes which coincide with our ambition and failing to observe those which do not. And once again the result is likely to be a person who is not himself. Family traditions of interest in music, art or literature, the parent with over-rarefied notions about truthfulness or sexual purity, the examination paper which asks a child to make critical assessments in advance of a child's stage of development all have much to answer for.

There is still one other angle from which this matter may be regarded. There is an increasingly wide acceptance of the paradox that a child grows best, not by preparing for the future, but by living fully at his own level in the present. This is not susceptible of proof but it is what many would expect and it has encouraging confirmation from observation and experience. If it is accepted, the inference from it is plain and far reaching. So far as it can be achieved, every child must be given the freedom and the opportunity and the tools to extract from his environment the maximum richness and fullness of experience appropriate to his stage of development. This does not mean that it is to be done without any help or suggestion from the grown-ups. He must frequently be led to the water and at times made to drink. But it does mean that the grown-up will think in terms of the child's present needs rather than of his shaping for the future. His mind will be concentrated on observing the child and studying and providing for his interests. The traditional out of school occupations will be re-examined and most probably very few of them will be discarded, but they will be seen by the grown-up, not as vehicles for the development of the various characteristics and virtues he wants the child to acquire, but as opportunities for living through the stages of interest appropriate to childhood. For it seems very certain that if he does not live fully through these stages, growth is checked and he is apt to return to them later in life. Most of us can confirm that from our personal experience.

For example, in the classroom the teacher will shape his curriculum not in terms of the things which he thinks the child ought to know but in terms of what is significant to the child, that is to say, what arouses his spontaneous interest or has some link with his experience of life. We may teach him until we are exhausted, we may get him successfully through all sorts of examinations, but unless these conditions are fulfilled, the knowledge does not become a harmonious part of him, and it may well be destructive of his integrity, making him something which is unreal. To take an extreme example, it would not be impossible for an entirely unmusical person to obtain a degree of Doctor of Music, but that would not make him a musician and it might make him a fake.

Trying to create an environment that will give children a full and whole life is not the same thing as giving them an overcrowded life. An essential element in any whole life especially, perhaps, in a child's, is time to be leisurely, to lie fallow, to be utterly idle. And yet we still go hunting through our timetables trying to find five minutes here and five there in order to squeeze in some fresh activity that we think may be for the child's good. This has become such a habit that we feel guilty if we dare to try to provide for him a pattern of life in which his daily unorganized time is reckoned not by minutes but by hours. We find it hard to leave him free to moon about looking at the clouds and dreaming his dreams, or even screaming his screams, without suggesting to him how he could occupy himself more profitably. Our down to earth, realistic friends tell us that it all seems very charming and idealistic but is no way to prepare children for the hard modern world which they are going to meet. Their contention seems so practical and so reasonable and so safe that it takes all the courage we can summon to stand by our faith and reply to them, "Which do you really want, a conditioned child or one who will have a chance to grow into what God meant him to be?"

But our misgivings are not only planted on us from outside, they arise within us too. It would be a fair guess that the majority of us are uneasy if we are not busy all the time. Life is short, there is so much to be done, the unforgiving minutes slip by, and we reach the end of every day with a half frustrated, half guilty feeling that we have not done nearly all we meant to do. We salve our conscience by going to the ludicrous extreme of putting up a façade of being busy. And so inevitably we cannot bear to see children being unoccupied and aimless. Our temptation is to fill every moment of their waking day with "purposeful activities". The temptation is increased almost beyond our power of resistance when disasters and crimes occur as a result of their having unorganized time. On such occasions, and they are bound to occur, our first cry is that we must provide them with more organized occupation. There is, as every teacher and parent knows from experience, some truth in the old Victorian adage about Satan finding mischief for idle hands. The child who has never had any opportunity for real idleness will, when he gets it, be bored and querulous and destructive; he will be up to all sorts of mischief. A very tempting way out. But we are obliged to ask ourselves the question. "Would not the same result be achieved superficially by giving him the money to go to the pictures or by letting him turn on the television, and what ground is there for supposing that the one course, rather than the other, is anything more than a palliative?"

The tragic problem of boredom is one that we do well to study carefully both in ourselves and in our children. There can be little doubt that it is one of those excrescences in our civilization which need not be, but it would be rash to suppose that there are any facile formulae for its solution. Nevertheless it is hard to escape from the conclusion that, as far as children are concerned, the provision of ample time for sheer idleness is a first step towards attacking the problem. It is possible that it is in the end a matter of religious faith. Our professions imply a belief that the forces that make for good and for life are more powerful than those that make for evil and for death. Yet obviously much of our current practice is a denial of this. We have misgivings about leaving a child even for short periods alone with God because in our hearts we believe that the forces of evil will conquer. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief".

If we accept the contention that a full life at his own level is an important, perhaps essential, condition of the child's growth it is hard to see how this can be fulfilled in an environment from which one sex or the other is excluded. Life, even for children, must be one-sided and limited if they do not live in contact with members of both sexes, contemporary and adult. The difficulty is obviously not so great in the day school where the child has a continuous home life as it is in the boarding school. Those of us who were brought up in single sex boarding schools will, if we think about it honestly, recognize the fact that we lack something because during adolescence we had so little opportunity of getting to know members of the opposite sex as persons. The main contention of those who favour a segregated education during adolescence, and they are still in a large majority, is that those qualities which are peculiar to one sex or the other are more freely and fully developed away from the presence of the opposite sex. Reasonable as this idea would seem to be, it has to be said that during the half-century or more of experiment in schools which have been fully co-educational no evidence whatsoever has come to light to support it. Another argument frequently advanced is that the presence of the opposite sex is a distraction from the main purposes of being at school, which are passing examinations and preparing for a career. If there were substance in this we should have to say to those with whom it carries weight, "Do you feel that you are really putting first things first? Your insistence on the importance of academic achievement and of equipment for a career is fully justified. A well stored and agile mind is a part, though only a part, of the full life, and, moreover, no-one can have a wholly satisfactory life if he is working at a job in which he feels either that he cannot fulfil himself, or that he is not being of value to, and being valued by, his neighbours. But are you really prepared to put the material consideration of what we call success in life in front of growth to maturity and real fullness of life". As a matter of fact there is no need to worry. There is no dilemma. The boy's preoccupation with Amaryllis is no greater distraction than his preoccupation with sport or with any other interest he may have. The same is true of the girl. The academic record of the co-educational schools compares satisfactorily with that of the single sex public schools and grammar schools.* The co-educational school must satisfy itself that it can provide, as adequately as the single sex school can, for the separate needs of the two sexes. If it can do this, and experience has amply demonstrated that it can, it has the added advantage that it provides for the fundamental need in both sexes, which is the presence of the other.

* An illustration may be taken for the school whose records are most easily accessible to me. It has no entrance test of academic attainment so that its pupils are of mixed ability, those the average intelligence may possibly be just a little higher than that found in the average grammar school. Its total numbers (age range 7-18) have only recently exceeded 200. During the period since its recognition by the Ministry of Education as a efficient secondary school about sixteen years ago the numbers in its sixth form have not until recently exceeded about twenty, that is, about eight per year doing advanced courses of one sort or another. In that period, although it includes nearly six years of war, there have been nine open awards (6 scholarships, 3 exhibitions at English universities, (Oxford 5, Cambridge 2, London 2; spread over classics 1, modern languages 1, history 2, English 2, economics 1, science 2). And, what is perhaps more significant, there have been ten first classes in final degrees. It is further interesting to note that the two lists overlap in only three cases. Four pupils from this period are engaged in university teaching. Co-educational schools which are older and larger could doubtless produce more impressive lists.

The exercise of discipline may play some part in aiding growth. In every organization, in all forms of human activity, discipline is necessary as an economy of time, effort and strain. No-one questions the benefit of an accepted pattern of life and procedure, supported to the extent that may be necessary by sanctions. In a community of children, in addition to the consideration of economy, it is now generally recognized that the acceptance of a pattern of life and behaviour and of certain limitation to unbridled activity are important elements in the child's sense of security. When a child comes to a school the first thing he wants to know is what he is allowed to do and what he is not. As long as he is uncertain about this he is insecure and strained; as soon as he has found out he settles down and is happy.

But essential as this is, it is not all. The fact that a skeleton is essential to the human body does not alter the fact that it is bare bones. Discipline may be given much greater warmth and purpose if its exercise is also regarded from the standpoint of the extent to which it aids or hinders growth. It is not suggested that there should be a separate discipline for this purpose but that in all our exercise of routine discipline we should bear in mind its influence on growth. In this way it may, in particular, be bent to aid the various acceptances which were discussed in an earlier chapter, the acceptance of the logic of circumstances and the rest. For example, a good man people would not nowadays punish a child for what we call moral offence such a lying or stealing, but they are being unrealistic if they disguise from the normal child that hard fact that the person who lies is apt not to be believed next time and the one who steals is under suspicion whenever there is any subsequent disappearance of property. The way in which discipline is exercised is one of the useful ways of selling the child our fallibility. We all have a very natural and human urge to prove that we are right, especially, perhaps, when we are doubtful about the fact. Under many circumstances it may well be a part of our job to help the child to see the logic of our actions, but there are other situations in which it is a good thing to enforce obedience, not on the ground that we are right, but on the ground that we are responsible and therefore must have the last word. When two teams play a game of football there might well be muddle, waste of time, and possibly friction if there were no referee, and so there is a tacit agreement to abide by the decisions of a referee acceptable to both sides. He is not a superman and he has no sanctions by which to enforce his decisions beyond the agreement of the players to accept them. He may make a decision which every player on the field recognizes to be a wrong one but not one of them will question it. More than this, ideally, at any rate, not one of them will feel upset about it. This attitude of "playing to the whistle", of accepting the referee's decisions, not because he is right, but because for the moment he has the say so, is part of maturity. Unfortunately, much as sportsmen like to claim it, there is little evidence of transference in matters of this kind from the playing field to ordinary life, but it is true that in both an inability to accept the referee's decision without emotion is a mark of immaturity, and this gives us a hint as to a way in which the ordinary discipline of a community may be orientated to aid growing up. For example, provided that a child has confidence that his environment is on the whole a logical, reasonable and friendly one, it is generally better to say "must" to him rather than "ought". "Must" involves no interference with his judgment and is often useful in getting him to accept our fallibility; "ought" may well involve a serious invasion of his moral integrity, and must therefore be used only with great circumspection. The word has to be used sometimes; we cannot at

our present stage dare to let children grown up without any sense of obligation; but when it does have to be used we have to decide whether or not the better plan may be to help the child to develop his own “oughts”, rather than to impose ours upon him. Even so we have to be careful. There are dangers in both methods of procedure. If we impose our own “oughts” there is the danger that we may do it at a time inappropriate to his stage of development, or that we may impose more “oughts” than are really necessary and so may add to his sense of guilt through his failure to live up to them. There must be few of us who do not at times become aware how our lives are being deadened by our sense of guilt through our failure to fulfil obligations which there is no need whatever for us to feel. People with a stern sense of duty, valuable and worthy as they may be, are usually rather dull. We find it hard to believe that they are really all God meant them to be. If, on the other hand, we leave the child to develop his own “oughts” there is a danger of his being weighed down with a consciousness of moral responsibility which is a check rather than an aid to free growth. The matters which a child at any given stage of development should decide for himself and those which should be decided for him are an open question which should be constantly in the adult mind.

We are driven to the conclusion that the best way is only to make use of the word “ought” when we cannot see any other way out. And in adopting a course which may seem a little daring and unorthodox we may derive some comfort from noting the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, the greatest of all teachers, is almost never recorded as saying “ought”. After all, do we want people to act rightly because of a sense of duty and obligation, or do we want them to do so because they are free, spontaneous and loving, because their hearts are in the right place and that is the way they feel about it. One is positive, the other negative, one the way of life, the other of death.* The way in which the adult, as referee, points the discipline which he has to exercise may have a marked bearing on this problem so vital to growth. And outside the sphere of discipline, in that of the ethos of a school community, much may also be done. In our efforts to develop our old friend, the team spirit, we have frequently in the past imposed on the child burdens of obligation and raped his tender sense of loyalty in a manner that cannot but have been damaging to growth. It is a possibility that trading on his loyalty has been a greater outrage upon him than trading on his competitive spirit.

One other example of the orientation of discipline may be useful. The question often arises in one form or another as to whether we should normally give reasons for the commands and prohibitions which we have to lay upon children. There can again be no formula for the answer, which must be dependent on a number of circumstances peculiar to each case. But the problem becomes a less arid one and more worthy of the time spent

* The reader will understand that the word “ought” has been used for the sake of brevity in order to avoid the repeated use of long-winded phrases such as “sense of obligation”, but that it is only intended to apply in those cases where a sense of obligation is imposed. There are many popular uses of the word in which this is not so, e.g. “You ought to have put a comma there”. It is the sense of obligation which may be damaging. Most of our guilt sense arises from it. In extreme cases it results in neuroses. It is interesting to observe that when a psychiatrist starts to re-educate a breakdown the first step very often is to try to relieve the patient of all sense of obligation. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that something might be done in the way of locking the stable door before the horse escapes. The cases that result in complete breakdown are not the only ones that are affected.

on it if it is considered in relation to growth. The adult world must be one in which the child normally sees sane and intelligible behaviour. In order that this may be done it is necessary that the child should be given reasons for orders sometimes. This will help him to realize the general reasonableness of his surroundings and to establish a relationship of trust between him and the adults who have to deal with him. If this trust is successfully established he should normally be willing to accept orders without being given reasons even if sometimes he is quite sure that they are misguided or mistaken ones. If, as sometimes happens, the result of giving him reasons is that he becomes unwilling to accept an order without being given a reason for it, something has gone wrong. Trust in his environment is insufficient, or he has not yet succeeded in accepting adult fallibility, or he is still too exclusively regarding his environment in the light of how it serves or thwarts his purposes. If discipline is to play its part as an aid to growth it must be sufficiently light and elastic to permit these valuable danger signals to remain operative. A discipline which is over rigid and repressive, or over-sentimentally linked with loyalty or tradition, or overloaded with personal domination, however effective it may be in securing immediate objectives of efficiency and good order, and however flattering to adult self-esteem and satisfying to adult sense of power, cannot be of any use as an aid to growth.

Although in most cases it would seem to be a check to growth if a child is allowed to argue about an order, it may very well be a good thing, if he seems unhappy or bewildered about it, to discuss it with him after it has been carried out. Whether to do so or not must be judged separately in each case. But if discussion takes place it must be entered into by the adult with an entirely open mind. Nearly all of us enjoy an argument and we like to win it. If we argue with a child it must not be with the object of winning the argument but in order to arrive at the truth. Unless we enter into the discussion with an open minded willingness to let the child win, and to give weight to heart as well as head, it is better to have no discussion at all. An open minded discussion may give the adult an opportunity of presenting the child with a new point of view, or it may end in a chance for him to acknowledge to the child that he was wrong, another simple and straightforward way of selling the child his fallibility and of cementing friendship. We are sometimes in danger of forgetting that an intolerable thing it is to have to go on living at close quarters with someone else who is always right, which is the lot of most children.

But when all is said and done it is still possible that the most important factor in a child's growing up is his contact with adults who are themselves grown up. A depressing thought because we are all conscious that we fall woefully short in this matter. Is there anything we can do about it? We can but try. We can make some effort to achieve the acceptances of life which were mentioned in an earlier chapter. If we cannot ourselves make these acceptances there is little hope of our aiding children to do so. For example, the grown-up who carries about a sense of the way in which he ought to be treated by children, and quite probably rationalizes it as part of his important duty of teaching them good manners, is labouring under a severe handicap in his task of fostering growth.

It is possible, also, to make an effort to become more simple, to cast off the cloaks and pretences which most of us assume, particularly in those situations in which we are

least sure of ourselves. We form a picture of a type of personality that we admire and then proceed to play that role until it becomes encrusted on us, and we even sometimes take on unconsciously the mannerisms of real people whom we admire. In ordinary adult relationship this is a comparatively harmless and laughable little foible and is not among the major barriers to human friendship. But in our relationship with children, to the extent that they do not see through us so often – and what a mercy it is that they do see through us so often – it can be damaging. The more we can be just our true selves, free from any sort of pretence of artificiality or affectation, the more we are likely to help their growing up. We gasp at the story of the mother who in reply to questions told her child that the glass of liqueur was “Mummy’s nasty medicine, darling”, but we blush at the remembrance of the occasions when we ourselves have lied to children to save our faces, to avoid the disclosure of our ignorance or our lack of charity or integrity.

It is important that everyone who is at all closely connected with children should be living a full life in the adult world. One of the great drawbacks about teachers in the past, especially those engaged in boarding schools, has been that they have tended to lead a life much too cut off from fellow men outside their own little school circle. There are various possible explanations of this. A good proportion of those who have chosen the teaching profession have done so with an element of escapism in their motive. It is a return to the nest where they were safe and happy, a means of avoiding the risks and buffets which may come with some of the more robust professions. These are, in any case, likely to be content with a withdrawn life. A more general reason is that children do happen to be a full time job. Once an ordinary man or woman gets into the profession it is hard to resist the pull to become absorbed and to do everything possible for the children. And so it comes about that there is no time for anything else. Those who are keen spend a considerable proportion of their much vaunted holidays in improving themselves by studying and attending courses and conferences, and do not leave themselves enough time for doing things which serve no useful purpose but are just good and joyful in themselves. Many teachers help in the evenings with youth organizations, or teach in evening classes, partly through enthusiasm, partly because they find it difficult to say “No” to importunate organizers, and partly, in the case of paid work, in order to supplement meagre incomes. In boarding schools the staff spend all their available spare time in supervision duties and in helping various out of school activities. No teacher working full time in a school should spend any of his leisure time in any activity connected with youth. If we want our teachers to be of maximum value in aiding children to grow up it is important that we should see that they have the fullest possible opportunities for varied contact with the outside world.

The fact that a number of teachers do spare time to educational work in order to earn more money raises the important point of salary. The welfare of the child demands that every teacher should have a salary sufficient to free him from the necessity of working in his spare time. The main considerations, so far, have been those of a supply and demand nature, related to the competing financial attraction of other forms of employment for which he might be qualified. This, though important, should be a second consideration; the first should be the welfare of the child. Throughout the present century there has been a widespread admission that teachers were underpaid, and a genuine effort has been made to improve matters. But, in fact, the increases in teachers’ salaries, though

substantial, have barely kept pace with the increases in the cost of living, so that the teacher of today is no better off than was his predecessor in the first decade of the century.

If our teachers are to be as effective as possible in turning out grown-up persons, they must be given the feeling that, measured by its financial rewards their work is valued by the community. They must also be made as free as possible from financial anxieties, which must indirectly affect their pupils. And, too, they must have the means and the opportunity to take a full part in the cultural and social life of the adult community, to serve on councils and committees, to travel, to visit exhibitions, concerts and theatres, to buy a few books and periodicals, and, very important, to drink a glass of beer in jovial company.

On the whole teachers during the last half century have suffered from a sense of inferiority. Their compensation for this shows itself partly in a defensive attitude in their social relationships but very much more in their relationship with children in the classroom. Anyone who can remember his schooldays will confirm this. Increased salaries would not solve the whole problem but it would make a good start. Teachers cannot do much about the salary question except by complaining and agitating, and most teachers feel diffident about appearing to put the remuneration before the job. When they agitate for increases in salary their motives are doubtless mixed, but to the extent that their agitations are successful, the benefits accrue at least as much to their pupils as to themselves.

And the most important thing of all, though it is difficult to talk about it without seeming sentimental, is that the teacher should be a person who genuinely loves children. No child can grow up without being loved and feeling that he is loved. If a person is grown up in the sense in which we have been considering it, he is a loving person. If he is not a loving person he is not a grown-up person. Indifference and hatred are the outcome of some barrier to growth. But it must be remembered that anyone who loves children more than he loves his fellow adults is not the best sort of person to be with children. A person who enjoys the company of children better than he does that of his contemporaries has suffered a check somewhere or other in his growth, and is handicapped in stimulating the growth of children. Love, in the sense in which it is used here, cannot be selective. If we are not persons in whom the love element in our nature predominates over the hate element we should not have anything to do with children.

Chapter 6

HEADMASTERS AND LEADERSHIP

The problem of leadership with all its subtleties is one which intrigues most of us and has a bearing on the matters which have been discussed so far. The happiness and harmony, the sense of purpose and direction, the vitality and effectiveness and the quality of life in any community depend primarily on the leader. It is therefore worthwhile spending a little time in considering some of the problems which face a headmaster.

The qualities demanded of the leader of a military expedition, a political party, an exploration, an industrial or business enterprise, a religious or an educational community are not identical and it would be rash on the part of anyone whose experience was limited to one sphere to generalize about any of the others. Nevertheless it is likely that most of what is true in one sphere is true in all. For motives which are pleasantly earthy we seek promotion and when we get it we find ourselves faced with responsibilities which dismay us. It is not at all as we thought it was going to be. The frills fall away until there is nothing left but a single-minded concentration on the goal. It must be true in all spheres that a first requisite of leadership is a clear conception of objectives – not necessarily without a humble and elastic willingness to later them – and a blazing and confident determination to achieve them. In so far as the quality of leadership demanded in one sphere differs from that demanded in another it is the objective to be achieved which determines the differences.

So the first task of anyone taking over a school is to make sure that he has some clear idea in his mind about where he is going. He must have a working answer to the question, “What is the main purpose of a school?” That has already been discussed in a previous chapter and what follows assumes the outlook adopted there. But having a clear idea of the objective is not quite enough. It has to be kept all the time in the front of the mind. It is amazing how easy it is to lose sight of it amid the thousand petty details of school life, exigencies of timetable and organization, limitations of accommodation, stress and strain of human relationship, and so on, and one of the very important jobs of a headmaster is to see that, amid all these very necessary things, main objectives are kept in sight. It is desperately easy for a school to become the slave of its timetable or of its building layout.

In most other spheres of activity objectives are near at hand and progress towards them is not difficult to assess. In a school, where results in the things that matter are not discernible until after, perhaps long after, the child has left, there is a danger of a false sense of satisfaction arising from smooth working and slick organization and discipline. The headmaster has to be constantly alert in guarding against this. There are good reasons for efficient organization, namely the economizing of human effort and the avoidance of stress and strain. Preventable waste of human endeavour is a sin, and teachers, particularly young ones, must not be subjected to the frustrations which some

from working below full power on account of conditions which could be remedied by a little careful organization. But it is the business of a headmaster to see that it is confined to purposes of this kind and is never allowed to become an end in itself, thwarting rather than serving main objectives. Any step in the way of organization has to be checked over in his mind with the question, "How does this affect our main aims?" So also any compulsion or prohibition which has to be imposed should be tested with the question, "What degree of compulsion is necessary in order to achieve the required purpose?" There is always the possibility that an unnecessary perfection of organization, tidiness and discipline may strange spontaneity and obscure valuable danger signals. The head of any community must constantly remind himself that nothing must be allowed to interfere with his prime duty of keeping it alive and healthy and growing.

P.G. Wodehouse in one of his earlier novels divided headmasters into workers and poppers-up-to-Town and gave his vote to the workers. Today they may be divided into busy headmasters and leisurely headmasters, and a strong case can be made out for giving our vote to the leisurely headmaster. Both are to some extent assumed poses. Vanity creates a great temptation to put on an act as a busy headmaster and other people are only too ready to support one in that role. But it is doubtful whether it is the true job; it is possible that it contains an element of escapism. If a headmaster has every minute of his day filled up with little jobs, most of which ought to be done by other people, it may well be that he is neglecting what is more important for what is less so. There is much to be said for devoting the main part of his energy to the pastoral side of his work, giving himself time for personal contact with colleagues and pupils and parents. To do this he must have the courage to hand over to other people every job that can possibly be done by them, fully accepting the fact that it may be less well done than if he did it himself, and fully prepared to accept responsibility for their mistakes. Only so can he give himself time for wandering about, meditating, planning and getting things in their true proportion, even vegetating, so that he has the strength and freshness to deal with crises when they occur.

His effective handling of crises may make enormous differences in the lives of individuals and of the community under his care. It is true that we all have certain reserves upon which we can call when crises demand them, but it is better to be prepared, physically and spiritually, for the crises, major and minor, which may be upon us at any moment. And in a school community there cannot be many moments when there is not a crisis in somebody's life. The headmaster who allows himself to become absorbed in administration may let these pass without even becoming aware of them and so lose some of his most valuable opportunities. Neither lack of time nor fatigue must ever be made an excuse. We all get tired. There is a certain feeling of satisfaction about it; it flatters our self-esteem, makes us feel that we have been working hard, but it is an unpardonable thing in a headmaster. If he is tired he is of no use to anyone and he must ask himself what he has been doing that he could have left to somebody else. This is a counsel of perfection but it has to be aimed at.

This policy of deliberate laziness has its pitfalls. Colleagues and pupils tend inevitably to take their time from the headmaster, and if he appears to be leisurely they may easily become the same. The problem of achieving a busy and vigorous community

with the headmaster the only apparently leisurely person in it is not an easy one. But the leisurely attitude does not necessarily involve the tolerance of slackness. It must not induce the colleague to say, "He is easy-going, it does not matter how I do this job", but, "This is my job, if I do not do it it will not get done".

To be an easy-going headmaster is more emotionally wearing than to be a busy one. The busy headmaster, occupied with his administration, schedules, statistics and schemes – and whatever else busy headmasters occupy themselves with – has not time to worry. In many pursuits not having time to worry may be a good thing; in education it is not. If the headmaster gives himself time to wander about and ruminate, he will give himself time to worry. And it is necessary that he *should* worry. The highest can only be approached through agony, and no-one who shirks that agony can be a true leader. One of the greatest of all dangers is the temptation to be self-satisfied, and perhaps the chief condemnation of the busy headmaster is that he tends to be complacent. Worrying is far more exhausting than working and one has to be prepared to face this emotional strain. An easy way to escape from it is to sit down and do paper work, routine of some sort or graphs and statistics about the school. This gives immediate relief and a comfortable feeling of being busy and efficient. But in truth it is in many ways better, because more honest, to go and play at something, which will avoid any chance of pretence that one is working.

The leisurely headmaster has a strong advantage in the important matter of accessibility. In spite of its dangers it is a good thing to create the impression of having plenty of time for everyone, both pupils and colleagues. The busy headmaster, the "I can spare you five minutes at four twenty" headmaster, cannot do this. If the headmaster appears to be in a hurry whenever he is seen about he cannot do it. If a school is too large it cannot happen. For pupils easy access to a housemaster or tutor is only a second best to access to the person in whose hands rest final decisions.

Accessibility in a purely physical sense is not enough. The headmaster must be approachable. Colleagues and children must be certain that they will be welcomed and that, whatever their problem or worry, he will not think them foolish. There should be no need for them to be frightened of him for the days of the awe-inspiring headmaster are over. In former days it was only when we reached the sixth form that we discovered that he was a human being and our terror turned to veneration. The headmaster of today must be neither feared nor venerated. Both fear and veneration may be impediments to growth.

The practice of having ample time for everyone has, of course, its difficulties. There are always people who will take advantage by stealing too much of the headmaster's time, and there are always people who will try to lean on him too much. But the remedy is, not to make himself less accessible, but to toss the ball back in those cases where it seems necessary. He should hesitate to say, "You should not have bothered me about this", but he need not hesitate to say, "This is a matter in which you must make your own decisions".

The cornerstone of a headmaster's leadership is his relationship with his colleagues. His organization may be efficient, his discipline perfect, his public relations good, his relationship with pupils good, but unless he is harmoniously carrying his staff along with him his while effort is in danger of breakdown. Such a situation is by no means unknown and the question is worth a few moments thought. Just as the adult has to sell the child his imperfections, so the headmaster must ensure that there is a full acceptance of all his defects on the part of his colleagues. This is only likely to be achieved if the understanding is a two way one. They must be aware of his defects and he must know what they are; he must be aware of theirs and they must know that he is. But again, awareness is not enough. There must be full acceptance so that neither becomes irritated or frustrated by the other's shortcomings, but both may pull together to accomplish whatever is possible within the limits which the shortcomings impose. An understanding of this kind is fundamental to any sound and happy collaboration.

The next step is that the headmaster must do all in his power to build up the self-confidence of his colleagues. Two essential attributes of anyone who has to deal with children are that he should be natural and that he should be truly humble, and no-one is likely to be either unless he is in considerable measure sure of himself. No small part of a headmaster's leadership consists in helping colleagues to discover their capacities by encouraging the to adventure, showing appreciation of good efforts, interfering as little as possible, being careful not to deflate them by over vehement strictures on their failures, and at the same time expecting of them standards and achievements of which they did not realize themselves to be capable. All this is especially important in the case of the young teacher in his first job. So often he appears to be outwardly cocksure, opinionated and dogmatic. There is a problem to which he does not know the answer and all his senior colleagues are old-fashioned and reactionary. There is a violent temptation to snub him but that is the last medicine that he requires. He is in reality a frightened and bewildered child, trying at all costs to keep his end up, clinging to the little bits of philosophy that have attracted him during his time at school and college. It is a point in his life at which there is a danger of crystallization. Whether his development stops short and he becomes in his turn one of the very reactionaries who at the moment arouse his indignation, or whether he becomes disillusioned and perhaps a little embittered, or whether he continues to grow and to broaden, depends in great measure on the sensitiveness with which he is handled during those first few years.

In general it seems that the aim should be to make each colleague feel as responsible as possible for his own department. And it is astonishing what a large proportion of people, at any rate among teachers, evade responsibility if they possibly can. The headmaster has to aim at an understanding with each of his senior colleagues, and with as many junior ones as possible, something like this. "Here is your job". (The degree to which it is then defined depends upon a number of local circumstances; some jobs are better closely defined, some not; some people have to be given precise and detailed instructions others to better if given latitude.) "It is for you to tackle and to make a success of it. I shall watch with interest, and such advice and help as I am capable of is available any time you want it. But go ahead with it in your own way and do not hesitate to make decisions. If you make wrong ones it is part of my responsibility to take the blame for them and I must not run away from that". Not, of course, in those pompous

words; that would wreck it all from the start; but somehow bit by bit, and, if possible, without making speeches, getting it across.

So far so good, but here comes a dilemma. A person does his best work if he feels responsible and can get on with his own job in his own way. But if there are numbers of people, each one doing his own job in his own way, there is likely to be a lack of cohesion, and the headmaster is in danger of not getting his own ideas carried out. The headmaster must therefore provide a framework of ideas within which his colleagues are to work, and their work must maintain contact with it. There cannot be any definite rule as to how to do this. The important thing is to bear in mind all the time the necessity for maintaining the balance between, on the one side, the unifying influence of the headmaster's outlook, and on the other, the value of giving colleagues the fullest possible latitude to be their whole and true selves in all their relationships with their pupils. In building and maintaining his framework, each headmaster has to determine, very often by a process of trial and error, to what extent it can be done by persuasion and inspiration. It is not certain that one way is more enslaving than the other. It may well be that if he lays down a rule, his colleagues in carrying it out can retain the integrity of their own judgment as to its wisdom, and that if he carries them away by the persuasiveness of his oratory as a stall meeting their judgment becomes merged in his. In which shape are they going to be of the greatest value to their pupils – as independent personalities, or pale reflections of himself? There is no easy answer but it is important to bear the problem in mind.

But it is not enough to find a workable compromise between giving rein to a number of colleagues who are reasonably trying to proceed in diverse and irreconcilable directions and requiring them to conform to the headmaster's ideas. The task is clearly a more delicate one than this. The situation which faces the headmaster is himself and a band of colleagues each with ideas and talents to contribute to the common effort. His business as leader is to know the minds and capacities of all and to make a synthesis which will embrace as much as possible of what is valuable in each individual contribution. The illustration which occurs is that of a weaver who has a number of threads spun by different spinners and has the problem of weaving them into a fabric which shall be harmonious and yet retain as much as possible of the richness of the individual threads. An analogy must not be carried too far but, it is sometimes useful in helping to retain contact with fundamentals.

It often happens that a headmaster, on taking over a school, is expected to become the trustee of its heritage and traditions. The love of tradition, a trait not peculiarly English, though among us it may have attained a more self-conscious form than it has among any other people, has a virtue which is not to be disputed. But it carries with it the danger that we may sometimes attach too much value to institutions as such. The governors and headmaster of a school seem sometimes to attach greater importance to its preservation as an institution than to the salvation of the individual children. To the extent that a division of function is practicable in a matter of this kind it may be suggested that the preservation of the institution is the governors' business and that the salvation of the individual is the headmaster's. And the headmaster should never forget this. The two objects are not necessarily in conflict; in fact, they need rarely be so. The

glorification of the institution is a useful, perhaps a necessary, technique in the process of individual salvation. The individual does not grow unless there is something outside himself and wider than himself towards which his attention may be directed. But the danger is that the headmaster may forget that it is only a technique and may come to regard it as an end in itself. He must never forget that the final criterion of the value of his work will not be the survival or otherwise of his school as an institution but the quality of the lives of the pupils who have passed through his hands. It may happen that an individual may have to be sacrificed for the preservation of an institution. Jesus gave his life for the salvation of his fellow men, but for the preservation of any man-made institution.

The fact that the upholding of tradition can never be a headmaster's first concern does not mean that he should ignore established customs and habits of thought in any school with which he may be connected. On the contrary, he should treat them with deep respect. A new broom sweeps clean, but, over-vigorously applied, it can sweep the pile off the carpet along with the dirt. Nevertheless change must come. A community whose pattern of life is not a growing and developing one stagnates and dies. To keep the community alive is a headmaster's responsibility, and every headmaster is faced with the delicate problem of making changes. There is no golden rule as to how to set about it except the need for remaining aware of the necessity for steering between extremes. A headmaster is not doing his job if he does not recognize and cut away dead wood, and yet he must not outrage the treasured beliefs or even the prejudices of his colleagues and pupils. But nothing relieves him of his final responsibility and he may at times feel obliged to make decisions in the face of public opinion, with or without previous consultation. He does not expect his colleagues to agree with all that he does, he wants people of independent judgment, but before taking any action which he had grounds for supposing may meet with disapproval he should have established a confidence and evoked a loyalty which will say in effect, "This particular action of the headmaster seems to us to be ill-advised, but there is sense in most of what he does, so, of course we will give this step our support and hope for a chance of discussing it if events seem to confirm our fears about it". The leader who flies in the face of the collective opinion of his followers before he has established in them an adult loyalty to himself is heading for trouble. Loyalty cannot be demanded until it has been earned and, in the case of a headmaster, one of his chief concerns is to see that there is no conflict in the hearts of his colleagues between their loyalty to the school as an institution and their loyalty to himself as head.

It would be pretentious for anyone but a great leader to attempt to suggest how this can be achieved. Perhaps, so long as the importance of it is borne in mind, each individual will find his own way towards it. What seems certain is that it cannot even be begin without humility. The headmaster has to make it plain that he welcomes advice from colleagues and that their advice will be taken to heart. And this must be at a deep and genuine level. There is always this paradox about it. If it is just a means to an end and there is uppermost in mind the purpose of making the colleague feel his value as a member of a team, not very much happens. If ulterior purpose is forgotten and advice is accepted and considered just because that is a right and good thing, then the miracle takes place and the secondary purpose is fulfilled.

These are only a few of the problems and pitfalls in the path of anyone undertaking the leadership of a community of young people. They are so many and so diverse that the qualities demanded to meet their challenge make a formidable list:- a philosophy to provide a sense of direction; a clear vision which does not allow minutiae to obscure essentials; an infectious enthusiasm to carry others towards the goal; the elasticity to change his mind; the humanity to be accessible; the imagination to put himself in other people's places, combined with the capacity to induce them to laugh at themselves; the frailty to make mistakes and the courage to acknowledge them; the confidence to be humble and, embracing all of them, the love and integrity to be truly simple.

It goes without saying that nobody has ever come anywhere near to possession all these qualities, but there is no harm in aspiring.