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## THE CORPORATE LIFE OF SCHOOL II

(Concluding article)

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It is now my task to describe the way in which certain principles established in the first instance with reference to English boarding-schools have received a wider extension. There has always been noticed among more thoughtful parents and teachers a distrust of the boarding-school. Many parents felt that their boys would be best educated if they were able to live at home and at the same time attend a public school where an active corporate life was maintained. But there were no such schools in existence; at Harrow, and Eton, and other such schools, day-boys were not welcomed. It so happened, however, that among the newer boarding-schools one was established in 1860 at Clifton, a suburb of Bristol, where a large number of parents resided whose means enabled them to enter their sons at the school, and the head-master, Dr. Percival, who came from Rugby to take charge of the school, was in sympathy with such parents in their desire to share the benefits of the place. Under his régime the school rapidly became famous and many useful reforms were adopted which gave the school a distinguished position. Dr. Percival's name will be familiar to American teachers, for he became afterward a head-master of Rugby, maintaining there the best traditions of Arnold and Temple; he has now for twelve years been on the episcopal bench, and is the one bishop who supports the present liberal government. While at Clifton, Percival established the "town-house" system;<sup>1</sup> the school consisted in all of some six hundred boys ranging from ten to nineteen years of age, four hundred of whom were boarders, coming chiefly from the great manufacturing towns of Lancashire, and two hundred

<sup>1</sup> Described by Mr. Tait, one of the town-house tutors, in *The Journal of Education* (London, 1884).

day-boys sleeping at home. These boarders lived in groups of fifty or sixty in houses built for the purpose near the school; in each of these a house tutor lived, with usually a younger teacher to help him, and each house, as we have seen in my previous article, had a very distinct corporate life of its own, which displayed itself in all sorts of activities other than those which centered round the classroom. The problem was: How shall the "day-boy" be brought to his share in this corporate life? Those who work in these public schools believe that the effects of corporate life are equally or even more important than the effect of school lessons, and they could not therefore leave it to be a matter of indifference whether a scholar came within the circle of this influence or not. School games certainly play a greater part in the average logic development than arithmetic does: hence every boy must attend and be grouped for games as carefully as for lessons. The day-boys at Clifton were divided up into "houses," a North-Town house and a South-Town house, each with its house tutor, with senior boys as house prefects, and with a reading-room as a meeting place for members of the house out of school hours. If the reader will turn back to my previous paper he will see that this plan maintained the principles which had hitherto been displayed in connection with boarders, except that the bond of intimacy between the members of a town house is less strong, simply because the day scholar lives at home and feels a bond of association with parents and friends there external to the school society. But it is well understood that during term time the school has the first claim upon his time—not only school lessons, but all sorts of out-of-school interests, of which games, though perhaps the chief, is only one.

This plan has flourished at Clifton College for more than thirty years, and has been transplanted elsewhere either by teachers who worked under Dr. Percival, or by others like myself who came under the influence of Clifton traditions. It has not spread very rapidly for reasons which would take too long to expound,<sup>2</sup> but it is interesting to notice that within the last three

<sup>2</sup> See *The Educational Times* (January, 1899) for an inquiry and report into "Corporate Life and Games in Secondary Schools."

or four years various attempts on similar lines are being made. And the problem is naturally directed to inquire whether the principles at issue need to be confined, as at Clifton, to schools where the boarders are more numerous than day scholars; or whether, on the contrary, it is not equally important to see these principles at work in schools which are solely attended by scholars who sleep at home. Further, as soon as the experiment is fairly started in day schools, it is found that "the school" comes into a new relationship with and attitude toward "the parent."

These were two problems that I found myself able to handle, when in 1898 I was appointed head-master of a secondary school (called an intermediate school) to be opened in Cardiff. It was a new school, to be controlled by the municipality, in a community largely democratic in its ideas, and often said to be more like an American city, both in its good and evil aspects, than any other community on this side the Atlantic. The governors of the school were favorable to progressive plans in school management and gave their head-master a free hand. So there was a fair chance of conducting a pedagogic experiment, and during the five years that I conducted the school, there was adequate time to judge of the value of the house system. At the close of the five years, when I left to come to Manchester, some fear was expressed that the house system, and all it implied, might be endangered by changes in the teaching staff; the parents therefore sent in a letter to the governors urging that these plans of education should be continued, and they are so continued unto this day.<sup>3</sup> I mention this as the best evidence obtainable as to the success of such an experiment. Evidence of results in matters of education (as Dr. Rice among others has shown in his "Forum" investigations) is always difficult to gauge, particularly where the aim is, somewhat vaguely, to train in character and social ideals as well as in physical powers: so a testimony from parents may be regarded in some sense as an approach to scientific proof in the relation of cause and effect.

<sup>3</sup> I may also note that Sheffield, one of the largest cities in the north of England, has recently reorganized its principal secondary day school, calling it the King Edward VIIth School, and has adopted a similar plan of "houses." Other schools in the North of England are following suit.

The arrangements were, briefly, as follows: Every member of the school community, teachers and scholars alike, with the sole exception of the head-master and the caretakers, were members of a "house;" each house consisted of some forty scholars, two or three of the elder being chosen as prefects with some authority over the rest; a senior teacher was house tutor, helped by a younger teacher as vice-tutor. Every scholar, as soon as he was admitted to the school, was entered as a member of some house, and remained a member till he left; very often he had a brother or friends in a house already. At first the houses were named by the letters of the alphabet; presently special names were given to commemorate services rendered to the school by distinguished citizens or others. The first duty of each house was to organize its athletics on the two afternoons, Tuesday and Thursday, assigned to games; every scholar played in some team or other unless a medical man certified that he should not, in which case some other physical exercise was found for him. And games, although the chief, were not the only sphere of interest taken in hand by a house. The important point to note is that through these games and the social activities which these games and other activities called forth, the tutor in the course of years got to know individual scholars and to come into friendly relations with them in a way that cannot be realized during lesson hours. When important questions of the promotion—or at times of the punishment—of a scholar came up, or a question of his choice of studies, or equipment for some after-school career, the house tutor would always be able to advise, for his knowledge of the individual had been accumulating year by year. American teachers may consider that such an organization, with the prominent rôle assigned to the house tutor, would scarcely take the place, in the imagination of an American high-school boy, of the secret fraternity, where the boy is entirely independent of his teachers. I think, however, that the ordinary schoolboy is not really anxious for such independence; the fraternity is an organization suited to the later years of adolescence, at the college; the boy of twelve, fourteen, sixteen, even eighteen, is quite happy in a society where he is allowed *play* for his

gregarious instincts, without the entire exclusion of his elders. In fact I regard the secret fraternity, which has had faint analogues in English secondary schools, as an abnormal growth, due to the neglect of the American high school to organize itself *as a society*. The ordinary school is organized solely for curriculum purposes, and curricula are in the scholar's eyes merely a side issue. The normal boy, like the normal man, finds his best interests in social affairs, in the life of mankind as lived here and now; and at any age between eight and twenty-one the most natural direction for social interest to take is in the place where he meets his fellows day after day. Home has become too narrow for him; city and state are as yet too wide and abstract for his sympathies; school is the microcosm on which the young boy or girl plays a happy part before stepping on a broader stage.

#### PARENT AND SCHOOL

Now when a day school has so organized itself, claiming to absorb not only intellectual efforts, but the social sympathies of its scholars, there ensues in many cases, under the surface, a certain struggle between school and home. The boy is not unwilling to lead the double life, to divide his interests and affections between two centers, but he is not yet prepared, as we adults are, to play the double part without any interchange or acquaintance between school and home. A man will easily run a business or a profession absolutely apart from his home life, and to that he sometimes adds a club life or a church life equally separate. To the child these divisions are not so easy. Many parents also are at first unwilling to let their children be so absorbed in school society. Hence I found that the same principles that justified the organization of a "house" system, lead inevitably to a closer recognition by the school of the existence and the claims of parents.

I say advisedly "the existence," for in the eyes of some teachers—and these not the oldest—the parent is solely regarded as a person established to bring forth, feed, and clothe the child so as to render him "school-fähig," fit to be molded by the beneficent hands of our craft; having handed over the child,

the parent, as viewed by such teachers, has henceforth no further business to "interfere;" or if he does claim a right to deal with school affairs, he can do so only as a citizen, a tax-payer, not as the parent of Jimmy or Martha whom I teach in this school. It would, however, take us too far away from the study of corporate life to discuss the parent as a factor in external school administration,<sup>4</sup> but a few sentences will make clear how the study of school as a corporate society leads on to the recognition of the inner relation of parents to this society.

Parents do not actually belong to the school society; they have no membership within it, but they are, so to say, on the fringe of it; they are keenly interested spectators of what goes on; they have contributed to the school a part of themselves and they are ready to be interested, not only in their own sons, but in his friends. Naturally, therefore, a boy's "house" comes within the circle of the parents' interest. Very often the house tutor comes to be known as a friend who can advise in situations where advice is needed. In these days when public questions of organization demand so much attention the principal of a large school cannot find time to know intimately the needs of each scholar; hence he values the help of experienced assistants who as tutors fulfill a duty which in earlier days fell entirely upon himself.

And the house system serves to acquaint parents with the school in another way. Most good schools now-a-days seek some plan for inviting parents to visit their school and acquaint themselves with its life. In the kindergarten parents are usually welcomed to come and be present at an "open day," when the little ones follow their usual occupation; but with older scholars this is impossible, for children become too self-conscious after the age of eight, and it is practically impossible to conduct a school class if the parents of several scholars are sitting by. In nearly all secondary schools in England, an annual prize-giving or speech day is instituted where parents, governors, and the public assemble to hear singing and recitations and to listen to speeches on education. But these occasions, although helpful to parents, are

<sup>4</sup>In a paper in the October, 1907, number of *The International Journal of Ethics*, I briefly indicate what principles are, as I think, here at stake.

not intimate enough; they are rather in the nature of public display and commemoration. When I studied at Jena under Professor Rein I found that he had instituted *Eltern-Abende*, which approached nearer to the educational ideal. These "parents' evenings," as conducted for the *Übungs-Schule* in Jena, were simple social gatherings of class teachers, and the fathers and mothers, partly for interchange of views, partly to show parents the scholars' work and to hear recitations and music chosen from the daily pursuits of the different classes. Such gatherings are held at Jena two or three times a year. At Cardiff I imitated Rein's example, but used the house system as an additional means of interest. The "parents' evening" took the form of an "at home," the host of the evening being one of the houses; the house selected took the whole affair in hand, issued the cards of invitation, decorated the premises, looked after the refreshments, arranged the displays of woodwork, art work, and other school exercises, and received the guests. The invitations were, however, not confined to the parents of that house, but were sent to all parents, and the attendance was always very large. After the programme of recitations, acting, singing, and so forth was completed, the head-master would usually give a short address on some topic of practical importance to the well-being of the school, and thereupon would follow discussion, the scholars meanwhile having gone home and left parents and teachers together for their serious talk. In the Demonstration Schools which I now direct in connection with the University Department of Education, we have continued this custom, and none of us doubt its value in enabling teachers and parents to unite for the training of our scholars. In schools where children of both sexes are received it is found that some plan of this kind, whether or not it be called a house system, is almost indispensable. For whatever advantages are secured by associating boys and girls during the years of adolescence, for teaching purposes, it is certain that they will not and cannot mix entirely in games and in social life. Here and there in England boys and girls are set to play hockey and cricket together, but the results are ludicrous. But with a "house" organization in which the girls with the women teach-



ers are grouped in their own "houses" and the boys with the men teachers in their "houses" it becomes easy to carry on the life of the school as a united whole in matters where the whole school must unite a corporate body, while giving freedom to the two sexes to run apart in matters where separation is required both by common-sense and by respect for the ideals of the two sexes.

To an American teacher accustomed to an environment and to traditions very different from those of England, many of the details which I have given may seem somewhat strange, but my purpose is served if I have been able to show that experiments are being tried on the basis of universal principles. Hitherto in the history of education most of the organized effort, most of the philosophic thinking about schools has gone toward the improvement of curricula and method, or of machinery, such as promotion, examinations, textbooks and the like, dependent on the work of teaching. I have tried to show that the problem of training, based fundamentally on the conception of school as a society is also capable and deserving of scientific investigation and experiment. And I have some hope that students of social progress, who are taking year by year a deeper interest in education, will come to see that in this direction there is a field of investigation and for practical work which will yield an abundant harvest. So long as the schools were small, so long as the task of schooling only played a minor part in the experience of the young, the social aspect of school organization was unimportant, but with the creation of large permanent institutions the problem before us has come to be of capital importance for the welfare not only of teachers and scholars, but of the home and of the city.