

John Howard on Ackworth School

HAVING in many of the schools I have visited observed, among other irregularities, the *rudeness of the boys*, and being persuaded that *no instruction* is given them relative to a decent and becoming *deportment*, perhaps hints may be taken for their improvement in this respect from some of the *rules* of the *excellent* institution of the Quakers, at *Ackworth* in *Yorkshire*, for the education of children of their persuasion, which I here copy.

“ INSTRUCTIONS TO SCHOOL MASTERS.

“ That the schools, during the summer season, open at half after six o'clock in the morning, and in the winter at half after seven o'clock, and that they close at eight ; that after breakfast they open at nine and close at twelve, that after dinner they open at two and close at five. These times to be observed as near as conveniently may be.

“ That they observe that the children come into the schools when the bell rings, in a quiet and becoming manner, with their faces and hands clean, hair combed, and take their seats at the time appointed.

“ That the boys be instructed in spelling, reading and English grammar ; that after dinner, the boys who attended the writing masters, shall attend the reading masters ; and the lads who attended the reading masters, shall attend the writing masters.

“ In order that punishments may be inflicted with coolness and temper, and in proportion to the nature of the offence, the following method is agreed upon *viz.* : That the treasurer and each master keep a book, and minute down offences committed within the day ; that once a week, or oftener, they meet together and inspect these books, and administer such punishments as may be agreed upon, using their endeavours to convince the children that the only purpose of correction is for their amendment, and to deter others from the commission of the like offence.

“ That they sit down with the children and family on 1st day (Sunday) evening, reading to them, or causing them to read suitable portions of the holy scriptures, and other religious books, the treasurer and principal master selecting such parts and subjects as are most instructive, and best adapted to their understandings.

“ That they in *particular* endeavour, by divine assistance, to impress upon the minds of the children the necessity of a strict adherence to truth, and abhorrence to falsehood, as well as a remembrance of their Creator in the days of their youth ; having the fear of the Lord before their eyes, which will preserve under the various temptations to which they are incident, and lead to the enjoyment of real happiness by keeping a conscience void of offence towards God and towards Man.

30 JOHN HOWARD ON ACKWORTH SCHOOL

“GENERAL RULES *to be strictly observed by all the Boys at ACKWORTH SCHOOL, and to be read to them once a month.*

“ That they rise at six o'clock in the morning in the summer, and at seven o'clock in the winter, and dress themselves quietly and orderly, endeavouring to begin the day in the fear of the Lord, which is a fountain of life preserving from the snares of death.

“ That they wash their faces and hands, and at the ringing of the bell, collect themselves in order, and come decently into the school ; that they take their seats in a becoming manner, without noise or hurry, and begin business when the master shall direct.

“ That they refrain from talking and whispering in the school, and, when repeating their lessons to the master, that they speak audibly and distinctly.

“ That they should not be absent from school, nor go out of bounds without leave.

“ That when the bell rings for breakfast, dinner or supper, they collect themselves together in silence, and in due order, having their faces and hands washed, their hair combed, etc., and so proceed quietly into the dining room, and eat their food decently.

“ That they avoid quarrelling, throwing sticks, stones and dirt, striking or teasing one another ; and they are enjoined to complain not of trifles ; and when at play to observe moderation and decency.

“ That they neither borrow, lend, buy, nor exchange without leave, and that they strictly avoid gaming of all kinds ; that they never tell a lie, use the sacred name irreverently, nor mock the aged or deformed.

“ That when a stranger speaks to them they give a modest audible answer, standing up, and with their faces turned towards him.

“ That they observe a sober and becoming behaviour when going to, coming from, and in religious meetings.

“ That their whole conduct and conversation be dutiful to their masters, and kind and affectionate to their school fellows and that in all cases they observe the command of Christ, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.*

“ That in the evening they collect themselves and take their seats in the dining room, and after answering to their names when called over, and attending to such parts of the holy scriptures and other religious books, which may be read to them, they retire to their bed chambers, and undress with as much stillness as possible, folding up their clothes neatly, and putting them in their proper places ; and they are tenderly advised to close as well as begin the day, with the remembrance of their gracious Creator, *whose mercies are over all His works.*”

The *instructions* to school mistresses ; being similar to those for school masters ; and the *general rules* being nearly the same for girls, I omit copying them.

I cannot better conclude this subject than in the words of my learned, much respected and honoured friend Dr. Price.

“ Seminaries of learning are the springs of society, which, as they flow foul or pure, diffuse through successive generations *depravity* and

misery, or on the contrary, *virtue* and *happiness*. On the bent given to our minds as they open and expand, depends their subsequent fate ; and on the general management of *education* depend the honour and dignity of our species."

From *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe*, by John Howard, F.R.S., Warrington, 1789, p. 122.

At *Ackworth*, near Pontefract, there is a school belonging to the people called Quakers,¹ in a healthy and fine situation. The house was built as an appendage to the foundling hospital, but was purchased (for about £7,000) at the desire of that excellent man *Dr. Fothergill*, and intended for the education, maintenance and clothing of children of both sexes whose parents are *not* in affluence. They are instructed in reading, writing and accompts, and the girls in knitting, spinning, plain needle-work and domestic occupations. A small part of every day is devoted to silent and serious thoughtfulness which does not seem tedious or irksome to the children, for they are habituated from their early infancy, at stated times, to silence and attention.

The house is a good and spacious building, and well adapted for the proper separation of the boys and girls. No children are admitted younger than nine years of age, except orphans, and but few remain in the house after they are fourteen. As the school is partly supported by donations and legacies the expense to the parents is easy (about eight guineas a year for each child). The general average number of children is three hundred and ten. From the 18th of October, 1779, to the end of 1787, nine hundred and ninety-two children have been admitted. Of these only twelve have died ; three of them by the small pox in 1782, in the natural way. Of thirty-two who were inoculated, none died.

At my visit, January 10th, 1788, there were one hundred and sixty-two boys, and one hundred and eight girls, neat and clean at their several employments, and the school rooms were in great order. The children were calm and quiet, and their countenances indicated that this did not proceed from fear of the severity of their masters or mistresses. (I well remember an expression of the doctor's to me with reference to this school, "we have got a person at the head of it, who is made for the purpose".) Their bedrooms were clean and in order ; the children (properly) lie on hair mattresses and in each room is an usher or mistress. I omit the diet table, because I do not approve of beer for children nor of meat oftener than once or twice in a week.

From *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe*, by John Howard, F.R.S., Warrington, 1789, page 197, footnote to Pontefract Town Gaol.

¹ This much respected people, with whom I have passed many agreeable hours of my life. I trust will believe me when I say I cordially join in opinion with *Dr. Percival*, who in his *Dissertations* says, "The people *improperly* because *opprobriously*, called *Quakers*, certainly merit a very high degree of esteem from their fellow citizens, on account of their industry, temperance, peaceableness, and catholic spirit of charity." To which I will add, as an amiable property, their uncommon neatness in their persons and houses.