

## CHAPTER VI

### FAMILY AND SCHOOL

IN the family the child grows into boyhood and reaches the age for school. Consequently school should be linked with the home. The most pressing need of to-day is, then, to relate school to home-life. Till this is done man cannot free himself from the burden of empty verbal formulas stored in the memory—mere husks of knowledge—or experience the joy and power of a living knowledge of the real nature of things. Well would it be for our children and for later generations if we realized that we have little vital knowledge that has grown up with us in our very souls, and that the so-called knowledge which we daily labour to increase is outside our real lives. Well would it be if we ceased to pride ourselves on our second-hand knowledge, thoughts, and feelings, and no longer found the highest glory of our schools in the veneering of our children's minds with the knowledge and skill of others. Then school would be a true school—one which aims at making clear to the pupil the nature and essential relations of things to each other, to himself, and to God, the vital ground of all. This is the aim of instruction, and instruction itself furnishes the means by which it may be attained. School and instruction, therefore, set before the pupil the external world as something distinct from himself, and at the same time himself as part of that world. But it also makes clear the relations of things, and step

by step rises to more general relations, and so advances to a higher spiritual conception of them. So in school the boy passes from a mere external view of things to a higher and more spiritual view. This is his entrance into true knowledge; this it is which makes him a scholar and the school a real school. Thus, it is not the imparting of information that makes a school, but the living spirit which animates it.

A true school, therefore, implies the presence of an intelligent mind which partakes of the nature both of the pupil and of the external world, and so can link them together in language and understanding. This intelligent mind is the true schoolmaster, so called because his province is to make clear to himself and to others the inner spiritual unity of all things. This the child expects and requires of him, and this anticipation is the invisible but potent bond between them.

That boys are sometimes mischievous in school does not contradict this. The very fulfilment by the school of its function of nourishing the spiritual life leads the boy to feel more keenly and to act more vigorously. It is not good for a boy to be listless and dull: he should be full of life in soul and body. The mischievousness of the schoolboy is, then, a mere overflowing of high spirits without thought of consequences.

Probably we have here the reason why former schoolmasters were more successful in cultivating the true inner lives of their pupils than are their present-day successors, who tell the children many things but fail to show their relations and spiritual unity.

It is the spirit alone which makes a schoolroom a true school—the spirit that unifies things which seem separate, not that which, by ever-advancing analysis, isolates them still more. Never should it be forgotten that the

work of the school is less to teach many things than to bring out clearly the essential unity of all things. It is because this is so continually ignored that school-teachers and places for instruction are so many, schools and schoolmasters so few.

We can now answer the questions: Are schools necessary? Why are they needed? What should they be like? As spiritual and material beings we should develop into intelligent and efficient men. We should endeavour to cultivate the spirit we have received from God, and to show forth in our lives the divine element within us, confident that so will all our earthly needs also be satisfied. We should grow in wisdom and in understanding of all things both human and divine. We should recognize that we and all other earthly things are temples of the living God. We should realize that we are to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect, and in the light of that knowledge live our lives faithfully. To lead us to this is the business of the school; this is why it is necessary; this determines its character.

Further, a clear realization of the true nature of the school makes it evident that the subject in which a boy needs instruction is also that about which he should receive instruction. Otherwise, instruction and learning is an idle game incapable of entering into the spiritual life.

Mankind should rejoice in knowledge and insight, and should attain an energy and efficiency of which we do not even dream. But these must develop in each individual as the outcome of his own life. The boy should take up his future work, which now begins to occupy him, cheerfully and with confidence, not sullenly and unwillingly, full of trust in God and in nature, rejoicing in the success of his efforts. He should find satisfaction in his work because peace, harmony, temperance, and all