

Social Work in Catholic Schools

By Rev. Charles Plater, S.J., M.A.

London Catholic Truth Society No.cts0008 (1909)

How may the boys in our Catholic schools and colleges be given more knowledge of and more interest in the social duties which await them?

Of the importance of beginning our social education at school only a few words need be said. Even those who are most alive to the practical difficulties in the way are agreed as to the desirability of getting boys interested in social work. That these difficulties are not insurmountable we shall show in a moment. At present it will be enough to indicate briefly the need of surmounting them even were they more formidable than they actually are.

We can scarcely hope that the next generation of Catholic laymen will be alive to their opportunities and even their duties as bearers of a great message unless the present generation of boys in our schools and colleges be trained to take an interest in social service. The work which awaits them is not the acquisition of mere technical knowledge, to which a boy's early education need have no direct reference, and which may be picked up in early manhood. Social work calls the whole man into play. It tests his early training. It appeals to character. The appeal may pass unheeded if our boys have not been taught to respond to it. They will brush aside their responsibilities unless they have been trained to welcome them.

We are not, of course, here speaking of the spiritual foundation which must precede all really valuable social work. That we take for granted, as something absolutely indispensable. An intimate knowledge of their religion, devotion to the sacraments, piety, self-control—all these we assume. But even pious boys may, in after-life, overlook their social and civic duties unless they have been convinced, during their school days, that such duties exist.

This, then, is the first need: that boys even when at school should be got to realize that they are receiving an education not merely for their own benefit, but for the benefit of those among whom they are to live; that they have, in short, a mission in life for which they are now preparing themselves.

The Urgent Need for Social Education

M. Max Turmann, who has done so much of late to promote interest in social subjects among the Catholics of France, gives in his book *L'Éducation Populaire* (a volume which has been crowned by the Academy), some of the reasons which should urge the directors of Catholic schools to pay more attention to the subject which we are considering. He admits the practical difficulties in the way, but insists upon the need of overcoming them.

"In order to despise these numerous obstacles," he writes, "let these educators imagine for a moment the penetrating force which Catholicism would speedily possess if boys in the colleges were moulded with a view to this action... What could these young men not accomplish if, together

with their certificate on the completion of their studies, they were able to carry away with them the firm and heartfelt resolution of working, according to their strength, to win to Christ the nation in which God has placed them?"

Besides getting our boys to foster habits of generous consideration for those about them, we must also endeavour to give them some knowledge of the actual conditions of the society in which they will live, and of the ways in which they may propagate the Catholic spirit. Some methods of imparting such knowledge will be suggested presently. But it will be clear from the outset that a boy must not be allowed to lose sight of the realities which await him.

Dr. Pooch, in an admirable paper on Sociology as a School Subject, read before the Conference of Catholic Colleges in June, 1908, lays stress upon this point:

"It is most necessary that the generous and charitable side of the character of our boys should not be atrophied when with us. There is danger of this, unless they are constantly reminded that their secluded college life is only intended to make them take a more capable and exalted part in the great world outside, when they have left our walls.

"It is almost impossible to focus our attention upon some things without losing sight of others. The danger of college life is that in looking after one's own progress one is apt to forget that of others outside. Hence the student needs to be constantly reminded that his college career, absorbing, as it does, that period of his life when he is capable of receiving the deepest impressions for good, is only most usefully employed when it expands his heart and mind towards a more efficient service of God and his neighbour."

We have ourselves met several Catholic young men who, after leaving school, have, by a happy combination of circumstances, been brought to take interest in social subjects, and who are now doing excellent work among the London poor. They have been full of the subject, though gratifyingly modest about their own efforts. But their description of the sore spiritual and temporal needs of the poor, and of the wonders that might be worked for their alleviation by Catholic laymen, has usually been followed by the disconcerting question: "Why were we not told all about this at school?"

Perhaps they were told of it. But there was evidently some lack either of enthusiasm or of tact in the telling. Had the message been delivered with a little more conviction or appositeness, these young men and many others like them might have made an earlier acquaintance with social problems. As it is, too many of them never make the discovery at all.

When we speak of social activity, we must not be thought to refer merely to "slumming." We use the term in its widest sense, to include many forms of civic service. There are many who find themselves quite unable to undertake settlement work or S.V.P. work, but who might render excellent service as members of various public bodies.

As Father Joseph Browne, S.J., said in his Presidential Address to the Conference of Catholic Colleges in 1908:

"The modern social revolution has altered as well as increased the duties of the Catholic laity. The enormous expansion of our great towns, the development of local government, the devolution of educational and other control upon the people—these things make an increased demand upon the personal activity of the citizen. A host of men is wanted in every district to carry on the work of

administration. Are Catholics to be represented among them? If they are not, we shall be swamped by the oncoming wave of secularism. If they are, it is for us to find and train the men."

Methods of Interesting Boys in Social Work

Methods of interesting boys in social work will, of course, vary with different cases. But a few suggestions may be offered, based on the experience of some who have succeeded in getting at the real boy through the veneer of convention and reserve.

The boy is a confirmed hero-worshipper
He is susceptible to example, and easily rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
Towards greatness in its elder."

Or, to quote from the same poem of Tennyson, he is prone to that

"instant reverence dearer to true young hearts than their own praise."

True, he selects his heroes with some disregard of their actual merits. He will find strange gods among his schoolfellows or in the chronicles of sport. But the instinct is a valuable one, and should be made use of.

We must learn the schoolboy's language and cultivate some insight into his standards and predilections. This done, we can teach him to admire rightly. We can substitute more worthy pictures in his gallery of heroes. By judicious stress on what attracts him most we may win him to a loyalty towards Catholic heroes, living and dead, which will mould his character. Better still if we can bring him into direct personal relation with those who combine a thorough understanding of boy nature with wide personal experience of charitable and social work.

Such born leaders of the young are fortunately to be found amongst us. Send a boy to visit them and see them at their work, and the conquest will be almost certain. Best of all if the boy can be got, so to say, to commit himself: to take some personal share, however small, in what is going on. Let him spend an evening with Mr. Norman Potter's Club at Bermondsey and play draughts with the boys there or sing them a comic song: or let him spend a week with those who are helping the Catholic hop-pickers, or with the zealous young promoters of the Catholic Settlements Association. It will be surprising if he does not start a new cult in the school during the next term.

Such work in a school may not be hurried. It is better to act on an élite and let these gradually mould public opinion. Too frequent public exhortation may provoke a reaction. Boys are nervous creatures, and the repeated phrase or over-emphasized lesson may annoy them and become a catch-word, linking itself with many unworthy associations, and even provoking a certain amount of innocent profanity. The new element must be assimilated in their own way, and not crammed down their throats. It might even be well to avoid the employment of definite terms like "social work." It is the thing that is wanted; the verbal description may be left to take care of itself.

The Rev. J. G. Adderley, in *The New Floreat*, "letter to an Eton boy on the social question" (a book of which we should be glad to see a Catholic counterpart), gives a few specific pieces of advice to his young friend which we may here briefly summarize. Those who wish to see them put in a way that would appeal to boys may be referred to the original. They are as follows:

1. Always to respect the poor and look upon them as human beings. Never to patronize them or talk down to them.
2. To be as anxious to rescue them from evil surroundings and cruel conditions of life as you would if they were members of your own family.
3. Never to encourage those who are responsible for such evils. To avoid buying goods which are obviously "sweated."
4. To believe in everybody's right to get a chance.
5. To look upon wealth as a God-given trust.
6. Never to think that the possession of wealth exempts from hard work. "A rich man has his wages paid in advance." The idle man is a pest to society.
7. Not to look on money as the be-all and end-all of life, but as a means to useful work.
8. To determine to study social questions. "We want more thinkers and students."
9. To bring religion into social work. Such work must be informed by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

These suggestions may be heartily endorsed. We would only remark that the second of them implies a certain exaggeration, and that the third is not perhaps very practical; the average boy is unable to discriminate between goods which are sweated and those which are not. True, he should bear the point in mind for his future guidance; and meanwhile he may be induced to avoid giving unnecessary trouble to servants or being thoughtless of their feelings.

Theory and Practice: Formal and Informal Instruction

We may now indicate some ways in which, according to the experience of those whom we have been able to consult, boys may be given an interest in social work. We may take, as a convenient division, first theory and then practice.

First as to theory. Is this to be conveyed through specific formal instructions on economics and sociology? or can such existing school machinery as essays, debates, and the like be made to secure the desired result? or finally, must we trust merely to personal stimulus and private enterprise outside the regular school course? In this matter there is some difference of opinion.

There are those who say that the times demand a real addition to the syllabus. They advocate set instructions on social subjects and economics. Dr. Pooch, in the paper already referred to, writes as follows:

"If then I am asked, Do I think that the syllabus usually found in our colleges wants revising? I answer, Yes. Those of our students who are on the commercial side must have a more scientific preparation for their business future. The 'bread-and-butter' standpoint calls for such advance. This means that Political Economy or Economics will have to receive a greater share of attention. From the points of view of culture, religion, and social reform also, the study of Economics is becoming more desirable day by day."

Dr. Pooch tells us (and he speaks from experience) that such studies may be made interesting to boys:

"Boys, as a rule, take most kindly to Economics if they are presented to them in a practical manner... Economics and social subjects can be made as humane and humanizing as the humanities, which they need not supplant but only supplement and explain."

The Teaching of Civics

Dr. Pooch's contention has lately found support in a valuable little book by Mr. C. H. Spence, the Head of the Modern side at Clifton College, entitled, *The Teaching of Civics in Public Schools*. The following somewhat lengthy quotations will, it is hoped, have the effect of inducing those of our readers who are interested in the subject to get the book for themselves.

Mr. Spence pleads eloquently and with knowledge for the teaching of "civics" in our public schools, and points out that "the services of a numerous class who (whatever be their defects) possess as a class a large share of good temper and public spirit, a keen sense of fair play, and a very high standard of honourable dealing and personal honesty, are lost to the State, and our national life is so much the poorer; the country is in want of their voluntary services, they should be taking their part in various civic and municipal activities."

The writer proceeds to show how the school subject of "literature" may be connected with life and used "as a means of stimulating the imagination, and arousing enthusiasm, sympathy, and kindness." On the social bearings of the study of history he lays still more stress. He points out that we are apt to treat history "far too much from the constitutional and political point of view, and far too little from the social and economic side."

He complains that schoolmasters and examination boards believe that English history ended with the Battle of Waterloo, and that boys leave school knowing nothing of the Industrial Revolution, the growth of the United States, or the welding together of the German Empire. He also pleads for some effort to connect our history lessons with what is happening around us:

"If a boy is learning about the Poor Law of Elizabeth, it will be well to try and make him understand the present Poor Law and how it works or fails to work. If he is reading of the Black Death and the Statute of Labourers, he had better be given some notion of our present labour difficulties, and learn something of strikes and sweating and wages boards."

Mr. Spence would go even farther. He advocates the direct teaching of "civics," and is able to point to successful experiments which have been made at Clifton College on both the Classical and the Modern sides of the school.

He begins with a warning:

"Before we begin to teach 'civics,' however, it is well to face the main difficulty. We must keep two things in mind: (1) We have continually to go back on first principles, and show boys by concrete instances what the long words really mean. (2) We have to get them to understand these long technical terms, since without this knowledge they cannot follow the discussions in the newspapers and reviews."

He then gives examples of the subjects which call for explanation—how laws are made, how a Government is formed, the franchise, the land laws, the duties of the various local bodies, labour questions, and so forth. Technical terms are introduced by degrees.

"After we have cleared the ground a little, it is well to give each boy a copy of Whitaker's Almanack, and, using it as a text, explain more in detail such things as the Budget, the National Debt, the various Government offices and their functions and duties, the Civil Service, and the way in which we govern India and the Colonies. A great deal can be done by questions, which should be of all kinds; some supplied by the teacher, more by the boys themselves."

Other methods are suggested; that, for instance, of giving a subject for a set discussion to take place at the end of the week, so that the boys may have time to talk it over with their friends and take sides.

With older boys a more ambitious line may be taken:

"One can give them lists of technical terms to explain; or passages from books in the school library to read; and it is not a bad plan to cut out special articles on social and economic questions out of the Times or the Morning Post, and get boys to read them and write abstracts of them. I have sometimes given my form at the beginning of the month a list of suitable articles in the National Review, Fortnightly, and so on, and they bring a précis of one of them at the end of the month. This is not unsuccessful.

"One advantage of the subject is that it teaches a boy to read the daily paper with intelligence, and no longer to regard it merely as a vehicle for athletic news, and in time he grows to prefer good newspapers to bad ones."

Other advantages of this method are noted, and some of the difficulties considered. The paper ends with an eloquent plea for the teaching of "civics" in the public schools. By way of appendix there is a syllabus for a three-term course in "civics," and a list of books useful to the teacher.

Practical Application in Catholic Schools

How far such formal instruction in "civics" might be introduced into our Catholic schools will depend upon circumstances. The matter is at all events worth considering. At St. Bede's College and elsewhere it has been found that such instruction is practicable and stimulating. "General knowledge papers," including questions on economic and social subjects, would appear to be growing in favour, and the interest which they arouse might well justify some attempt at the more or less systematic teaching of "civics."

Such teaching is particularly necessary in Catholic schools, since the welfare of the Church in this country will depend to a large extent upon our success in training the coming generation in Catholic social service. The reform of the Poor Law will necessitate the formation of an army of Catholic workers to defend Catholic interests and preserve Catholic institutions. We should welcome reform; but such reform may be prejudicial to Catholic interests if Catholics do not take their share in the movement.

It will of course be objected that the formal teaching of "civics" in our schools is quite impracticable. "The syllabus is already overloaded," the harassed schoolmaster will urge, "examination boards have piled up the agony. Now you require us to teach a new and ominous-sounding subject. Where do you propose that we should find the time?"

To this it may be said that even from the point of view of examinations there is something to be said for the inclusion of "civics" among school subjects. For, as Dr. Pooch and Mr. Spence have pointed

out, history lessons and literature lessons will become far more interesting and make a deeper impression on a boy's mind if they are connected with modern instances and illustrated by modern conditions. The problem of the tramp in the days of Elizabeth will present itself with an added touch of reality if it is brought into connection with the problem of the tramp who haunts the cricket pavilion. History for boys is too often kept in a water-tight compartment, quite out of relation with life. Boys will glibly repeat information in suspiciously rounded phrases about representative government, taxation, imports, Reform Acts and the like, without having mastered the modern implications of these terms.

Now, examining boards are beginning to recognize this and are becoming quite ready to welcome gleams of intelligence or traces of observation in a history paper. In the case of quite small boys of course such acquaintance with social institutions is not to be expected: history for them had better take the form of story telling. But in the case of bigger boys, and especially in the case of those who are preparing for University examinations, knowledge of this sort is of very considerable advantage in the examination-room. It has been pointed out that boys from Catholic schools who present themselves for scholarship examinations are notably lacking in a knowledge of "civics," and that this deficiency tells much against their prospects of success. Cases could be mentioned in which Catholic boys sent to University tutors in order to be brushed up for scholarship examinations have been set to read, not Demosthenes or Cicero, or Latin or Greek history, but books like Bagehot's English Constitution or Masterman's Heart of the Empire. These same tutors have generally gone on to ask, "Why wasn't this done at school?"

Another objection which is sometimes raised against the teaching of "civics" is that boys cannot or will not take in such teaching.

Now experience shows that they certainly can take it in. A favourite axiom of a particularly successful teacher is that "nothing is too hard for boys," a statement with which many experienced teachers have been found to agree. When keen interest is aroused boys will face almost anything. A Catholic school may be instanced where the boys, according to the testimony of one of the masters, "will get up pages of dry stuff to make a point in their debates, and how they find time for it is a mystery." The same boys will make a frontal attack in Devas's Political Economy or analyze Ruskin's *Unto this Last* without turning a hair. "One boy put in two months' hard work on the Belgian *Œuvres Sociales*, producing twelve folio pages of close analysis." This school, it may be added, is well to the fore in the matter of public examination results.

Hence boys can stand instruction in "civics." Whether they will is quite another matter. If the lectures are dull and uninspiring the auditors will display a mulish obstinacy and discover opprobrious epithets for the new course of study. But if the teacher knows his subject thoroughly and can manipulate it skilfully and with enthusiasm, the boys will clamour for more.

This brings us to another difficulty. How is the already overburdened master to find time for acquiring a new subject? He must start, as a rule, from the very beginning, since, as Mr. Spence points out:

"Public schoolmasters are the most 'uncivic' of men. I know, indeed, of one schoolmaster who has been several times a Mayor, but he is, like the Phoenix, unique. I am thinking myself of standing for a Parish Council, but I see no prospect of being elected. The civic activities of most of us are limited to serving on Grand Juries or Quarter Sessions."

This is a very serious difficulty. Yet Catholic schoolmasters who have made such strenuous efforts to keep abreast of modern requirements will not grudge the farther effort when once its importance has been realized. The Catholic Social Guild has already published a list of books on social subjects for their guidance, and is ready to give them any further assistance that they may require.

This part of our subject may be concluded in the words of the Headmaster of Clifton College, the Rev. A. A. David:

"Our young men are not interested in the practical problem of local government and social organization largely because of ignorance. They do not care because they do not know. I believe that by a certain amount of systematic instruction boys may quite easily be stirred to a real and intelligent interest in these great (perhaps the greatest) questions of the day, which may lead many of them later on to take an active part in their solution."

Creating the Right Atmosphere

So much for formal instruction in "civics." That such instruction, given the atmosphere, is practicable would appear to be the conviction of many who have given attention to the subject.

Nevertheless, informal instruction should generally precede (and continue to supplement) formal, since the right atmosphere must be created in a school before the specific teaching of "civics" will be acceptable.

But how to create this atmosphere? This is the question which has now to be considered.

Even those who would deprecate any addition to the already swollen list of subjects on which masters are required to give formal instruction must admit that valuable use may be made of such existing machinery as the debating club, prize essays, lantern lectures and the like. Boys may be worked up to a considerable degree of interest by an approaching debate on some subject which is exercising the minds of statesmen at the time—a Licensing Bill, or an Eight Hours Bill, or an Old Age Pensions Bill, or the like. Give them access to good literature and a little direction, and they will work up a case with ardour and discuss it as though they had the settling of the matter. Take them seriously (they deserve to be taken seriously), and give them an initial inkling of the importance of the matter in question. They may then contrive to get a very fair grip of the subject. The same applies to essays and the like.

Good work of this kind is already being done in several of our colleges, where prizes are offered for essays on social or economic questions. Valuable use is also made of debates, and it is often found that boys show every inclination to respond to suggestions as to individual research.

Interest in social work may readily be stimulated by private conversation.

"Stir a boy's curiosity," writes a master, "and you will be pelted with questions. He will suggest more or less impossible remedies for the undesirable state of things which you have, as vividly as possible, described to him. You must be ready to seize on anything of value that his suggestions contain, and press for more practical amendments. Of course you must be fairly well up in the subject yourself in order to be able to carry on the game. You miss a really educative chance if, on account of the scantiness of your own stock in trade, you endeavour to damp farther inquiry by changing the subject. It would be far better to tell the boy frankly that you don't know, but that you will look it up. Make him do the same, and then come back to the subject again."

The little gathering of three or four boys about a master in his room or on a walk has witnessed the sowing of seed which has borne valuable fruit. This is a matter of experience. Take the foremost social workers in any country at any time and ask them to date their first interest in the subject. They will, very often, take you back to some such beginning.

A well-selected library is, of course, a necessity; and much may be done in the way of guidance in the selection of books. They need not be forced down the boys' throats: but a little experience will show how boys may be lured into reading them.

Special lectures from old boys and others describing social work in which they are actually engaged may do much to arouse interest. Those who have seen the impression created on boys by a lecture from Mr. Norman Potter will need no convincing on this score. But it may be noted that the effect of descriptive lectures on slum life (and the same may be said of visits to settlements, and the like) will depend largely upon the degree to which the boys have been prepared for them. If they are sprung suddenly upon the boys without any previous explanation or without any attempt to let the boys see the importance and interest of the matter, they will lose much of their force. One who has done much to interest schoolboys in social work writes to us as follows:

"I think the attendant circumstances of poverty are simply repulsive if suddenly sprung upon boys: but if they know the facts theoretically first, the subsequent contact with reality stimulates their ambition of doing something to help. Give them first the idea that they can be useful to the happiness of others, and then show them how, and few will remain indifferent."

Practical Social Work

Coming now to the second element in our social education, namely practice, we are, of course, met by various obstacles which may make it extremely difficult for boys to take part in practical social work during term time. Yet even here something may be done. Occasionally, in favoured circumstances, actual work may be done in connection with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. More frequently, perhaps, although the boys may not be able to "go to the people," the people may come to the boys. Poor children from an orphanage or a settlement may visit a school and meet the boys at cricket or football and tea. Bigger boys will take pleasure in organizing sports, and will naturally, after a little preliminary shyness, show a kindly and gentle courtesy towards their guests. Their after-comments will reveal the impression that has been made. "Did you see that little chap with the ragged coat tucking into the sandwiches? The poor little beggar told me he had eaten nothing but dry bread for a week, and not much of that. It must be beastly rotten. Why can't they do something for them?" And so forth. The problem has presented itself with a touch of reality at last!

Or might not a school lend its gymnasium and supply old rubber shoes? or keep their old bats for an orphanage? or let a boy or two visit a garden city or a workhouse or an orphanage? or poor people in the neighbourhood? or admit village children to a rehearsal of their plays? or give them a concert? A little expense may be involved. But, somehow, expense does not present such obstacles when it is a question of sending off a team to a match, or giving the cadets an outing, or providing a form with a "spread," or mounting a play. In any case a great deal may be done with practically no expense. We have to get into the heads of boys (and sometimes of their elders) that it is personal service that is chiefly wanted.

Difficulties and How to Overcome Them

This brings us to the difficulties which, as a rule, stand in the way of any systematic attempt to interest schoolboys in social and civic work. These difficulties, of course, vary with circumstances: those of a day-school are not those of a boarding-school; those of a school in a town will differ from those of a school in the country. But speaking generally and with special reference to boarding-schools in the country, we find certain obstacles almost normally present.

In the first place there is the very real but somewhat impalpable obstacle of schoolboy public opinion. Where a tradition of social service has been created in a school, it may be maintained without any very great difficulty. But where it is absent, its creation involves an almost heart-breaking amount of contradiction. Here, again, schools will vary. But is it not true to say that in many schools where the sons of the well-to-do are receiving a liberal education, the traditions, the interest, the atmosphere, the tone, are not entirely favourable to efforts of the sort which we describe? The boys are pulled away in other directions by a complex and baffling array of forces.

We are reminded of the eloquent passage in Plato's Republic where Socrates describes the many causes which keep young men from becoming students of philosophy. Public opinion is against them, he says in effect. They may be healthy plants, but the soil is uncongenial. The world and its fashions infect them. There may be in some cases a special divine assistance which keeps them true to their better selves. But for the most part they are lured away by the temptation to acquiesce in the world's ways and accept its standards. And if one were to come to them (continues Socrates) and quietly to tell them that they are really very silly and that good sense is a thing that must be worked for, they would not listen, or if they were to listen and to aim at better things, there would be an outcry from the rest.

Have we not here a picture of the difficulties which beset him who would turn the thoughts of the school politeia into the channels of social service? He has to deal with the steady pressure of what at its best is narrowness of horizon and at its worst is snobbishness. It shows itself especially in a sort of tacit assumption among the boys that servants, workmen, and the like, represent an inferior order of beings; and in a complete inability to sympathize with their difficulties and aspirations.

Yves le Querdec, in his remarkable novel, *Le Fils de l'Esprit*, gives a picture of this impenetrable school prejudice of which we speak. He describes a young French boy of noble family, who finds himself in a school where his companions regard the working classes as a mere means to their own enjoyment. These gilded youths have not the least inkling of the responsibilities of wealth. The workers and tenants on their estates are strange alien creatures, put in their place by Providence, and set to toil that their masters may enjoy the world. They are simply canaille, and any attempt on their part—not necessarily to rise above their position in life, but to adorn it with some of the pleasantnesses of social converse or literature or art—is regarded as a symptom of a dangerous insubordination.

Norbert, the hero of the story, has had a glimpse of better things. He despairs of influencing his companions, but he cannot reconcile himself to the views of life which he finds current amongst them. He himself takes the Gospel and its teaching as to the responsibilities of wealth and the law of charity quite simply and seriously. He opens his heart to an old priest, who tells him that modern society is riddled with pagan views, which, unhappily, find admission even into Catholic schools. Let him abhor such views, and follow the light which God has given him. He does so, and devotes himself to the service of the poor, despite the sarcasm of his aristocratic relatives.

This unpleasant picture of French school life is, we think, somewhat overdrawn. But there is undoubtedly much truth in it, and some of the features herein described are to be met with on this side of the Channel.

Moreover, even when the school atmosphere is free from this snobbish exclusiveness, there will often be present, from the nature of things, a certain narrowness of horizon. As Dr. Pooch writes, in the paper already referred to:

"A boy's college life tends to isolate his sympathies from the life outside the college walls, because he has but little contact with such life. The world in which he lives is after all but a very tiny Cosmos. Some of the springs of his mind and of his heart may easily stagnate."

True, there are certain hard realities of modern life with which we cannot expect boys to have an intimate acquaintance. It is not well to smirch their young minds with pictures of all the horrors of slum life. Yet at the same time something might be done to prevent their becoming self-centred or sublimely unconscious of evils which they might, in later life, help to remedy.

After all, most boys have commonly a deep fund of generosity. Could we but touch the right springs, it should not be difficult to enlist their sympathy in the sufferings of the poor, and arouse their indignation at the enormous social injustice about them. Indeed, it is among young men that we shall find our best material. There is much truth in the saying of Alfred de Vigny that a great life is but a thought of youth carried out in mature years. If a man has acquiesced in the world's injustice until he is thirty, he will scarcely conceive a generous ardour for reform in later years. He will become callous to the sight of daily suffering. The seeds, at least, of a generous life must be sown in boyhood.

Even snobbishness among boys is apt to be superficial. It is a very different thing from the ingrained and assimilated snobbishness of middle life. It can be cured by a judicious personal appeal. It can be completely burned out by the fires of enthusiasm. Even lower motives may avail to oust it. Tell a boy that his disdain of "the lower orders" is bad form, and that quite the best people are really kind to their servants. Let him know that University men and prominent statesmen are often very keen about social reform. An appeal of this sort may possibly prove effectual where purely spiritual motives are, at first, of less avail. The boy will put his hand to the work, and in the course of it will come to see and to value its spiritual implications.

Anything like honest hard work under good direction will soon remove any tendency to smug self-satisfaction. He will realize that he is a learner rather than a condescending teacher.

But it is probably more frequently the case that a boy's aloofness comes not from snobbishness at all, but from shyness. This shyness is a very serious obstacle, and must be faced by authorities with much tact. General exhortations to the whole school may be of little use. But much may be done if masters can get hold of a few influential boys and lure them on to take the first step. The example will be readily followed.

But here we encounter another difficulty. Our schoolmasters, clerical and lay, are themselves, it may be, somewhat cut off from opportunities of realizing the urgent need of social service, and the ways in which it may be rendered. The pressure of examinations and the increasing demands upon a teacher's time, make it somewhat difficult for him to develop an interest in social questions. This is undoubtedly true. We can only urge upon those who are preparing themselves for the work of teaching boys, whether in seminaries, training colleges, or universities, that they should bear in

mind the importance of gaining some acquaintance with social subjects before entering on their work of teaching. It is easier for a busy man to keep up an interest than to create it. As is well known, admirable work of this kind is already being done at Oscott and elsewhere.

It may be said that this same pressure of work makes it difficult even for the well-informed and enterprising teacher to introduce social topics into school work. But this difficulty is not really as formidable as it sounds. Even without giving formal instruction in these matters during class time, it is possible to bring them to bear on the existing curriculum in a way which will not only arrest the attention and arouse the interest, but will, so far from prejudicing school studies, throw considerable light upon them. Even from the point of view of examinations, there is much to be gained by connecting, for instance, the facts of ancient history with modern instances. So in other fields. To quote again from Dr. Poock:

"Much useful social teaching can be imparted to all our lads in connection with ordinary school subjects. History and geography, in particular, lend themselves to such treatment. For example, the knowledge of the principles of modern Socialism helps considerably in explaining the force of the teaching of John Ball, as expressed by his rhyme, 'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?' and also John Wyclif's peculiar views of communism in property. Again, the difference between the working out of the French Revolution and the upheaval now going on in Russia can largely be traced to geographical causes. The same causes are considerably controlling the great social changes actually operating in Japan. Many school subjects thus treated from an economic and social point of view derive new vigour and interest, and a much truer and more fruitful presentation of them is the result."

And equally valuable work may be done by influencing individuals out of school hours, as we have indicated.

A no less serious obstacle is, we fear, often presented by injudicious parents. It is of little avail for masters and others who have control over boys during term time to instil into those under their charge an instinct for social service, if the results thus obtained are to be stultified during holiday time. True, the holidays are intended to afford rest and relaxation after the term's work. But surely both these may be secured without plunging the boys into an atmosphere of mere excitement and pleasure-hunting. We have heard experienced schoolmasters complain sadly of the havoc wrought in a boy's character through such foolish indulgence on the part of parents. Steadiness and thoughtful consideration for others has given place to a fluid unrest, a craving for selfish excitement, and even a weakening of religious principle. Holidays would be no less enjoyable if they were less out of harmony with the great aims for which Catholic schools exist.

The present writer remembers spending a particularly enjoyable afternoon at a cricket match. There were thirteen a-side, and the pitch left much to be desired. But the interest never flagged. Each team consisted of nine or ten particularly ragged Liverpool urchins—paper-boys, match-sellers and the like—and three or four members past and present of a non-Catholic school which has figured well of recent years in the honours lists of both Oxford and Cambridge. Some of the latter were old boys, taking their holidays from the Stock Exchange, or whatever their business might be. Others were of the present generation and had just come away from their school speech-day. It is all very simple and very enjoyable. The whole thing is run by the Old Boys' Association, aided by the contributions and personal help of the school—a special chapel collection on the last Sunday of term, reports from time to time, and so forth. A barn for sleeping, a large room for meals, and fields for playing

have been lent for the week by a generous benefactor who enters thoroughly into the spirit of the enterprise. The days are filled by healthy out-door sport, and much appreciated (and needed) meals. Prayer in common is not forgotten. The helpers sleep in the barn and take their meals with the boys. Both helpers and boys gain considerably by the experience.

The latter, besides the increase in health and the welcome change from street life, learn much of discipline, orderliness, sportsmanship, mutual consideration. The effect of the moral training makes itself felt even in so short a time.

The gain to the helpers need not be insisted upon. Their task, if it brings its own reward, is all the same not without its demands on patience and tact. One could not help being struck by the entire absence of bullying or nagging, the wise discretion in handling different types of boy, the kind but firm maintenance of order. All these things might be illustrated by a hundred incidents noticed in the course of a single afternoon—slight in themselves, but indicative of a spirit of real sympathy for the poor urchins.

We Catholics surely possess the material for similar work; and no less surely do we possess the motives. Above all, we have in our hands the most powerful means of setting that work on a firm basis, and supplying a boy's deepest needs in a manner unknown to the most strenuous and devoted workers outside the fold. In the sacraments we have the key to many social problems. All that we need is a little more appreciation of their value, and some slight effort to organize methods of bringing their influence to bear on the poor whom Christ loves.

Cooperation Between Catholic Schools

In conclusion, we may raise the question to what extent Catholic schools might co-operate with one another in social study and work.

In the first place it would be well to discover what exactly is being done in this matter at the various Catholic schools. Even were a general organization, such as a Catholic Boys' Guild, found to be impracticable, it would still be helpful and stimulating to the boys at one school to know what was being done elsewhere.

To this end it is much to be desired that the various Catholic schools should become affiliated to the Catholic Social Guild. Such affiliation could not possibly interfere with their school work, since it imposes no obligations save the payment of a small annual subscription. But it would have the effect of keeping each school in touch with the social efforts which are being made in other schools, and would facilitate any experiments which a school might desire to make in the way of formal or informal instruction. The Guild would provide bibliographies and literature, lectures and, if required, lecturers. It would also form a centre of reference for those who are leaving school and who wish to turn to practical account the lessons they have learnt in the schoolroom or debating club.

Should the Catholic Social Guild succeed in combining the Catholic schools it might be possible, by means of a questionnaire and by the slow growth of experience, to draw up a list of practical suggestions for the promotion of social study and work among Catholic boys. The same might of course be done for the girls' schools. The possibilities of inter-school organization would then become apparent.

It is not long since a Report was drawn up by a committee appointed by the Anglican Bishop of Southwark to consider "the opportunities that are or may be given to instil into boys the duty of active Christian service." After admitting that there exists "a strong desire on the part of the masters to take every opportunity of impressing their boys with the duty of Christian service," and that many and varied opportunities are made for so doing, especially in the way of school missions and occasional lectures on charitable institutions, the Report continues:

"We feel that, while every effort is made, and rightly made, to rouse in the boys the feelings of love and charity to their neighbours, little or nothing is being done by study or instruction to guide and direct their feelings into channels in which they will be later of service to their fellow-men and to the State.

"Recent years have seen much ill-informed and misdirected charitable effort, and we have watched with grave concern not only the sad waste of the highest form of human endeavour, but the positive injury to the individual and the community attendant in its train.

"We find in the treatment of the great industrial problems of the day the same absence of that understanding without which we do not believe that their ultimate solution is possible. We seem to see a tendency largely to regard industrial distress as something sad indeed, but the inevitable outcome of economic law, or even of God's law, so that man abdicates his reason and his Christianity, and instead of seeking the remedy accepts the evil.

"...In regarding these evils we feel that we cannot acquit the schools of a share in responsibility. They appear to us to have overlooked the complexity of life in a modern civilized community, and the bearing of Christianity on the relationships to which that complexity gives rise. They have been content to inculcate a general charity towards neighbours, and a sound moral tone in the regulation of the lives of the boys, but the question, 'Who is my neighbour?' has not received the attention it deserves."

These are weighty words, and should have a special interest for Catholics, who have the advantage of sound social principles upon which to build.

The Committee offers various suggestions as to organization which deserve attention, but cannot be considered here.

So far as Catholic schools are concerned, therefore, what is wanted first is a real facing of the problem, and a concerted investigation into the possibilities of social study and social work in schools. To this end we have suggested that the Catholic Social Guild would form an obvious centre of reference. It might then be possible to go farther, and establish some sort of Guild which would bring the boys of the various schools into touch with each other, and with those who have left school and are taking an active part in social work. Such a movement, if seen to be practicable, would no doubt secure the co-operation of expert workers like Mr. Norman Potter and of the Catholic Settlements Association. In this way something would be done to meet the deplorable shortage of workers which is felt by Catholic clubs such as that organized by Mr. Potter at Bermondsey, or by the Catholic Settlements Association at Hoxton.

In any case, co-operation with the Catholic Social Guild might have the effect of securing a certain continuity between the social lessons learned by the boys at school and the life into which those boys are subsequently launched. Members of the Guild who are engaged in active social work would be able to initiate boys leaving our schools into such work as might be practicable. The boys

leaving a particular school would, if possible, be put into communication with old boys of the same school who were members of the Guild. The school authorities would naturally welcome such an arrangement as tending to promote the school spirit, and would take care to supply information as to the boys who were leaving, their circumstances and capacities.

The various school magazines, too, might well co-operate to the same end. A column in each issue recording the social activities of old boys could not fail to stimulate the school spirit. Visits to the school and lectures from old boys who are engaged in social work would produce a like effect.

Use might also be made of the Christmas holidays. The London boys at one of our Catholic schools are accustomed each Christmas to get up an entertainment for Mr. Norman Potter's boys at St. Hugh's. They do so quite on their own initiative, and both entertainers and entertained thoroughly enjoy themselves. The impression made upon the former is quite remarkable: no doubt many of them when they leave school will make opportunities of giving their personal service to the various Catholic social works which are at present so seriously hampered by the lack of such co-operation.

Conclusion

We may conclude by some words from the Report above quoted:

"We realize that the training we advocate is life-long, and that only the foundations can be laid in boyhood; and we should like to see the Universities and training colleges and all the general educational organizations for those who are older, especially those for teachers, giving serious consideration to the subject."
