

**A DIALOGUE ON
MORAL
EDUCATION**

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A MID-TERM holiday is a chance that a schoolmaster dare not despise. On one of them I had arranged to take a long country walk, accompanied by a doctor friend, both of us glad to be able for the nonce to shake off the cares of work and to reinvigorate ourselves, by drinking the fresh country breezes round us, for renewal of work on the morrow. We proposed to get rid of the smoke of our busy town by training it out to such a distance as would land us in the open country without fear of interruption, and were making preparations for the start when my neighbour, Reynolds, a clergyman, happened to drop in to borrow a book. Reynolds and I were very good friends, though our views were in many points most divergent; but divergence of views I have often found to be a strong bond of union among thinking men who are keen, as we both were, on argumentation, and alive to the fact that the last has scarcely been said on any subject of human speculation. Hearing that we purposed to escape "the smoke and stir of that dim spot which men call" Workton, but we in more familiar terms—though we breathe it not to others, the natives of the town—Smoke-i'-th'-Hole-cum-Filthton, Reynolds asked if he might join us, to which we gladly said yes. As he was well up in the district for many miles round, and was besides an excellent topographer and archæologist, I in particular was delighted; for I have a strong predilection for losing my way on the very least provocation—my friends are rude enough to say on none at all—and as Hindley had not been very long in the town, and during that time had been too busy with arranging his new practice to be able to make explorations, or even to study the maps of the district through which we proposed to tramp, the duties of organizer fell upon me, or rather

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would so have fallen had it not been for the opportune intervention of Reynolds, on to whose shoulders I gladly threw the, to me, unwelcome burden.

"I know you like it, so I will make no apologies; and if Hindley says, as he probably will, that it is most immoral and cowardly to back out of my undertaking in so brazenfaced a way, well, in the first place I do not care, as my education, I fear, was not sufficiently exalted to make me adopt the high tone in which he delights; in the second place, should he persist in his sermonizing and reproaches, you just leave, at the most ticklish point, the conduct of the walk to me, and I can assure you that, with the noblest intentions and the clearest map before me, I will lead him astray so far that he will not succeed in reaching home to-night, and then all those new patients to whom his court is so assiduous will have nothing more to do with him, because he has failed to pay the old ladies his due regulation visit at the expected time. So be careful, Hindley; no lecturing as you value your practice."

Hindley laughed and said:

"All right, I know you of old, that you are quite incorrigible; and whatever my sentiments may be about your natural laziness, I will suppress them till a convenient season, when I promise you they shall be delivered with all the expansive vigour which is generated by long bottling and good fermentation."

Reynolds for his part made no objection—very far from it; so off we started, and were soon landed in the train, wishing it would go a little faster and not waste so much of the valuable day. We had before us a long programme—to strike across country, by field as much as possible, over a mountain called High Fell, to descend the other side of it, mount a second height, Black Ridge, then stop at a little village for tea, and in the cooler part of the evening to trace the windings of the beautiful and wooded valley-road which led to the town of Windicombe, whence train was to see us home. Reynolds and I both knew the route, indeed Reynolds first introduced me to it; but to Hindley, who was a stranger from the level flats of the eastern counties, it seemed a true revelation, and though he was not given to violent expression of his emotions, I could tell by his look, and the occasional remarks he

dropped, that he was enjoying it thoroughly. Perhaps I was wrong to say that he was not given to violent expression of his emotions; he certainly was given to violent expression of something very nearly akin to his emotions when his ideals were in any way touched. To tell the truth, I was rather hoping that I might be able to trot him out for the benefit of Reynolds, who had not as yet come to know him very well, but I was going to wait my chance; for I knew from old experience that when the conversation turned upon any social topic, as it invariably did with both of my companions, I should be sure to tread on Hindley's corns, who, though reluctant to confess it, was at heart a real Socialist. The chance, however, came much sooner than I expected; for, after we had gone some three or four miles, we came within sight of a well-known Roman Catholic College, about which I made use of a rather strong expression. Hindley at once pulled me up.

"You have no right to say that; I do not believe that any one—still less any body of men—is an utter hypocrite."

"No, I plead guilty; but I cannot get rid of the feeling that the directors of the system are aware of its glaring faults—at least, if they aren't they ought to be—and make no attempt to alter them, because they find the duping system better."

"There you are; even in your apology you beg the whole question. Why should they be aware of the glaring faults, as you please to call them?"

"How can any man of sense not be?"

"My good Trelawney, what is a man of sense? One who agrees with you, I suppose. But may I ask—you will forgive the question—if you are aware of your own glaring faults, whether personal, or in your system of education?"

"Well, I have a suspicion of some perhaps, but——"

"But you are not sure? Well, why don't you ask some particular friend to tell you quite candidly what they are, and amend them?"

"A friend I could not get to do it."

"Well, an enemy then."

"I'm afraid I haven't the moral courage."

"Precisely; nor probably have the Jesuits. The fact is you are the slave, partly of inherited, and, if I may coin a word, ineducated prejudices; partly perhaps—who knows?—of professional jealousy. Two of a trade never agree, and you probably are conscious only too much of the greatness of the work the Jesuits have done, and of the marked superiority of their closely-reasoned system over the system which is traditional in most of our schools, and of which you are now a professional exponent, to be able to judge in the question quite dispassionately."

"I think you are rather hard on Trelawney," said Reynolds. "I know he is alive, at all events, to some defects in our every-day round of working education, and tries his best to remedy them; but Rome, you know, was not built in a day, and education will hardly be perfected just yet."

"Oh," ejaculated Hindley, "I have known Trelawney long enough to be quite assured that he would not consciously reject anything that he recognised as better. I only say he is not in a position fairly to judge what is better."

"Who is then? Would you dethrone the specialist?"

"Most assuredly. The proper person to judge is an outsider, before whom the specialists should plead."

"Well, there," I intervened, "I think I agree with you, so long as it is not education that is in question."

At this my two friends burst into a hearty laugh, in which I joined, adding:

"I knew you would laugh; but, after all, I am afraid that is the position which, if pressed, I should finally have to confess that I believed in my heart of hearts to be the only tenable one, at least on education. And yet I have known officers in the merchant service object most strongly to the naval courts, on the ground that experts ought to be the judges, even while admitting that non-professional judges, helped only by special assessors and pleaders, constituted a system which worked well in every case save where their own business was concerned. I was greatly amused at the time, and now here I am doing exactly the same thing!"

"Never mind, old fellow, we doctors are more conservative than any one else when our own interests are attacked;

and as for taking lay opinion on a point of medical procedure or jurisprudence, why, I think if it were to be seriously suggested, the whole faculty would die in a fit."

"Dear me! what a terrible reflection on poor human nature!"—this from Reynolds. "Is there no one who has boldness and honesty enough to entirely cast away his prejudices?"

"I am afraid it is very difficult to find any one, and I certainly am not that being. Trelawney knows how often he has tried to convince me that I have a fatal twist in judging of social matters, and how little he has succeeded in altering my views, though I admit there is probably something to be said for his statements."

"Probably!—thank you," I replied. "It is the first time you have ever gone even so far as that."

"Oh, don't be alarmed; I made the admission for Reynolds's benefit, not yours. Please look upon yourself as an eavesdropper. So far as you are concerned, the remark is unsaid."

"Well now, what is the good of arguing with a fellow like this?" I said, turning to Reynolds. "You had better discuss with him, I'm sure I can't."

"I have been wanting," Reynolds said, "to find out what points in the Jesuit system Dr. Hindley considers so worthy of admiration. Of course," he added, addressing Hindley directly, "you will remember I am a clergyman of the Church of England."

"And therefore a biassed and incompetent judge, though doubtless you think yourself specially qualified to express an opinion. Well, my support of the Jesuits depends practically on two things: first, they have reasoned out a system of education and stick to it; secondly, to them the prime point is morality."

At this remark both Reynolds and I opened fire, but I managed to get the lead, and said that I admitted they had much to teach us in the matter of organization; but as for their moral training, I did not believe in it. However, as I saw that Reynolds was boiling over, I left off abruptly, and so gave free opening to the torrent that straightway came.

"Moral education, indeed! A system of spying and mistrust! Never a moment of freedom for the boy, never