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Hickory, Jan. 29, 1887. - No 8.

THE DUTY OF PARENTS.

The Extreme of Discipline and Leniency—Children as Often Ruined by Indulgence as by Tyranny—The Proper Treatment of the Young.

"He fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man and heavy." I Samuel iv: 18.

This is the end of a long story of parental neglect. Judge Eli was a good man, but he let his two boys—Hophni and Phinehas, do as they pleased, and through over-indulgence they went to ruin. The blind old judge, 98 years of age, is seated at the gate waiting for the news of an important battle in which his two sons were at the front. An express is coming with tidings from the battle. This blind nonagenarian puts his hand behind his ear and listens and cries: "What meaneth the noise of this tumult? An excited messenger, all out of breath with the speed, said to him: "Our army is defeated. The sacred chest, called the ark, is captured, and your sons are slain on the field." No wonder the father fainted and expired. The domestic tragedy in which these two sons were the tragedians had finished its fifth and last act. "He fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man and heavy."

Eli had made an awful mistake in regard to his children. The Bible distinctly says: "His sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." Oh, the ten thousand mistakes in rearing children, mistakes which we all make. Will it not be useful to consider them?

This country is going to be conquered by a great army, compared with which that of Baldwin the First, and Xerxes, and Alexander, and Grant, and Lee, all put together, were in numbers insignificant. They will capture all our pulpits, store-houses, factories and halls of legislation, all our shipping, all our wealth and all our honors. They will take possession of all authority, from the United States presidency down to the humblest constabulary—of every thing between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They are at the march now, and they halt neither day nor night. They will soon be here and all the present active population of this country must surrender and give way. I refer to the great army of children. Whether they shall take possession of everything for good or for bad depends upon the style of preparation through which they pass on their way from cradle to throne. Cicero acknowledges he kept in his desk a collection of prefaces for looks, which prefaces he could at any time attach to anything he wanted to publish for himself or other; and parents and teachers have all prepared the preface of every young life under their charge, and not only the preface, but the appendix, whether the volume be a poem or a farce. Families, and schools, and legislatures are in our day busily engaged in discussing what is the best mode of educating children. Before this question almost every other dwindles into insignificance, while dependent upon its proper solution is the welfare of governments and ages eternal. Macaulay tells of the war which Frederick the Second made against Queen Maria Theresa. And one day she appeared before the august diet, wearing mourning for the father, and held up in her arms before them her child, the archduke. This she wrought upon the officers and deputies of the people that with half drawn swords they broke forth in the war cry, "Let us die for our queen, Maria Theresa!" So, this morning, realizing that the boy of today is to be the ruler of the future, the popular sovereign, I hold him before the American people to arouse their enthusiasm in his behalf and to evoke their oath for his defense, his education and his sublime destiny.

If a parent, you will remember when you were aroused to these great responsibilities, and when you found that you had not done all required after you had admired the tiny hands, and the glossy hair, and the bright eyes that lay in the cradle, you suddenly remembered that that hand would yet be raised to bless the world with its benediction, or to smite it with a curse. In Ariosto's great poem there is a character called Ruggiero, who has a shield of insufferable splendor, but it is kept veiled save on certain occasions, and

when uncovered it startled and overwhelmed its beholder, who before had no suspicion of its brightness. My hope today is to uncover the destiny of your child or student, about which you may have no special appreciation, and flash upon you the splendors of its immortal nature. Behold the shield and the sword of its coming conflict!

I propose in this discourse to set forth what I consider to be some of the errors prevalent in the training of children.

First: I remark that many err in too great severity or too great leniency of family government. Between parental tyranny and ruinous laxity of discipline there is medium. Sometimes the father errs on one side, and the mother on the other side. Good family government is all important. Anarchy and misrule in the domestic circle is the forerunner of anarchy and misrule in the state. What a repulsive spectacle is a home without order or discipline, disobedience and impudence, and anger and falsehood lifting their horrid front in the place which should be consecrated to all that is holy and peaceful and beautiful. In the attempt to avoid all this, and bring the children under proper laws and regulations, parents have sometimes carried themselves with great rigor. John Howard, who was merciful to the prisons and lenient to the lawless, was merciless in the treatment of his children. John Milton knew everything but how to train his family. Severe and unreasonable was he in his carriage toward them. He made them read to him in four or five languages, but would not allow them to learn any of them, for he said that one tongue was enough for a woman. Their reading was mechanical drudgery, when if they had understood the languages they read, the employment of reading might have been a luxury. No wonder his children despised him, and stealthily sold his books, and hoped for his death. In all ages there has been need of a society for the prevention of cruelty to children. When Barbara was put to death by her father because she had countermanded his order, and had three windows put in a room instead of two, this cruel parent was a type of many who have acted the Nero and the Robespierre in the home circle. The heart sickens at what you sometimes see, even in families that pretend to be Christian—perpetual scolding, and hair pulling, and ear-boxing, and humping, and stamping, and fault finding, and teasing, until the children are vexed beyond bounds and growl in the sleeve, and pout, and rebel, and vow within themselves that in after days they will retaliate for the cruelties practiced. Many a home has become as full of dispute as was the home of John O'Groat, who built his house at the most northerly point in Great Britain. An I tradition says that the house had eight windows, and eight doors, and a table of eight sides, because he had eight children and the only way to keep them out of bitter quarrel was to have a separate appointment for each one of them.

That child's nature is too delicate to be worked upon by sledge hammer, and gouge, and pile driver. Such fierce lashing, instead of breaking the high mettles to bit and trace, will make it dash off the more uncontrollable. Many seem to think that children are wax—not fit for use till they have been hatched and swindled. Some one talking to a child said: "I wonder what makes that tree out there so crooked." The child replied: "I suppose it was trod upon while it was young." In some families "all the discipline is concentrated upon one child's head. If anything is done wrong, the supposition is that George did it. He broke the latch. He left open the gate. He backed the banisters. He whittled sticks on the carpets. And George shall be the scapegoat for all domestic misunderstandings and suspicions. If things get wrong in the culinary department, in comes the mother and says, angrily: "Where is George?" If business matters are perplexing at the store, in comes the father at night and says, angrily: "Where is George?" In many a household there is such a one singled out for suspicion and castigation. All the sweet flowers of his soul blasted under this perpetual northeast storm, he curses Ruggiero, who has a shield of insufferable splendor, but it is kept veiled save on certain occasions, and

in an elegant mansion, amid such domestic gorgons. A mother was passing along the street one day, and came up to her little child, who did not see her approach, and her child was saying to her playmate: "You good for nothing little scamp, you come right into the house this minute or I will beat you till the skin comes off." The mother broke in, saying: "Why, Lizzie, I am surprised to hear you talk like that to any one!" "Oh," said the child, "I was only playing, and he is my little boy, and I am scolding him, as you did me this morning." Children are apt to be echoes of their parents.

Safer in a Bethlehem manger among cattle and camels with gentle Mary to watch the little innocent than the most extravagant nursery, over which God's star of peace never stood. The trapper extinguishes the flames on the prairie by fighting fire with fire, but you cannot, with the fire of your own disposition, put out the fire of a child's disposition.

Yet we may rush to the other extreme and rule children by too great leniency. The surgeon is not unkind because, notwithstanding the resistance of his patient, he goes straight on with firm hand and unflinching heart to take off the gangrene. Nor is the parent less affectionate and faithful because, notwithstanding all violent remonstrances on the part of the child, he with the firmest discipline advances to the cutting off of its evil inclinations. The Bible says: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Childish rage unchecked will, after a while, become a hurricane. Childish petulance will grow up into misanthropy. Childish rebellion will develop into the lawlessness of riot and sedition. If you would ruin the child, dance to his every caprice and stuff him with confectionery. Before you are aware of it that boy of 6 years will go down the street, a cigar in his mouth and ready on any corner with his comrades to compare pugilistic attainments. The parent who allows the child to grow up without ever having learned the great duty of obedience and submission has prepared a cup of burning gall for his own lips and, appalling destruction for his descendant. Remember Eli and his two sons Hophni and Phinehas.

A second error prevalent in the training of children is a laying out of a theory and following it without arranging it to varieties of disposition. In every family you will find striking differences of temperament. This child is too timid, and that too bold, and this too miserly, and that too wasteful; this too inactive, and that too boisterous. Now, the farmer who should plant corn and wheat and turnips in just the same way, then put them through one hopper and grind them in the same mill, would not be so much of a fool as the parents who should attempt to discipline and educate all their children in the same manner. It needs a skillful hand to adjust these checks and balances. The rigidity of government which is necessary to hold in this impetuous nature would utterly crush that flexible disposition while the gentle reproof that would suffice for the latter would, when used on the former, be like attempting to hold a champing Bucephalus with reins of gossamer. God gives us in the disposition of each child a hint as to how we ought to train him, and, as God in the mental structure of our children indicates what mode of training is the best, he also indicates in the disposition their future occupation. Do not write down that child as dull because it may not now be as brilliant as your other children or as those of your neighbor. Some of the mightiest men and women of the century had a stupid childhood. Thomas Aquinas was called at school "the dumb ox," but afterward demonstrated his sanctified genius and was called "the angel of the schools" and "the eagle of Brittany." Kindness and patience with a child will conquer almost anything, and they are virtues so Christianlike that they are inspiring to look at. John Wesley's kiss of a child on the pulpit stairs turned Matthias Joyce from a profligate into a flaming evangelist.

The third error prevalent in the training of children is the one-sided development of either the physical, intellectual or moral nature at the expense of the other. Those, for instance, greatly mistake who, while they are faithful in the intellectual

and moral culture of children, forget the physical. The bright eyes half quenched by right study, the cramped chest that comes from too much bending over school desks, the weak side resulting from sedentaries of habit, pale cheeks and the gaunt bodies of multitudes of children attest that physical development does not always go along with intellectual and moral. How do you suppose all those treasures of knowledge the child gets will look in shattered casket? And how much will you give for the wealthiest cargo when it is put into a leaky ship? How can that bright, sharp blade of a child's attainments be wielded without any handle? What are brains worth without shoulders to carry them? What is a child with magnificent mind but an exhausted body? Better that a young man of 21 go forth into the world without knowing A from Z, if he have health of body and energy to push his way through the world, than at 21 to enter upon active life, his head stuffed with Socrates, and Herodotus, and Bacon, and La Place, but no physical force to sustain him in the shock of earthly conflicts. From this infinite blunder of parents how many have come out in life with a genius that could have piled Ossa upon Pelion, and mounted upon them to scale the heavens, and have laid down panting with physical exhaustion before a mole hill. They who might have thrilled senates and marshaled armies and startled the world with the shock of their scientific batteries, have passed their lives in picking up prescriptions for indigestion. They owned all the thunderbolts of Jupiter, but could not get out of their rocking chair to use them. George Washington in early life was a poor speller, and spelled hat-h-a-double-t, and a ream of paper he spelled "rheum," but he knew enough to spell out the independence of this country from foreign oppression. The knowledge of the schools is important, but there are other things quite as important.

Just as great is the wrong done when the mind is cultivated and the heart neglected. The youth of this day are seldom denied any scholarly attainments. Our schools and seminaries are ever growing in efficiency, and the students are conducted through all the realms of philosophy, and art, and language, and mathematics. The instruction is so good that it gives way before the onslaught of adroit instructors. But there is a development of infinite importance which mathematics and the dead languages cannot effect. The more mental power the more capacity for evil unless coupled with religious restraint. You discover what terrible power for evil unsanctified genius possesses when you see Scaliger with his scathing denunciations assailing the best men of his time, and Blount and Spinoza and Bolingbroke leading their hosts of followers into the all-consuming fires of skepticism and infidelity. Whether knowledge is a mighty good or an unmitigated evil depends entirely upon which course it takes. The river rolling on between round banks makes all the valley laugh with golden wheat and rank grass, and catching hold the wheel of mill and factory, whirls it with great industries. But, breaking away from restraints and dashing over banks in red wrath it washes away harvests from their moorings and makes the valleys shrink with the catastrophes. Fire in the furnace heats the house or drives the steamer, but uncontrolled, warehouses go down in awful crash before it, and in a few hours half a city will lie in black ruin, walls and towers and churches and monuments. You must accompany the education of the heart, or you are rousing up within your child an energy which will be blasting and terrific. Better a wicked dunce than a wicked philosopher.

The fourth error often committed in the training of children is the suppression of childish sportfulness. The most triumphant death of any child that I ever knew was that of Scoville Haynes McCollum. A few days before that, he was at my house in Syracuse, and he ran like a deer and his halloo made the woods echo. You could hear him coming a block off, so full was he of romp and laughter and whistle. Don't put religion on your child as a straight jacket. Parents after having for a good many years been jostled about in the rough world, and to lose their vivacity, and a

how their children can act so thoughtlessly of the earnest world all about them. That is a cruel parent who quenches any of the light in a child's soul. Instead of arresting its sportfulness, go forth and help him trundle the hoop, and fly the kite, and build the snow castle. Those shoulders are too little to carry a burden, that brow is too young to be wrinkled, those feet are too sprightly to go along at a funeral pace. God bless their young hearts! Now is the time for them to be sportful. Let them romp and sing and laugh, and go with a rush and a hurrah. In this way they gather up a surplus of energy for future life. For the child that walks around with a scowl, dragging his feet as though they were weights and sitting down by the hour in moping and grumbling, I prophesy a life of utter inaction and discontent. Sooner hush the robins in the air till they are silent as a bat, and lecture the frisking lambs on the hillside until they walk like old sheep, than put exhilarant childhood in the stocks.

The fifth error in the training of childhood is the postponement of its moral culture until too late. Multitudes of children because of their precocity have been urged into depths of study where they ought not to go, and their intellects have been overburdened and overstrained and battered to pieces against Latin grammars and algebras, and coming forth into practical life they will hardly rise to mediocrity, and there is now a stuffing and cramming system of education in the schools of our country that is deathful to the teachers who have to enforce it, and destructive to the children who must submit to the process. You find children at 9 and 10 years of age with school lessons only appropriate for children of 15. If children are kept in school and studying from 9 to 3 o'clock, no home study except music ought to be required of them. Six hours of study is enough for any child. The rest of the day ought to be devoted to recreation and pure fun. But you cannot begin too early the moral culture of a child, or on too complete a scale. You can look back upon your own life and remember what mighty impressions were made upon you at 5 or 6 years of age. Oh, that child does not sit so silent during your conversation to be deceived by it. You say he is not instructed. Although you do not know his phraseology is beyond his grasp, he is gathering up from your talk influences which will affect his immortal destiny. From the question he asks you long afterward you find he understood all about what you were saying. You think the child does not appreciate that beautiful cloud, but its most delicate lines are reflected into the very depths of the youthful nature, and a score of years from now you will see the shadow of that cloud in the tastes and refinements developed. The song with which you sang that child to sleep will echo through all its life, and ring back from the very aches of heaven. I think that often the first seven years of a child's life decides whether it shall be irascible, waspish, rude, false, hypocritical, or gentle, truthful, frank, obedient, honest and Christian. The present generations of men will pass off very much as they are now. Although the Gospel is offered them, the general rule is that drunkards die drunkards, thieves die thieves, libertines die libertines. Therefore to the youth we turn. Before they sow wild oats get them to sow wheat and barley. You fill the bushel measure with good corn, and there will be no room for husks. Glorious Alfred Cookman was converted at ten years of age. At Carlisle, Pa., during the progress of a religious meeting in the Methodist church, while many were kneeling at the foot of the altar, this boy knelt in a corner of the church all by himself and said: "Precious Savior, thou art saving others, O, wilt thou not save me?" A Presbyterian elder knelt beside him and led him into the light. Enthroned Alfred Cookman! Tell me from the skies, were you converted too early? But I cannot hear his answer. It is overpowered by the buzzes of tens of thousands who were brought to God through his ministry. Isaac Watts, the great Christian poet, was converted at nine years of age. Robert Hall, the great Baptist evangelist, was converted at twelve years of age. Jonathan Edwards the greatest theologian of the age, was converted at 20.

Oh for one generation of holy men and women. Shall it be the next? Fathers and mothers, you under God are to decide whether from your families shall go forth cowards, inebricates counterfeiters, blasphemers, and whether there shall be those bearing your image and carrying your name festering in the low haunts of vice, and foundering in dissipation, and making the midnight of their lives horrid with a long howl of ruin, or whether from your family altars shall come the Christians, the reformers, the teachers, the ministers of Christ, the comforters of the troubled, the healers of the sick; the enactors of good laws, the founders of charitable institutions, and a great many who shall in the humbler spheres of toil and usefulness serve God and the best interests of human race.

You cannot as parents shirk the responsibility. God has charged you with a mission, and all the throng of heaven are waiting to see whether you will do your duty. We must not forget that it is not so much what we teach our children as what we are in their presence. We wish them to do better than we are but the probability is that they will only be productions of our own character. German literature has much to say of the "specter of Brocken." Among those mountains travelers in certain conditions of the atmosphere see themselves copied on a gigantic scale in the clouds. At first the travelers do not realize that it is themselves on a larger scale. When they lift a hand or move the head this monster specter does the same, and with such enlargement of proportions that the scene is most exciting, and thousands have gone to that place just to behold the specter of Brocken. The probability is that some of our faults which we consider small and insignificant, if we do not put an end to them, will be copied on a larger scale in the lives of our children, and perhaps dilated and exaggerated into spectral proportions. You need not go so far off as the Brocken to see that process. The first thing in importance in the education of our children is to make ourselves, by the grace of God, fit examples to be copied. The day will come when you must confront that child, not in the church pew on a calm Sabbath, but amid the consternation of the rising dead, and the flying heavens, and a burning hell. On your side that son or daughter, bone of your own heart of your heart, the father's brow his brow, the mother's eye his eye, shall go forth to an eternal destiny. What will be your joy if at last you hear their feet in the same golden highway and hear their voices in the same rapturous song, illustrations, while the eternal ages last, of what a faithful parent could, under God, accomplish. I was reading of a mother who, dying, had all her children about her, and took each one of them by the hand and asked them to meet her in heaven, and with tears and sobs, such as those only know who have stood by the deathbed of a good old mother, they all promised. But there was a man of 19, who had been very wild and reckless, and hard, and proud, and when she took his hand she said: "Now, my boy, I want you to promise me before I die that you will become a Christian and meet me in heaven." The young man made no answer, for there was so much for him to give up if he made and kept such a promise. But the aged mother persisted in saying: "You won't deny me that before I go, will you? This parting must not be forever. Tell me now you will serve God and meet me in the land where there is no parting." Quaking with emotion he stood, making up his mind and haulting and hesitating, but at last his stubbornness yielded and he threw his arms around his mother's neck and said: "Yes, mother; I will, I will." And as he finished the last word of his promise her spirit ascended. I think a God the young man kept his promise. Yes, he kept it. May we give all mothers and fathers the same assurance of their children's salvation. For all who are trying to do their duty as parents I quote the following passage: "Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." If through good discipline any prayer and godly example are acting upon