

Mother's Influence Over Training Her Children

(Condensed From Hear's International-Cosmopolitan by George A. Dorsey.)

Recently, through my interest in the relation of childhood training to maturity, I have closely observed two children with their mothers. One is a girl of seven—a tyrant who rules one father, one mother, one grandfather, one grandmother, one aunt, and three servants. She really rules; her whim is law. The boy is the same age. He is even worse off than the girl, because the world at large will less rapidly put up with his whims and pettiness than hers.

There is no reason why the world should, but the world does. This boy is also a tyrant, and quite devoid of what we call manners. He has been so pampered, indulged, fondled, and spoiled that the natural manhood we expect to find in a boy of seven has had no chance to develop.

These two youngsters are typical of why thousands of young men and young women, and even elderly men and women, fail; they cannot stand on their feet against a gale because they never learned to stand on their feet in a breeze.

It is easy for a mother to become so emotionally wrought up over her child that she cannot see it with the

naked eye or give it the chance it needs. Neither mother of these two children realizes what she is doing for her child. I suspect they would both be insulted if told that they are spoiling their children because they are not willing to take a stand. Both mothers are no doubt annoyed and at times much distressed, but when it comes to a question of restraining these children it comes to "Mother's precious darling," and mother's precious darling knows how to get his or her way.

We must remember the plain fact that, in maturity, we do not "put away childish things." The mother who recognizes the significance of that fact can prepare her boy or girl for the hard knocks of life.

Biology, the mother is responsible for so bringing up her child that when adolescence comes that child can start a home of its own—and start it on its own economic, social, moral and physical resources. But the mother who would assume this responsibility wisely must realize that the child learns to walk alone only by walking alone! The difference between teaching by order, rote, formula, or advice, and teaching by child's doing it, is fundamental.

These two particular mothers are victims of the high cost of keeping up with the Joneses. They command servants' rooms and a garage, but no nursery; neither boy nor girl has any room, lot, or spot where he or she can manipulate things to the joy of fingers and the delight of eyes. Both children are hard pushed for natural outlets of surplus steam. If the boy were left alone in a shed with some soft pine, he might saw off a finger, but nine fingers would carry him farther on the road to a happy and useful life than the coddling he now gets.

Any mother can see how habit forms as a result of physical repetition, but often she fails to see that the child's emotional nature likewise gets set in its way by repetition. Any normal infant will cry when in pain or when hungry, but suppose the mother, every time she picks it up to look for a pin or nurse it, pets it, and makes a fuss over it. That infant has learned the value of crying, nor will it require much brain to learn to cry for the fondling there is in it. The ways a baby can learn in six months to get what it wants are nothing short of incredible. And the capacity of a year-old boy or girl to rule an entire household is hardly less astounding.

The two youngsters of my illustration are demanding attention all the time, usually by doing something mother does not like. It seems ridiculous, but it is literally true that many a child of six finds it easiest to get mother's attention by doing something which calls for

a "don't!" The boy especially is "doted" fifty times a day—and enjoys it hugely. The punishment should fit the crime and must follow immediately—it then becomes tied in. A little rap over the knuckles at the proper time will do more to correct deportment than all of father's ragings or mother's tears hours later.

When these youngsters enter a room every body present must know it. If slamming the door does not suffice, there is a cackle or a whistle or a stamp of feet.

So it is that middle-aged men and women demand attention at every little upset. There are thousands of such adult persons who literally never have learned to get along away from their mother's apron strings. Their mothers may be dead, but in every crisis they revert to childish ways. They must be rocked to sleep so somebody must hold their hands, rub their brows, or feed them the kind of "pap" they learned to depend on to get out of trouble. The tragedy comes, of course, when a husband or a wife says: "I'm tired of living with a baby; I'm off!" or when the head of the firm says: "This job needs a man; you're fired!"

It is easier for the average mother to give in to a child than to correct it, easier for her to become the child's slave than to thwart it or see it cry. She does not realize that she has taught it to cry, or that she has made herself the child's slave. She speaks scornfully of nagging mothers, but the difference between a nagging and coddling mother is the difference between two ways of spoiling a child.

Another kind of mother raises a timid child by using fear as a weapon of control, as a labor-and-time-saving device to keep the child out, or keep it off, or keep it still. She tells stories to illustrate what happens to bad children and who gets them when they "don't watch out." Harassed by household duties, afternoon tea, or her bridge lesson, she has little time to guide the child's activities. She finds fear a mother's friend.

The child grows up in an atmosphere of goblins, ghosts, bad men, and devils. And the mother thinks she has done her duty with a comforting caress and a "There, there; Mother won't let the bad man get her little precious!"

The sex education of the child is enormously important and is generally avoided as if it were the plague. This is not the place for details, but the mother who lies about or evades such matters, or leaves such education to servants or to the street, endangers the child's future. Frankness does not mean forcing matters on the child's attention; it does mean never letting the child's natural curiosity become morbid, shamefaced or prudish.

Must Serve 30 Days



Mrs. Florence E. S. Knapp former New York secretary of state, who has been sentenced to serve thirty days in jail for grand larceny. She was convicted on two counts in connection with alleged state census thefts.

BAR BOY FLIER IN MASSACHUSETTS

Boston, Mass., Sept. 9.—Joseph Garside, 14-year-old Milton boy aviator who was granted a federal air permit in Washington and who will fly to Boston the plane which

his mother bought for him, may land in Massachusetts, but he will not be permitted to take it off the ground again. Such was the announcement made by the state motor vehicle registrar when he learned that young Garside, who recently ob-

tained a national reputation as a boy aviator in North Carolina, was flying here from Rockingham, N. C. with stops at Richmond and New York.

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