

## Training the Child.

BY MRS. ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

WE, in the conceit and bombast of our modern age, are apt to imagine that we represent the best ideas, not only in human government, but in educational training; but to me, it seems as if in the hurry of progress we had dropped many valuable hints characteristic of the past. In the age of chivalry the training of youth was an essential part of the household economy of the higher classes, and gallant knights and fair ladies received into their guardianship, as pages, the sons of their compeers, who were trained carefully, not only to feats of arms essential to the period, but into habits of self-denial, temperance, courtesy, truth, and honor; as befitting brave men and Christian soldiers.

Maidens also were received in like manner, and taught the best knowledge of the age in which they lived—to be diligent, courteous, skillful as “leeches” (doctors in our day), good housewomen, faithful, and chaste. These things were essential to gentle breeding, and were most certainly the germ of all that is generous and enlarged in our times.

Manners changed greatly with the Reformation, and Puritanism introduced what may be fitly denominated the “iron rule.” Indeed, it is not long since Comstock and Witherspoon, and the School of Good Manners were the text books of every household, and the child was so rigidly trained that little of true human sympathetic emotion was suffered to exist. Austere but kindly, religious to asceticism, upright to almost ferocity, intellectual and dogmatic, authoritative and methodical were the old families of New England. Here was the foundation of a great nationality, and it has told upon the country; with all its errors it served a great purpose.

But a revulsion must and would follow, and family neglect or family license threaten in our day to totally subvert public virtue.

I believe in training the child and rearing him to what is best and highest in the design of his creation. I do not believe in what are called “self-made men,” who are apt to be a compound of all that is pretentious, crude, conceited, and dishonest. Ignorant of what others have done a great deal better in the world, they cry Lo! here, and Lo! there, over their poor, ill-digested efforts, and imagine they are original and great, when they are only rude and turbulent. Good Lord, deliver us from self-made men!

Women make the country what it is, and if men fall short of manly sufficiency, it is the fault of the mothers who bore them. Men talk too much about the sacredness of the domestic altar, and do too little to uphold it by their own purity, integrity, and co-operation. If the example of either parent is such as to neutralize the wisest teachings of the other, disappointment and sorrow are too sure to follow.

Still be it remembered that there is an innate sweetness in our humanity which may be relied upon, and it is well to hope much from this and to trust to it greatly.

In the first years of the child its training must fall mostly upon the mother, who is likely to be more at home than the father, and whose sympathies are apt to be quicker and nearer, and more tenderly adapted to its undeveloped helplessness, though I must regard that father as culpable, who does not with fatherly affection, aid in the wise training of the child.

As the household increases, as young children cluster about the hearthstone, each bringing its new revelation, such variety of character, and yet such harmony in the adjustment of each, the mother will find her powers tested to the utmost; but if she has laid aside something of her girlish pliancy, she will have gained greatly in nobleness and dignity of character.

She will be no dogmatist; she will cast all the casuistry of the schools to the wind, for her creed is very simple, and must be inscribed upon the infant's palm: Love to God, and love to man. “All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them.” This is the burden of her morning, and evening, and noon-tide teaching. Integrity—savage, unadulterated integrity—she enforces as the law of the inner and outer life.

She is wise in the simplicity of her creed, and in the thoroughness of her moral code. She will have neither trick nor evasion, neither cajoleries nor flatteries, where a truth is involved. I consider it most essentially and properly the mother's duty to look early and late to the moral training of her children, because she is and ought to be more constantly with them, and because whatever be the capabilities of the women, *while she moves in the maternal sphere and her children are young, the responsibilities of the mother are paramount to all others.* Fathers are not to be exonerated from their duty to their children, for those who are instrumental in ushering into this turbulent world an immortal being, must not dare forget the duties thus involved.

The mother must beware that she does not

acquire a look of care, a feeling of discontent, a melancholy or despondency fatal to the comfort and cheeriness of the household. This forlorn, sickly gloom worn by many women is more destructive to the happiness of a family than even sharpness of temper, which will relieve itself by a few spicy words, and then all is cheery again; even a hasty slap is not so detrimental to comfort as the droning, moralizing gloom of a conscientious but tristful mother, for there is, as I have said, a sweetness in our humanity that will somehow go right under sharp impediments, as the lightning may kill, but is sure to purify, while the dead fog of perpetual coercion, perpetual admonition, perpetual fault-finding, and checking muddles the poor little brain of a child, and distorts its moral sense.

It is to be hoped the flippancy and shallowness of our age will not be entirely bereft of these stately, clear-seeing and morally grand women of the olden time, whose example has done so much to ennoble our sex. One such woman as Lady Russel is worth a "wilderness" filled with the "monkeys" of fashion; and Mrs. Wesley, with her nineteen children, ought to have a statue raised to her memory by the followers of her son John. Does any one doubt that the sweet lullaby of the mother was the key-note to the genius that afterward inspired Charles Wesley in writing some of the most beautiful hymns in the language, with a glowing spiritualism equaled only by those of Madam Guyon? And does any one doubt, that the simple, moral code which she impressed upon the mind of John, was the grand foundation for the "Gate Beautiful" which he reared in his true earnest life? Her moral code was very concise. She said:

"My son, if any course in life weakens your sense of wrong doing, or deadens your aspiration, that course is *sin* to you, whatever it may be to another."

Well might a son so reared go forth and preach hope and reform to the down-trodden masses, for never since the advent of Christianity has a more earnest, true, and thorough Christian democracy been preached to the world than that of John Wesley.

Reform must begin at the fireside. The foundation for empire is laid there, and when families are disorderly, treacherous, corrupt, and wicked, the nation will be a reflex of what is existing there. In our great crises of war and disorganization, not a single great man has arisen; not one great statesman to carry us through; but in its place we find wide-spread cor-

ruption and malignity, commercial fraud and political dishonesty. As is the ruler, so are the people; as are the people, so are the mothers who have reared them; for woman was designed to be the great spiritual, moral center, and therefore men have a right to look to us, even more than to themselves, for the right training of the child.

If all the intellect in the world were freely used, I do not think there would be a superabundance. If men were more thoughtful than they are, and women freely admitted to share in all subjects pertaining to legislation, in order to help on ideas, I do not think the world would be any too wise, while at present the race is stultified in order to keep one sex within the sphere of action which the other conceives to be appropriate for her, as if she were not the best judge of where she belongs and what she is best able to do.

There are a few simple rules which ought to be taught the child at the earliest dawn of reason, which commences sooner than most of people comprehend.

It should be taught the government of its appetites and passions, not by severity and the action of fear, but as a part of a cheerful and true life, superior to brute instinct. I know of a mother who always kept Friday as a fast day, not from religious asceticism, but because she wished to act an example of self-denial to her children. She would say in the morning, "Come, my darlings, I shall eat only bread and drink water to-day; are either of you strong enough to go with me?" Sometimes, indeed, most generally, the little ones joined her, and religiously did they observe the conditions. There was no compulsion, no gloom about it, indeed there was, perhaps, no brighter day than our fast day.

Once the little boys, the oldest not six years old, were invited to a party of children, and when the entertainment showed a table covered with dainties, they took only bread. The hostess greatly surprised, inquired the reason, when they whispered, smilingly: "We and mamma agreed to fast to-day." She suggested that it would do no harm to break the fast on such an occasion, but the brave little fellows adhered to their resolution and declined every luxury. When they returned home they brought a basket filled with all the pretty dainties of the table, which the lady had forced upon them.

"I do not think, mamma, we ought to save nice things fast day to eat afterward," said the oldest young hero, and the other assented.

They finally agreed to carry the basket to a child to whom such luxuries were a rarity.

In after years this child, grown to manhood, became, by a series of circumstances, involved in the suspicion of a crime of which he was wholly innocent. He suffered long and greatly, but still adhered to his integrity, knowing his innocence, as all did who knew him. On three several occasions he was offered indemnity in the shape of proceedings dropped, money and office, provided he would criminate certain parties. His answer, true to the training of the child, was invariably the same: "If they want a perjured scoundrel, they must look somewhere else for him; I am not the man."

In training the child the slightest variation of the truth should be promptly corrected. Falsehood in any and every shape must be forbidden. The child should feel that his whole soul is so adjusted to truth, that he must walk in its light. He should be taught to feel the meanness and the cowardice of falsehood as unworthy the character of a man. This great cardinal virtue firmly rooted in the child will become the foundation for all other manly virtues.

He should be early taught the sacredness of his word. If he make a promise, however trivial, he should be held to it. He should be taught punctuality also, and be made to see that he has no right to waste his own time, far less that of another. These things belong to the great moral code which no one can violate with impunity.

There are lesser virtues, which are essential to gentle breeding, and which greatly effect our own taste and comfort as well as that of others. The strictures upon manners, which we find in Erasmus, fall far short of the requirements of our day, and yet we find thousands but little in advance of what he so comically suggests.

I would train a child to that forecast and considerateness for others that he would not endanger the safety of the passer by, even in the street, by casting the parings of fruit upon the sidewalk; or offend his taste by scattering the shells of nuts, and spitting in a railway car. I would train him to keep all expressions of sickness and pain, and physical necessities of every kind, religiously in the background. He should learn that while the aims of life should be high, and the moral sense pure and noble, the sense of the beautiful is just as essential a part of a true life as an honest sense, and that, while we should ourselves aim to present the best aspect of human virtues, we should no less avoid obtruding our crude, tasteless, undeveloped humanities in the eyes of society.

## The Deaf and Dumb.

No. X.

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DEAF MUTES AS WITNESSES.

WHEN deaf-mutes appear before tribunals, as complainants, accused, or witnesses, much embarrassment often results from their inability to comply with the old-established forms adapted to those who hear and speak. This embarrassment would be much less if all of this class were so nearly alike in intelligence and education as to be brought under one general rule. But this is very far from being the case. There are some persons called deaf mutes who are as intelligent and understand writing as perfectly as do well-educated persons who hear. There are others again, who are not wanting in intelligence; but who either cannot read at all, or with a very imperfect idea of the meaning of the words and phrases presented to them. There are all grades of intelligence and knowledge of language between these two extremes; but the general mass of educated deaf mutes understand signs more directly and certainly than writing. Hence, as a general rule, when it is desired to reach more certainly and impressively the intelligence and conscience of a deaf mute, his examination should be in the language of signs, by means of an interpreter skilled in that language. In most cases, a teacher of the deaf and dumb will serve better than any other person as such an interpreter. And this has been the course followed in several cases on record, both in this country and in Europe.

Our limits restrict us to one or two examples. In the case of the State of Connecticut *v. De Wolf* (8 Conn. Rep. 93), the prisoner was indicted for an attempt to commit a rape on a deaf and dumb girl, who, of course, was the principal witness. She was sworn, and testified to the principal facts by signs, which were interpreted by Rev. W. W. Turner, then a teacher, since the Principal of the American Asylum at Hartford, of which the girl had been five years a pupil. The interpreter testified that the witness was well acquainted with the language of signs, and capable of relating facts correctly in that manner; and that she could read and write and communicate her ideas imperfectly by writing. The trial having resulted in a conviction