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### THE REARING OF OUR CHILDREN.

A SERIES OF VALUABLE PAPERS BY DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN WOMEN.

No. XII.

### Whipping Children.

BY ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

“WHAT is bred in the bone can't be whipped through the skin.” This homely old proverb would seem to indicate the absolute inutility of the whole system of hoping to make human beings any better in mind by beating them on the body. Had it been otherwise, those burly old monks who for hundreds of years were flagellated, or flagellated themselves, by way of wholesome penance for their sensual, unruly lives, would have been every one of them saints and martyrs, instead of presenting us with a Saint Francis Xavier, or a Loyala, or Vincent de Paul, one in a million, as the record now shows.

Were it otherwise, it would be a good thing for men and women about to enter into the holy bonds of wedlock to put themselves through a vigorous course of fasting and whipping (instead of flushing themselves with dainty food, costly raiment, and delicious aromas, as is the custom), in order that as few evils as is possible may be bred in the bones of their children. It would be better to beat wickedness out of the tough sinews of the parents, who are the most guilty, than hope to exude it from the tender

scions of a bad stock by any process of cuffing, whipping, flogging, or beating. What an ugly array of words; every one of which sounds like a blow to a sensitive ear!

But, such a system of perfecting the children is not likely to be resorted to even by the most conscientious, therefore we must take the offspring just as we find them, inheriting the sins of the parents, and often with no other inheritance. Every child has an inalienable right to perfect health, perfect beauty, and perfect moral freedom, and where he is denied these the sin lies at the door of those whose

“ancient but ignoble blood  
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the  
flood.”

There are such cruel brutes in the shape of men and women in the world that they would not know a pearl from a pea, a lily from a peony, an angel child from a demon child, and they would lacerate the silver skin of the one with as little remorse as the tawny texture of the other; therefore, to protect these innocents from such vile handling it would be well to consider

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every child as the property of the State, and place it under proper guardianship, where the parents are morally irresponsible; in this way thousands of valuable souls might be made useful to the country, and be protected from abuse and the commission of crime.

But we are to take the world as it is, and consider the propriety of a tall, two-footed creature taking hold of a poor little, trembling, wee creature, and subjecting it to stripes and blows.

It must be always borne in mind that the brain of the child is immature, its understanding or reason so partially developed that it can not put this and that thing together, and draw just conclusions therefrom, except in a very limited degree. The child questions perpetually the *why* of the world about him, and with his active instincts and fervid passions is slow to learn the justice of the many prohibitions to which he is subjected. If the parent is thoroughly just, rational, and tender, he and his child may "walk with God," in serene content and almost divine harmony; but such parents are very rare. Those of George Washington seem to have been of this kind, and we have the records of many where one parent was such, as in the case of Montaigne, Margaret Roper, and others that might be cited.

The mind of the child is not only immature, but often one faculty quite outstrips the rest, and he is, as it were, lopsided. He is irresistibly impelled in one direction, when reason and judgment both incline in another. His activities, for instance, incite him to fun, frolic, out-of-door sports, and companionship, while he is at an age when he should be justly held to some method of study and avocation essential to the discipline of coming manhood. He grows sulen and obstinate if denied his favorite pursuits, and perhaps becomes artful and untrustworthy for the sake of indulging them.

What is to be done in this case? It is not a bad case, only a little too much boy or girl, and perhaps forbearance and kindly remonstrance may effect a cure. Too much *talking* never will. The child is led by his instincts, and too much reasoning frets and bewilders him. Still he must be held to discipline. He must not be so coerced as to make him treacherous—a resolute supervision may bring him round all right; but I contend it is far better, as a last resort, to give the child a quick, honest whipping, not too solemn, not too protracted, like an inquisition, than run the risk of his undeveloped understanding being left fallow, and his morals endangered by too much tenderness. His impressions being too volatile, some severity will be neces-

sary to fix them upon his mind. I knew a boy of this kind, who, knowing that his father loved candor of mind beyond all other qualities, learned to play tricks upon him, and instead of going to school, one day played truant, or "hookey." At the usual hour he came home, and walking boldly up to his father said:

"Father, I played hookey to-day from school. Now give me a half dollar because I was honest and told."

There was a dangerous wit there. Such a boy might be trained to something better, but his instincts tended to the sordid, and I believe his deepest impressions would have to be reached through the skin. If he wants pay for his virtue, he should be deterred from wasting his time and losing his education by the fear of punishment, or he will do nothing good in the world unless it pays.

A neighbor of mine had two sons, Frank and Jack, as they were familiarly called; their ages were nine and eleven. These boys were sent regularly to the best school in the town where they lived, nicely dressed with pleated ruffles, as was then the fashion. One day the Principal of the school called, and it turned out that the boys had been absent therefrom nearly two weeks, notwithstanding that they had seemed to come and go at the proper time to and from home. Poor little Jack, a bright, fair-complexioned boy was the first to come in after the knowledge of this by the father, by whom he was sharply interrogated, for he was greatly incensed.

"Jack have you been to school the last two weeks?"

"No, sir; I've played truant."

"Who played with you? You have not been alone?"

"No, sir; but I can't tell on the boys."

"You must and shall; I'll whip it out of you."

And the generous, ingenious little hero was taken out and whipped smartly with a rod, again and again, but he would not betray his brother, nor other boys, who had been guilty of a like offense with him. He bore his punishment manfully, till he nearly fainted under the infliction. At length he said:

"Dear father, if I die, I will never tell."

The mother now interfered to stay the cruelty. Not long afterward Frank entered, and the father questioned him in his turn.

"Frank, have you been to school for the last two weeks?"

"Part of the time, sir."

"Why didn't you go all the time?"

"I don't know, sir. I and some boys went off to play ball together."

"What boys? who were they?"

"Oh, Jack and Fred, and Tom and I," avowed the young coward, trembling and pale.

The father was exasperated, more at the meanness and cowardice of the boy than any thing else, but Jack, the little fellow, was whipped worse than Frank was, because of his obstinacy, so called.

Now in a case like this, little Jack was too pliant for the sake of play, and had evidently been led astray by the older boys. I think it would have done him good to punish him slightly, for the sake of stiffening up his backbone, but his fine manly honor, which forbade him to expose his associates, was beyond all praise.

Such a boy as Frank might be "brayed in a mortar," and his meanness, cowardice, servility would not be beat out of him. It was bred in the bone, from some source or other.

Nobody ever whipped a child thinking to put ideas into his brain. If whipped at all, it is to cure him of a positive fault of character, a tendency to what is in itself dangerous. I contend that all discipline should begin with the child at home. If the "father of the man" is properly trained, there he will be less likely to be a bad citizen, and, eventually, public punishments would cease to be necessary, and courts of law and prisons no longer required for the safety of the community. It is because domestic training is lax that so much public crime has an existence.

I have seen many families where the whole system of training the child has been in the highest degree tender and conscientious, and yet where the children were mawkish and spooneyish, and the good, weak parents talked themselves well nigh into a consumption of the lungs, and after all there would be now and then a sly slap, or perhaps more. Children in such families are apt to grow up weak-jointed men, shaky in the back, and likely to fall into bad ways, from lack of moral force.

A very young child does better with a quick slap on the shoulder, to bring it to its right senses, than by too much talk, and even the stern glance of the eye will irritate and injure it more than a resolute blow. There is a great deal of twattle current among us upon this subject of whipping children, and there is also an evident desire to learn the best method of training a child. People talk as if a blow was the most cruel, needless thing possible, whereas the Great Parent above brings us to the necessary state of submission to His inevitable will by

sharp blows and severe discipline. Governments hold us to account for violations of law, without asking whether it will or will not be agreeable to our self-love; how much more then is it necessary that the child should be early taught to know that there is an order that must not be violated, human and divine laws to be religiously observed, and that all wrong-doing of necessity involves punishment. If taught this early, as his mind unfolds, it will save him from a world of remorse, and suffering, and sorrow, and shame.

I once heard a young man say, "I loved my mother, but she gave me one whipping—never but one in her life—and I have never forgiven it." Probably had she given him half a dozen he would have been the better for it; his remark I regarded as not only weak but unmanly. When the gallant knight of the olden time received the badge of the Order, the King or Queen struck them on the shoulder, saying,

"Take this, and never another,"

but it must be borne in mind that the blow was supposed to be the last of a series of many blows given and taken, by which he had won his spurs, and he was supposed henceforth to represent the utmost in manly generosity, courage, and magnanimity; he had been thoroughly trained to a high sense of honor, to Christian duty and courtesy of manner, by proud and haughty lords, and thus had won his way to the best and noblest.

A child ought not to feel itself aggrieved, even by a pretty sound thrashing, nor does he feel so, unless he is a poor, mean sneak, if conscious that he justly deserves it. A manly boy ought to take his punishment manfully, with no foolish sense of injury to his self-love, feeling only ashamed and regret that he has deserved the infliction.

The impressions of childhood are generally so fleeting, that they often require something more than mere talk to fix ideas in the mind. It is better, therefore, to arrest a child a little sharply, then allow it to dawdle on to the "teens" without purpose, and with no fixed sense of

"Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God."

I remember well a lesson I received when little more than five years old. Being somewhat precocious, I was apt to have my brain wool-gathering among books instead of observing the actual around me. My mother had directed me, in great haste, to run to the wood-house and bring her a small hammer which

hung upon a nail there. I went with alacrity, book in hand, but found the button far beyond my reach; instantly I ran back and proclaimed the difficulty. My bright, energetic mother secured my hand in hers and a small bench in the other, and with rapid steps reached the door, and showed me how the thing *might* be done; giving me a slap on the shoulder, with perfect good temper, she exclaimed,

"Next time take a bench!"

I never forgot the lesson, and it has helped me to many a resource in life.

Children must be taught to depend upon themselves; to get along with as little help as possible, and the parent who has taught his child this habit of self-reliance, has given him what is better than a mint of money; and this can not be taught by coaxing and wheedling, sugar plums and candy, or even by hours of tender talk and remonstrance; it is learned only by example and energetic effort.

Any one who has read the story of poor little Pip in Dickens's "Great Expectations," can not fail to see in the child the history of a thousand children, whose undeveloped minds read the records of every day much as Pip read the names of his parent in the graveyard, and, "from the character and turn of the inscription, *Also, Georgiana wife of the above*, drew a childish conclusion that his mother was sickly and freckled," and like him their brains are half addled by a *too liberal* and wicked application of "Tickler," by some ferocious, termigant mother or guardian. We must sympathize with kind, honest, philosophic Joe, when he exclaims in view of his wife and the merciless "Tickler," "On the Rampage—off the Rampage, Pip, such is life."

I think that we are receiving some false sentiment upon this subject of whipping children from the infusion of southern ideas, where, during the existence of slavery, it was a degradation and servility to take a blow, whereas, the fault committed is the degradation, and a brave child should feel this, and take the penalty manfully. When I lectured in Louisville, Kentucky, I saw the wealthy family of the Wards, handsome and high-spirited. At that time a northern man by the name of Butler kept a high school there. He also called upon me. He was a hard-trained, hard-working young man, somewhat sullen, evidently holding in check many unruly passions; in short, approaching in character to the Bradley Headstone type of Dickens.

Secretly, he felt a bitter hatred toward the peculiar institutions around him, and the

haughty assumptions of his pupils, among whom was a young boy of the Ward family. He knew perfectly well that the boys under his charge would not take a blow; and they ought to have known just as well that school discipline must be enforced, yet young Ward was insolent and unruly, and Butler, exasperated, flogged him. A manly boy would have felt his error like a gentleman, and have apologized and accepted the penalty; but the fiery, fierce boy, with no more reason than an ungovernable colt, rushed home to proclaim his disgrace, and in fifteen minutes after the unhappy teacher was a dead man, shot through the heart by Matthew Ward, an elder brother of the delinquent boy.

Dr. Charles Anthon, than whose no better scholars were ever set on the road to manhood, believed in whipping a dull boy, and a bad boy, and applied the birch with no little vigor; nor did I ever hear of a New York parent who objected to the sharp discipline of his Grammar School. He was cheerful and humorous with his boys, but exacted full duty. He had no whining, timid mawkishness; did not worry the boys by too much talk—law was law with him, and it must be obeyed.

The poor negro was right when he objected to having two kinds of punishment, and remonstrated in this wise: "Now, Massa, if you preachy, preach; if you floggy, flog; but no floggy and preachy too."

English boys everywhere, and girls, too, are subjected to the smart infliction of the birch, which would seem to be considered as a temporary and unimportant evil contrasted with the sturdy results, in the shape of manly fortitude, dutiful discipline, and national force. The boys in Eaton are regularly "horsed," and it is considered no disparagement, while it is considered base to snivel, and dodge, and meanly evade the infliction. Boys should learn that the *shame is in the offense*, not in the punishment.

Shenstone, in his quaint poem of the "Schoolmistress," thus describes her and her avocation, indicating no stinted use of the rod.

"A matron old, whom we Schoolmistress name,  
Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame;  
They grieve an sore, in piteous durance pent,  
Awd by the power of this relentless dame;  
And often time on vagaries idly bent,  
For unkempt hair, or task unconned, are sorely  
shent."

Our methods of imparting instruction have greatly advanced since the days of Shenstone, and more humane and gentle theories prevail; but the habits of our youth have not kept pace

with this improvement—and it is morally certain that, unless in the domestic circle and in the schoolhouse, a more thorough discipline be enforced, the whole national character will be demoralized. Love and kindness must be the prevailing law, but obedience to the law must be enforced; kindly, if possible, severely, if needful.

All the ancient martyrs, and heroes, and great soldiers, the men and women who shame our own pusillanimity, come up under the rod, and that not lightly administered. We know that the early settlers of New England enforced the "iron rule." The men of '76 were men used in childhood to sharp discipline—and the world is not likely to produce a nobler type of manhood. There is something weak and cowardly in this fear of the rod, though when unwisely and recklessly administered, it is a fearful evil, and too often administered at an age when the reason should usurp authority if it ever will.

That wonderful creature of wisdom, learning, grace and beauty, Lady Jane Grey, once said to her gentle tutor Roger Ascham, who found her reading Plato while other ladies of the court were in the park hunting, "I wist, all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure which I take in Plato."

She then, with the ingenuousness of girlhood, goes on to speak of the severity of training to which she was subjected. She says, "One of the greatest benefits, which ever God gave me is, that he sent me so sharp and severe parents, and so gentle a schoolmaster. For when I am in the presence of either father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand or go, eat, drink, be merry or sad; be sewing, playing, dancing or doing any thing else, I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea, presently sometimes with *pinches, nips, and bobs*, and other ways (which I will not name for the honor I bear them), so without measure misordered, that I think myself in hell, till the time come that I must go to my tutor, who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning, that I think all the time nothing while I am with him."

This is a specimen of the feeling prevailing more than three hundred years ago, and this young girl so severely treated, and not yet sixteen years of age, was mistress of Latin, Greek, and the French and Italian languages, in all of which she wrote and spoke, and was acquainted with their literature. She was versed in the sciences of the day, and confounded learned divines by the clearness and cogency of her theological arguments.

The system was unquestionably too severely applied to a child of such rare endowments, and of so lovely and gentle a mind, but it resulted in the production of a character of such superior excellence, such firm and yet tender courage, such dignity, purity and piety as the world has rarely seen; and yet this woman, whose character every day grows larger in the eye of history, laid her meek head down to the blow of the executioner before she was *seventeen years of age*.

Is there any thing in our squeamish modern training, which is indeed no training at all, likely to produce characters at all comparable to that of Lady Jane Grey? I wot not. With us, authority is inverted, and the child, not the parent, rules the household; all its fine old dignities are lost under a mistaken fondness, and a sensual indulgence. The child is restive under restraint, and, if punished, regards himself as a victim; he applies the odium to the punishment, however well deserved, and has no condemnation for the offense which occasioned it. In that feeling he is maintained by a growing, mawkish sentimentality in the public mind.

A manly boy would show his stripes manfully, and take them manfully as an atonement for a wrong, and such a boy is not likely to repeat the offense; while your weak, snivelling boy is very likely to beg your pardon ten times over, and, commit any meanness to escape a whipping; and ten times over commit a similar offense, and end his career at last in the penitentiary.

Parents and teachers often lack self-control themselves, and they magnetize children into rebellion, rage, and obstinacy, and the contest descends into a regular fight for the mastery. This is pitiful in the extreme, and the child is sure to suffer great cruelty in such a crisis. Parent and teacher are only fit for their office when perfectly calm, wise, and of just mind, and sympathetic of heart. They should be capable of penetrating to the mind and heart of the child, and judging thence what may rightfully be required of it.

It is wonderful how much harmony may be produced in a family by the simple methods of a calm judgment and sympathetic mind; for myself, I have always found that to lay my hand gently upon the shoulder of even a raging child, and saying, "My dear, you will do what is right," had the immediate effect to subdue him; hence, I believe that after a child is old enough to understand, he may ordinarily be controlled by reason and kindness; but where these fail to keep him up to the mark of con-

science and duty, more energetic measures ought to be resorted to. The parent or teacher is culpable who allows his charge to shirk one iota of the duty enjoined him, and if he does this and the boy or girl merges his future life into what is base and ruinous, the sin must lie at their door.

I do not approve of whipping, to my mind it it seems a merciless and unnecessary thing—children of the better instincts rarely, if ever, require it—but these little ones, “without reproach or blot,” are in the present state of society the exception, not the rule, and I am convinced that the majorities require energetic handling. They must be made to do, where they are deficient in the inner law. Justice to the child and justice to society demand this.

In extreme cases, even, I can hardly conceive that a child in his teens will need to be whipped; by that time reason and judgment ought to begin to gain the ascendancy, and induce tendencies in the right direction—he should be the companion of the parent, sharing in some degree his confidence, no less than his affection, and a right-minded parent would be to him the best and safest “guide, counselor, and friend.”

Little girls are not so often whipped as little boys, nor do I think they so often require it. They are less headstrong and violent, as a rule; are more sensitive, and more desirous of approval; more spiritual, also; their faults are equally dangerous to themselves and equally destructive to society, but they are of a kind that whipping will not cure.

The practice of “boxing” children on the ear, or slapping them on the head with the finger or thimble can not be too severely reprehended. If punishment must be inflicted, a rod, not too heavy, or the open hand upon that portion of the body where little harm can be done, and which Shenstone so tenderly describes, is the only safe, honest, and proper domain for infliction.

“And, brandishing the rod, she doth begin  
To loose the brogues, the stripling’s late delight;

*And down they drop—appears his dainty skin,  
Fair as the furry coat of whitest erminin.”*

It can not be doubted that children accustomed to blows and stripes are rendered cruel, if not brutal; they are hardened into all the malign and revengeful passions, because correction is not bestowed with its legitimate object to prevent the repetition of wrong, and to inspire a reverence for the right, but unjustly and

cruelly as the expression of all the vile, inhuman instincts of the inflictor. Parents and guardians, who are guilty of beating and cuffing their children in their rage, are capable of the worst crimes, and do them irreparable injury.

The ancient Spartan carried his son before the altar of the Taurian Artemis, and it was whipped by an appointed officer till his ruby veins tinged the altar-place, and he often expired without the utterance of a cry or groan. This practice was designed to render the boy courageous in danger, firm under suffering, and to instil into him a contempt for all that was weak and effeminate. Through such training grew the heroes of Thermopylae, and a people who *lived up* to all the hardy, austere virtues belonging to their ethics. The result is of value as indicating what the training of the child can do for a people.

If in our day of more humane ideas, a thorough educational system, kind, yet firm, could be as conscientiously carried out as was that of the Spartans, we might hope for a higher, purer, in every way, better nationality.

**WOMEN AND HORTICULTURE.**—I do not believe that either men or women should have a monopoly of any branch of horticulture, because there is work connected with each that is better suited to one than the other; but let us have a partnership, each doing that which is most congenial, and not, as at the present time, one having all the profit and honor, whether entitled to it or otherwise. Women have done and are still doing much for horticulture, but I fear that they receive little credit and less encouragement to continue in the good work. We want an extensive horticultural establishment near New York city, where a thousand girls and women can earn enough during summer to support themselves in winter, just as a large proportion of our farmers and fruit gatherers do at the present time.

There are plenty of charitable people in New York, who will give thousands of dollars towards furnishing guides to lead the *souls* of women into paradise; but if there is one who is ready to furnish the means of placing these ladies in a terrestrial garden of Eden, let him or her speak.—*A. S. Fuller, in Revolution.*

**WARM WATER FOR HORSES.**—Do not allow your horse to have warm water to drink, because if he has to drink cold water, after getting accustomed to warm, it will give him the colic.