

ABBOTT JACOB

GENTLE MEASURES IN
THE MANAGEMENT AND
TRAINING OF THE
YOUNG

Jacob Abbott

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and Training of the Young**

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Jacob Abbott

Gentle Measures in the Management and Training of the Young / Or, the Principles on Which a Firm Parental Authority May Be Established and Maintained, Without Violence or Anger, and the Right Development of the Moral and Mental Capacities Be Promoted by Methods in Harmony with the Structure and the Characteristics of the Juvenile Mind

CHAPTER I. THE THREE MODES OF MANAGEMENT

It is not impossible that in the minds of some persons the idea of employing gentle measures in the management and training of children may seem to imply the abandonment of the principle of *authority*, as the basis of the parental government, and the substitution of some weak and inefficient system of artifice and manoeuvring in its place. To suppose that the object of this work is to aid in effecting such a substitution as that, is entirely to mistake its nature and design. The only government of the parent over the child that is worthy of the name is one of authority—complete, absolute, unquestioned *authority*. The object of this work is, accordingly, not to show how the gentle methods which will be brought to view can be employed as a substitute for such authority, but how they can be made to aid in establishing and maintaining it.

Three Methods

There are three different modes of management customarily employed by parents as means of inducing their children to comply with their requirements. They are,

1. Government by Manoeuvring and Artifice.
2. By Reason and Affection.
3. By Authority.

Manoeuvring and Artifice

1. Many mothers manage their children by means of tricks and contrivances, more or less adroit, designed to avoid direct issues with them, and to beguile them, as it were, into compliance with their wishes. As, for example, where a mother, recovering from sickness, is going out to take the air with her husband for the first time, and—as she is still feeble—wishes for a very quiet drive, and so concludes not to take little Mary with her, as she usually does on such occasions; but knowing that if Mary sees the chaise at the door, and discovers that her father and mother are going in it, she will be very eager to go too, she adopts a system of manoeuvres to conceal her design. She brings down her bonnet and shawl by stealth, and before the chaise comes to the door she sends Mary out into the

garden with her sister, under pretense of showing her a bird's nest which is not there, trusting to her sister's skill in diverting the child's mind, and amusing her with something else in the garden, until the chaise has gone. And if, either from hearing the sound of the wheels, or from any other cause, Mary's suspicions are awakened—and children habitually managed on these principles soon learn to be extremely distrustful and suspicious—and she insists on going into the house, and thus discovers the stratagem, then, perhaps, her mother tells her that they are only going to the doctor's, and that if Mary goes with them, the doctor will give her some dreadful medicine, and compel her to take it, thinking thus to deter her from insisting on going with them to ride.

As the chaise drives away, Mary stands bewildered and perplexed on the door-step, her mind in a tumult of excitement, in which hatred of the doctor, distrust and suspicion of her mother, disappointment, vexation, and ill humor, surge and swell among those delicate organizations on which the structure and development of the soul so closely depend—doing perhaps an irreparable injury. The mother, as soon as the chaise is so far turned that Mary can no longer watch the expression of her countenance, goes away from the door with a smile of complacency and satisfaction upon her face at the ingenuity and success of her little artifice.

In respect to her statement that she was going to the doctor's, it may, or may not, have been true. Most likely not; for mothers who manage their children on this system find the line of demarkation between deceit and falsehood so vague and ill defined that they soon fall into the habit of disregarding it altogether, and of saying, without hesitation, any thing which will serve the purpose in view.

Governing by Reason and Affection

2. The theory of many mothers is that they must govern their children by the influence of reason and affection. Their method may be exemplified by supposing that, under circumstances similar to those described under the preceding head, the mother calls Mary to her side, and, smoothing her hair caressingly with her hand while she speaks, says to her,

"Mary, your father and I are going out to ride this afternoon, and I am going to explain it all to you why you can not go too. You see, I have been sick, and am getting well, and I am going out to ride, so that I may get well faster. You love mamma, I am sure, and wish to have her get well soon. So you will be a good girl, I know, and not make any trouble, but will stay at home contentedly—won't you? Then I shall love you, and your papa will love you, and after I get well we will take you to ride with us some day."

The mother, in managing the case in this way, relies partly on convincing the reason of the child, and partly on an appeal to her affection.

Governing by Authority

3. By the third method the mother secures the compliance of the child by a direct exercise of authority. She says to her—the circumstances of the case being still supposed to be the same—

"Mary, your father and I are going out to ride this afternoon, and I am sorry, for your sake, that we can not take you with us."

"Why can't you take me?" asks Mary.

"I can not tell you why, now," replies the mother, "but perhaps I will explain it to you after I come home. I think there *is* a good reason, and, at any rate, I have decided that you are not to go. If you are a good girl, and do not make any difficulty, you can have your little chair out upon the front door-step, and can see the chaise come to the door, and see your father and me get in and drive away; and you can wave your handkerchief to us for a good-bye."

Then, if she observes any expression of discontent or insubmission in Mary's countenance, the mother would add,

"If you should *not* be a good girl, but should show signs of making us any trouble, I shall have to send you out somewhere to the back part of the house until we are gone."

But this last supposition is almost always unnecessary; for if Mary has been habitually managed on this principle she will *not* make any trouble. She will perceive at once that the question is settled—settled irrevocably—and especially that it is entirely beyond the power of any demonstrations of insubmission or rebellion that she can make to change it. She will acquiesce at once.¹ She may be sorry that she can not go, but she will make no resistance. Those children only attempt to carry their points by noisy and violent demonstrations who find, by experience, that such measures are usually successful. A child, even, who has become once accustomed to them, will soon drop them if she finds, owing to a change in the system of management, that they now never succeed. And a child who never, from the beginning, finds any efficiency in them, never learns to employ them at all.

Conclusion

Of the three methods of managing children exemplified in this chapter, the last is the only one which can be followed either with comfort to the parent or safety to the child; and to show how this method can be brought effectually into operation by gentle measures is the object of this book. It is, indeed, true that the importance of tact and skill in the training of the young, and of cultivating their reason, and securing their affection, can not be overrated. But the influences secured by these means form, at the best, but a sandy foundation for filial obedience to rest upon. The child is not to be made to comply with the requirements of his parents by being artfully inveigled into compliance, nor is his obedience to rest on his love for father and mother, and his unwillingness to displease them, nor on his conviction of the rightfulness and reasonableness of their commands, but on simple *submission to authority*—that absolute and almost unlimited authority which all parents are commissioned by God and nature to exercise over their offspring during the period while the offspring remain dependent upon their care.

¹ See Frontispiece.

CHAPTER II. WHAT ARE GENTLE MEASURES?

It being thus distinctly understood that the gentle measures in the training of children herein recommended are not to be resorted to as a *substitute* for parental authority, but as the easiest and most effectual means of establishing and maintaining that authority in its most absolute form, we have now to consider what the nature of these gentle measures is, and by what characteristics they are distinguished, in their action and influence, from such as may be considered more or less violent and harsh.

Gentle measures are those which tend to exert a calming, quieting, and soothing influence on the mind, or to produce only such excitements as are pleasurable in their character, as means of repressing wrong and encouraging right action. Ungentle measures are those which tend to inflame and irritate the mind, or to agitate it with *painful* excitements.

Three Degrees of Violence

There seem to be three grades or forms of violence to which a mother may resort in controlling her children, or, perhaps, rather three classes of measures which are more or less violent in their effects. To illustrate these we will take an example.

Case supposed

One day Louisa, four years old, asked her mother for an apple. "Have you had any already?" asked her mother.

"Only one," replied Louisa. "Then Bridget may give you another," said the mother.

What Louisa said was not true. She had already eaten two apples. Bridget heard the falsehood, but she did not consider it her duty to betray the child, so she said nothing. The mother, however, afterwards, in the course of the day, accidentally ascertained the truth.

Now, as we have said, there are three grades in the kind and character of the measures which may be considered violent that a mother may resort to in a case like this.

Bodily Punishment

1. First, there is the infliction of bodily pain. The child may be whipped, or tied to the bed-post, and kept in a constrained and uncomfortable position for a long time, or shut up in solitude and darkness, or punished by the infliction of bodily suffering in other ways.

And there is no doubt that there is a tendency in such treatment to correct or cure the fault. But measures like these, whether successful or not, are certainly violent measures. They shock the whole nervous system, sometimes with the excitement of pain and terror, and always, probably, with that of resentment and anger. In some cases this excitement is extreme. The excessively delicate organization of the brain, through which such agitations reach the sensorium, and which, in children of an early age, is in its most tender and sensitive state of development, is subjected to a most intense and violent agitation.

Evil Effects of Violence in this Form

The evil effects of this excessive cerebral action may *perhaps* entirely pass away in a few hours, and leave no trace of injury behind; but then, on the other hand, there is certainly reason to fear that

such commotions, especially if often repeated, tend to impede the regular and healthful development of the organs, and that they may become the origin of derangements, or of actual disorganizations, resulting very seriously in future years. It is impossible, perhaps, to know with certainty whether permanent ill effects follow in such cases or not. At any rate, such a remedy is a violent one.

The Frightening System

2. There is a second grade of violence in the treatment of such a case, which consists in exciting pain or terror, or other painful or disagreeable emotions, through the imagination, by presenting to the fancy of the child images of phantoms, hobgoblins, and other frightful monsters, whose ire, it is pretended, is greatly excited by the misdeeds of children, and who come in the night-time to take them away, or otherwise visit them with terrible retribution. Domestic servants are very prone to adopt this mode of discipline. Being forbidden to resort to personal violence as a means of exciting pain and terror, they attempt to accomplish the same end by other means, which, however, in many respects, are still more injurious in their action.

Management of Nurses and Servants

Nurses and attendants upon children from certain nationalities in Europe are peculiarly disposed to employ this method of governing children placed under their care. One reason is that they are accustomed to this mode of management at home; and another is that many of them are brought up under an idea, which prevails extensively in some of those countries, that it is right to tell falsehoods where the honest object is to accomplish a charitable or useful end. Accordingly, inasmuch as the restraining of the children from wrong is a good and useful object, they can declare the existence of giants and hobgoblins, to carry away and devour bad girls and boys, with an air of positiveness and seeming honesty, and with a calm and persistent assurance, which aids them very much in producing on the minds of the children a conviction of the truth of what they say; while, on the other hand, those who, in theory at least, occupy the position that the direct falsifying of one's word is *never* justifiable, act at a disadvantage in attempting this method. For although, in practice, they are often inclined to make an exception to their principles in regard to truth in the case of what is said to young children, they can not, after all, tell children what they know to be not true with that bold and confident air necessary to carry full conviction to the children's minds. They are embarrassed by a kind of half guilty feeling, which, partially at least, betrays them, and the children do not really and fully believe what they say. They can not suppose that their mother would really tell them what she knew was false, and yet they can not help perceiving that she does not speak and look as if what she was saying was actually true.

Monsieur and Madame Croquemitaine

In all countries there are many, among even the most refined and highly cultivated classes, who are not at all embarrassed by any moral delicacy of this kind. This is especially the case in those countries in Europe, particularly on the Continent, where the idea above referred to, of the allowableness of falsehood in certain cases as a means for the attainment of a good end, is generally entertained. The French have two terrible bugbears, under the names of Monsieur and Madame Croquemitaine, who are as familiar to the imaginations of French children as Santa Claus is, in a much more agreeable way, to the juvenile fancy at our firesides. Monsieur and Madame Croquemitaine are frightful monsters, who come down the chimney, or through the roof, at night, and carry off bad children. They learn from their *little fingers*—which whisper in their ears when they hold them

near—who the bad children are, where they live, and what they have done. The instinctive faith of young children in their mother's truthfulness is so strong that no absurdity seems gross enough to overcome it.

The Black Man and the Policeman

There are many mothers among us who—though not quite prepared to call in the aid of ghosts, giants, and hobgoblins, or of Monsieur and Madame Croquemitaine, in managing their children—still, sometimes, try to eke out their failing authority by threatening them with the "black man," or the "policeman," or some other less, supernatural terror. They seem to imagine that inasmuch as, while there is no such thing in existence as a hobgoblin, there really are policemen and prisons, they only half tell an untruth by saying to the recalcitrant little one that a policeman is coming to carry him off to jail.

Injurious Effects

Although, by these various modes of exciting imaginary fears, there is no direct and outward infliction of bodily suffering, the effect produced on the delicate organization of the brain by such excitements is violent in the extreme. The paroxysms of agitation and terror which they sometimes excite, and which are often spontaneously renewed by darkness and solitude, and by other exciting causes, are of the nature of temporary insanity. Indeed, the extreme nervous excitability which they produce sometimes becomes a real insanity, which, though it may, in many cases, be finally outgrown, may probably in many others lead to lasting and most deplorable results.

Harsh Reproofs and Threatenings

3. There is a third mode of treatment, more common, perhaps, among *us* than either of the preceding, which, though much milder in its character than they, we still class among the violent measures, on account of its operation and effects. It consists of stern and harsh rebukes, denunciations of the heinousness of the sin of falsehood, with solemn premonitions of the awful consequences of it, in this life and in that to come, intended to awaken feelings of alarm and distress in the mind of the child, as a means of promoting repentance and reformation. These are not violent measures, it is true, so far as outward physical action is concerned; but the effects which they produce are sometimes of quite a violent nature, in their operation on the delicate nervous and mental susceptibilities which are excited and agitated by them. If the mother is successful in making the impression which such a mode of treatment is designed to produce, the child, especially if a girl, is agitated and distressed. Her nervous system is greatly disturbed. If calmed for a time, the paroxysm is very liable to return. She wakes in the night, perhaps, with an indefinable feeling of anxiety and terror, and comes to her mother's bedside, to seek, in her presence, and in the sense of protection which it affords, a relief from her distress.

The conscientious mother, supremely anxious to secure the best interests of her child, may say that, after all, it is better that she should endure this temporary suffering than not be saved from the sin. This is true. But if she can be saved just as effectually without it, it is better still.

The Gentle Method of Treatment

4. We now come to the gentle measures which may be adopted in a case of discipline like this. They are endlessly varied in form, but, to illustrate the nature and operation of them, and the

spirit and temper of mind with which they should be enforced, with a view of communicating; to the mind of the reader some general idea of the characteristics of that gentleness of treatment which it is the object of this work to commend, we will describe an actual case, substantially as it really occurred, where a child, whom we will still call Louisa, told her mother a falsehood about the apple, as already related.

Choosing the Right Time

Her mother—though Louisa's manner, at the time of giving her answer, led her to feel somewhat suspicious—did not express her suspicions, but gave her the additional apple. Nor did she afterwards, when she ascertained the facts, say any thing on the subject. The day passed away as if nothing unusual had occurred. When bed-time came she undressed the child and laid her in her bed, playing with her, and talking with her in an amusing manner all the time, so as to bring her into a contented and happy frame of mind, and to establish as close a connection as possible of affection and sympathy between them. Then, finally, when the child's prayer had been said, and she was about to be left for the night, her mother, sitting in a chair at the head of her little bed, and putting her hand lovingly upon her, said:

The Story

"But first I must tell you one more little story.

"Once there was a boy, and his name was Ernest. He was a pretty large boy, for he was five years old."

Louisa, it must be recollected, was only four.

"He was a very pretty boy. He had bright blue eyes and curling hair. He was a very good boy, too. He did not like to do any thing wrong. He always found that it made him feel uncomfortable and unhappy afterwards when he did any thing wrong. A good many children, especially good children, find that it makes them feel uncomfortable and unhappy when they do wrong. Perhaps you do."

"Yes, mamma, I do," said Louisa.

"I am glad of that," replied her mother; "that is a good sign."

"Ernest went one day," added the mother, continuing her story, "with his little cousin Anna to their uncle's, in hopes that he would give them some apples. Their uncle had a beautiful garden, and in it there was an apple-tree which bore most excellent apples. They were large, and rosy, and mellow, and sweet. The children liked the apples from that tree very much, and Ernest and Anna went that day in hopes that their uncle would give them some of them. He said he would. He would give them three apiece. He told them to go into the garden and wait there until he came. They must not take any apples off the tree, he said, but if they found any *under* the tree they might take them, provided that there were not more than three apiece; and when he came he would take enough off the tree, he said, to make up the number to three.

"So the children went into the garden and looked under the tree. They found *two* apples there, and they took them up and ate them—one apiece. Then they sat down and began to wait for their uncle to come. While they were waiting Anna proposed that they should not tell their uncle that they had found the two apples, and so he would give them three more, which he would take from the tree; whereas, if he knew that they had already had one apiece, then he would only give them two more. Ernest said that his uncle would ask them about it. Anna said, 'No matter, we can tell him that we did not find any.'

"Ernest seemed to be thinking about it for a moment, and then, shaking his head, said, 'No, I think we had better not tell him a lie!'

"So when he saw their uncle coming he said, 'Come, Anna, let us go and tell him about it, just how it was. So they ran together to meet their uncle, and told him that they had found two apples under the tree, one apiece, and had eaten them. Then he gave them two more apiece, according to his promise, and they went home feeling contented and happy.

"They might have had one more apple apiece, probably, by combining together to tell a falsehood; but in that case they would have gone home feeling guilty and unhappy."

The Effect

Louisa's mother paused a moment, after finishing her story, to give Louisa time to think about it a little.

"I think," she added at length, after a suitable pause, "that it was a great deal better for them to tell the truth, as they did."

"I think so too, mamma," said Louisa, at the same time casting down her eyes and looking a little confused.

"But you know," added her mother, speaking in a very kind and gentle tone, "that you did not tell me the truth to-day about the apple that Bridget gave you."

Louisa paused a moment, looked in her mother's face, and then, reaching up to put her arms around her mother's neck, she said,

"Mamma, I am determined never to tell you another wrong story as long as I live."

Only a Single Lesson, after all

Now it is not at all probable that if the case had ended here, Louisa would have kept her promise. This was one good lesson, it is true, but it was only *one*. And the lesson was given by a method so gentle, that no nervous, cerebral, or mental function was in any degree irritated or morbidly excited by it. Moreover, no one who knows any thing of the workings of the infantile mind can doubt that the impulse in the right direction given by this conversation was not only better in character, but was greater in amount, than could have been effected by either of the other methods of management previously described.

How Gentle Measures operate

By the gentle measures, then, which are to be here discussed and recommended, are meant such as do not react in a violent and irritating manner, in any way, upon the extremely delicate, and almost embryonic condition of the cerebral and nervous organization, in which the gradual development of the mental and moral faculties are so intimately involved. They do not imply any, the least, relaxation of the force of parental authority, or any lowering whatever of the standards of moral obligation, but are, on the contrary, the most effectual, the surest and the safest way of establishing the one and of enforcing the other.

CHAPTER III. THERE MUST BE AUTHORITY

The first duty which devolves upon the mother in the training of her child is the establishment of her *authority* over him—that is, the forming in him the habit of immediate, implicit, and unquestioning obedience to all her commands. And the first step to be taken, or, rather, perhaps the first essential condition required for the performance of this duty, is the fixing of the conviction in her own mind that it *is* a duty.

Unfortunately, however, there are not only vast numbers of mothers who do not in any degree perform this duty, but a large proportion of them have not even a theoretical idea of the obligation of it.

An Objection

"I wish my child to be governed by reason and reflection," says one. "I wish him to see the *necessity* and *propriety* of what I require of him, so that he may render a ready and willing compliance with my wishes, instead of being obliged blindly to submit to arbitrary and despotic power."

She forgets that the faculties of reason and reflection, and the power of appreciating "the necessity and propriety of things," and of bringing considerations of future, remote, and perhaps contingent good and evil to restrain and subdue the impetuosity of appetites and passions eager for present pleasure, are qualities that appear late, and are very slowly developed, in the infantile mind; that no real reliance whatever can be placed upon them in the early years of life; and that, moreover, one of the chief and expressly intended objects of the establishment of the parental relation is to provide, in the mature reason and reflection of the father and mother, the means of guidance which the embryo reason and reflection of the child could not afford during the period of his immaturity.

The two great Elements of Parental Obligation

Indeed, the chief end and aim of the parental relation, as designed by the Author of nature, may be considered as comprised, it would seem, in these two objects, namely: first, the *support* of the child by the *strength* of his parents during the period necessary for the development of *his* strength, and, secondly, his guidance and direction by their *reason* during the development of his reason. The second of these obligations is no less imperious than the first. To expect him to provide the means of his support from the resources of his own embryo strength, would imply no greater misapprehension on the part of his father and mother than to look for the exercise of any really controlling influence over his conduct by his embryo reason. The expectation in the two cases would be equally vain. The only difference would be that, in the failure which would inevitably result from the trial, it would be in the one case the body that would suffer, and in the other the soul.

The Judgment more slowly developed than the Strength

Indeed, the necessity that the conduct of the child should be controlled by the reason of the parents is in one point of view greater, or at least more protracted, than that his wants should be supplied by their power; for the development of the thinking and reasoning powers is late and slow in comparison with the advancement toward maturity of the physical powers. It is considered that a boy attains, in this country, to a sufficient degree of strength at the age of from *seven to ten* years to earn his living; but his reason is not sufficiently mature to make it safe to intrust him with the care of himself and of his affairs, in the judgment of the law, till he is of more than twice that age.

The parents can actually thus sooner look to the *strength* of the child for his support than they can to his *reason* for his guidance.

What Parents have to do in Respect to the Reasoning Powers of Children

To aid in the development and cultivation of the thinking and reasoning powers is doubtless a very important part of a parent's duty. But to cultivate these faculties is one thing, while to make any control which may be procured for them over the mind of the child the basis of government, is another. To explain the reasons of our commands is excellent, if it is done in the right time and manner. The wrong time is when the question of obedience is pending, and the wrong manner is when they are offered as inducements to obey. We may offer reasons for *recommendations*, when we leave the child to judge of their force, and to act according to our recommendations or not, as his judgment shall dictate. But reasons should never be given as inducements to obey a command. The more completely the obedience to a command rests on the principle of simple submission to authority, the easier and better it will be both for parent and child.

Manner of exercising Authority

Let no reader fall into the error of supposing that the mother's making her authority the basis of her government renders it necessary for her to assume a stern and severe aspect towards her children, in her intercourse with them; or to issue her commands in a harsh, abrupt, and imperious manner; or always to refrain from explaining, at the time, the reasons for a command or a prohibition. The more gentle the manner, and the more kind and courteous the tones in which the mother's wishes are expressed, the better, provided only that the wishes, however expressed, are really the mandates of an authority which is to be yielded to at once without question or delay. She may say, "Mary, will you please to leave your doll and take this letter for me into the library to your father?" or, "Johnny, in five minutes it will be time for you to put your blocks away to go to bed; I will tell you when the time is out;" or, "James, look at the clock"—to call his attention to the fact that the time is arrived for him to go to school. No matter, in a word, under how mild and gentle a form the mother's commands are given, provided only that the children are trained to understand that they are at once to be obeyed.

A second Objection

Another large class of mothers are deterred from making any efficient effort to establish their authority over their children for fear of thereby alienating their affections. "I wish my child to love me," says a mother of this class. "That is the supreme and never-ceasing wish of my heart; and if I am continually thwarting and constraining her by my authority, she will soon learn to consider me an obstacle to her happiness, and I shall become an object of her aversion and dislike."

There is some truth, no doubt, in this statement thus expressed, but it is not applicable to the case, for the reason that there is no need whatever for a mother's "continually thwarting and constraining" her children in her efforts to establish her authority over them. The love which they will feel for her will depend in a great measure upon the degree in which she sympathizes and takes part with them in their occupations, their enjoyments, their disappointments, and their sorrows, and in which she indulges their child-like desires. The love, however, awakened by these means will be not weakened nor endangered, but immensely strengthened and confirmed, by the exercise on her part of a just and equable, but firm and absolute, authority. This must always be true so long as a feeling of respect for the object of affection tends to strengthen, and not to weaken, the sentiment of love. The mother who does not govern her children is bringing them up not to love her, but to despise her.

Effect of Authority

If, besides being their playmate, their companion, and friend, indulgent in respect to all their harmless fancies, and patient and forbearing with their childish faults and foolishness, she also exercises in cases requiring it an authority over them which, though just and gentle, is yet absolute and supreme, she rises to a very exalted position in their view. Their affection for her has infused into it an element which greatly aggrandizes and ennobles it—an element somewhat analogous to that sentiment of lofty devotion which a loyal subject feels for his queen.

Effect of the Want of Authority

On the other hand, if she is inconsiderate enough to attempt to win a place in her children's hearts by the sacrifice of her maternal authority, she will never succeed in securing a place there that is worth possessing. The children will all, girls and boys alike, see and understand her weakness, and they will soon learn to look down upon her, instead of looking up to her, as they ought. As they grow older they will all become more and more unmanageable. The insubordination of the girls must generally be endured, but that of the boys will in time grow to be intolerable, and it will become necessary to send them away to school, or to adopt some other plan for ridding the house of their turbulence, and relieving the poor mother's heart of the insupportable burden she has to bear in finding herself contemned and trampled upon by her own children. In the earlier years of life the feeling entertained for their mother in such a case by the children is simply that of contempt; for the sentiment of gratitude which will modify it in time is very late to be developed, and has not yet begun to act. In later years, however, when the boys have become young men, this sentiment of gratitude begins to come in, but it only changes the contempt into pity. And when years have passed away, and the mother is perhaps in her grave, her sons think of her with a mingled feeling excited by the conjoined remembrance of her helpless imbecility and of her true maternal love, and say to each other, with a smile, "Poor dear mother! what a time she had of it trying to govern us boys!"

If a mother is willing to have her children thus regard her with contempt pure and simple while they are children, and with contempt transformed into pity by the infusion of a tardy sentiment of gratitude, when they are grown, she may try the plan of endeavoring to secure their love by *indulging* them without *governing* them. But if she sets her heart on being the object through life of their respectful love, she may indulge them as much as she pleases; but she *must govern* them.

Indulgence

A great deal is said sometimes about the evils of indulgence in the management of children; and so far as the condemnation refers only to indulgence in what is injurious or evil, it is doubtless very just. But the harm is not in the indulgence itself—that is, in the act of affording gratification to the child—but in the injurious or dangerous nature of the things indulged in. It seems to me that children are not generally indulged enough. They are thwarted and restrained in respect to the gratification of their harmless wishes a great deal too much. Indeed, as a general rule, the more that children are gratified in respect to their childish fancies and impulses, and even their caprices, when no evil or danger is to be apprehended, the better.

When, therefore, a child asks, "May I do this?" or, "May I do that?" the question for the mother to consider is not whether the thing proposed is a wise or a foolish thing to do—that is, whether it would be wise or foolish for *her*, if she, with her ideas and feelings, were in the place of the child—

but only whether there is any harm or danger in it; and if not, she should give her ready and cordial consent.

Antagonism between Free Indulgence and Absolute Control

There is no necessary antagonism, nor even any inconsistency, between the freest indulgence of children and the maintenance of the most absolute authority over them. Indeed, the authority can be most easily established in connection with great liberality of indulgence. At any rate, it will be very evident, on reflection, that the two principles do not stand at all in opposition to each other, as is often vaguely supposed. Children may be greatly indulged, and yet perfectly governed. On the other hand, they may be continually checked and thwarted, and their lives made miserable by a continued succession of vexations, restrictions, and refusals, and yet not be governed at all. An example will, however, best illustrate this.

Mode of Management with Louisa

A mother, going to the village by a path across the fields, proposed to her little daughter Louisa to go with her for a walk.

Louisa asked if she might invite her Cousin Mary to go too. "Yes," said her mother; "I *think* she is not at home; but you can go and see, if you like."

Louisa went to see, and returned in a few minutes, saying that Mary was *not* at home.

"Never mind," replied her mother; "it was polite in you to wish to invite her."

They set out upon the walk. Louisa runs hither and thither over the grass, returning continually to her mother to bring her flowers and curiosities. Her mother looks at them all, seems to approve of, and to sympathize in, Louisa's wonder and delight, and even points out new charms in the objects which she brings to her, that Louisa had not observed.

At length Louisa spied a butterfly.

"Mother," said she, "here's a butterfly. May I run and catch him?"

"You may try," said her mother.

Louisa ran till she was tired, and then came back to her mother, looking a little disappointed.

"I could not catch him, mother."

"Never mind," said her mother, "you had a good time trying, at any rate. Perhaps you will see another by-and-by. You may possibly see a bird, and you can try and see if you can catch *him*."

So Louisa ran off to play again, satisfied and happy.

A little farther on a pretty tree was growing, not far from the path on one side. A short, half-decayed log lay at the foot of the tree, overtopped and nearly concealed by a growth of raspberry-bushes, grass, and wild flowers.

"Louisa," said the mother, "do you see that tree with the pretty flowers at the foot of it?"

"Yes, mother."

"I would rather not have you go near that tree. Come over to this side of the path, and keep on this side till you get by."

Louisa began immediately to obey, but as she was crossing the path she looked up to her mother and asked why she must not go near the tree.

"I am glad you would like to know why," replied her mother, "and I will tell you the reason as soon as we get past."

Louisa kept on the other side of the path until the tree was left well behind, and then came back to her mother to ask for the promised reason.

"It was because I heard that there was a wasp's nest under that tree," said her mother.

"A wasp's nest!" repeated Louisa, with a look of alarm.

"Yes," rejoined her mother, "and I was afraid that the wasps might sting you."

Louisa paused a moment, and then, looking back towards the tree, said,

"I am glad I did not go near it."

"And I am glad that you obeyed me so readily," said her mother. "I knew you would obey me at once, without my giving any reason. I did not wish to tell you the reason, for fear of frightening you while you were passing by the tree. But I knew that you would obey me without any reason. You always do, and that is why I always like to have you go with me when I take a walk."

Louisa is much gratified by this commendation, and the effect of it, and of the whole incident, in confirming and strengthening the principle of obedience in her heart, is very much greater than rebukes or punishments for any overt act of disobedience could possibly be.

"But, mother," asked Louisa, "how did you know that there was a wasp's nest under that tree?"

"One of the boys told me so," replied her mother.

"And do you really think there is one there?" asked Louisa.

"No," replied her mother, "I do not really think there is. Boys are very apt to imagine such things."

"Then why would you not let me go there?" asked Louisa.

"Because there *might be* one there, and so I thought it safer for you not to go near."

Louisa now left her mother's side and resumed her excursions, running this way and that, in every direction, over the fields, until at length, her strength beginning to fail, she came back to her mother, out of breath, and with a languid air, saying that she was too tired to go any farther.

"I am tired, too," said her mother; "we had better find a place to sit down to rest."

"Where shall we find one?" asked Louisa.

"I see a large stone out there before us a little way," said her mother.

"How will that do?"

"I mean to go and try it," said Louisa; and, having seemingly recovered her breath, she ran forward to try the stone. By the time that her mother reached the spot she was ready to go on.

These and similar incidents marked the whole progress of the walk.

We see that in such a case as this firm government and free indulgence are conjoined; and that, far from there being any antagonism between them, they may work together in perfect harmony.

Mode of Management with Hannah

On the other hand, there may be an extreme limitation in respect to a mother's indulgence of her children, while yet she has no government over them at all. We shall see how this might be by the case of little Hannah.

Hannah was asked by her mother to go with her across the fields to the village under circumstances similar to those of Louisa's invitation, except that the real motive of Hannah's mother, in proposing that Hannah should accompany her, was to have the child's help in bringing home her parcels.

"Yes, mother," said Hannah, in reply to her mother's invitation, "I should like to go; and I will go and ask Cousin Sarah to go too."

"Oh no," rejoined her mother, "why do you wish Sarah to go? She will only be a trouble to us."

"She won't be any trouble at all, mother, and I mean to go and ask her," said Hannah; and, putting on her bonnet, she set off towards the gate.

"No, Hannah," insisted her mother, "you *must not* go. I don't wish to have Sarah go with us to-day."

Hannah paid no attention to this prohibition, but ran off to find Sarah.

After a few minutes she returned, saying that Sarah was not at home.

"I am glad of it," said her mother; "I told you not to go to ask her, and you did very wrong to disobey me. I have a great mind not to let you go yourself."

Hannah ran off in the direction of the path, not caring for the censure or for the threat, knowing well that they would result in nothing.

Her mother followed. When they reached the pastures Hannah began running here and there over the grass.

"Hannah!" said her mother, speaking in a stern and reproachful tone; "what do you keep running about so for all the time, Hannah? You'll get tired out before we get to the village, and then you'll be teasing me to let you stop and rest. Come and walk along quietly with me."

But Hannah paid no attention whatever to this injunction. She ran to and fro among the rocks and clumps of bushes, and once or twice she brought to her mother flowers or other curious things that she found.

"Those things are not good for any thing, child," said her mother. "They are nothing but common weeds and trash. Besides, I told you not to run about so much. Why can't you come and walk quietly along the path, like a sensible person?"

Hannah paid no attention to this reiteration of her mother's command, but continued to run about as before.

"Hannah," repeated her mother, "come back into the path. I have told you again and again that you must come and walk with me, and you don't pay the least heed to what I say. By-and-by you will fall into some hole, or tear your clothes against the bushes, or get pricked with the briers. You must not, at any rate, go a step farther from the path than you are now."

Hannah walked on, looking for flowers and curiosities, and receding farther and farther from the path, for a time, and then returning towards it again, according to her own fancy or caprice, without paying any regard to her mother's directions.

"Hannah," said her mother, "you *must not* go so far away from the path. Then, besides, you are coming to a tree where there is a wasps' nest. You must not go near that tree; if you do, you will get stung."

Hannah went on, looking for flowers, and gradually drawing nearer to the tree.

"Hannah!" exclaimed her mother, "I tell you that you must not go near that tree. You will *certainly* get stung."

Hannah went on—somewhat hesitatingly and cautiously, it is true—towards the foot of the tree, and, seeing no signs of wasps there, she began gathering the flowers that grew at the foot of it.

"Hannah! Hannah!" exclaimed her mother; "I told you not to go near that tree! Get your flowers quick, if you must get them, and come away."

Hannah went on gathering the flowers at her leisure.

"You will *certainly* get stung," said her mother.

"I don't believe there is any hornets' nest here," replied Hannah.

"Wasps' nest," said her mother; "it was a wasps' nest."

"Or wasps' nest either," said Hannah.

"Yes," rejoined her mother, "the boys said there was."

"That's nothing," said Hannah; "the boys think there are wasps' nests in a great many places where there are not any."

After a time Hannah, having gathered all the flowers she wished for, came back at her leisure towards her mother.

"I told you not to go to that tree," said her mother, reproachfully.

"You told me I should *certainly* get stung if I went there," rejoined Hannah, "and I didn't."

"Well, you *might* have got stung," said her mother, and so walked on.

Pretty soon after this Hannah said that she was tired of walking so far, and wished to stop and rest.

"No," replied her mother, "I told you that you would get tired if you ran about so much; but you would do it, and so now I shall not stop for you at all."

Hannah said that *she* should stop, at any rate; so she sat down upon a log by the way-side. Her mother said that *she* should go on and leave her. So her mother walked on, looking back now and then, and calling Hannah to come. But finding that Hannah did not come, she finally found a place to sit down herself and wait for her.

The Principle illustrated by this Case

Many a mother will see the image of her own management of her children reflected without exaggeration or distortion in this glass; and, as the former story shows how the freest indulgence is compatible with the maintenance of the most absolute authority, this enables us to see how a perpetual resistance to the impulses and desires of children may co-exist with no government over them at all.

Let no mother fear, then, that the measures necessary to establish for her the most absolute authority over her children will at all curtail her power to promote their happiness. The maintenance of the best possible government over them will not in any way prevent her yielding to them all the harmless gratifications they may desire. She may indulge them in all their childish impulses, fancies, and even caprices, to their heart's content, without at all weakening her authority over them. Indeed, she may make these very indulgences the means of strengthening her authority. But without the authority she can never develop in the hearts of her children the only kind of love that is worth possessing—namely, that in which the feeling of affection is dignified and ennobled by the sentiment of respect.

One more Consideration

There is one consideration which, if properly appreciated, would have an overpowering influence on the mind of every mother in inducing her to establish and maintain a firm authority over her child during the early years of his life, and that is the possibility that he may not live to reach maturity. Should the terrible calamity befall her of being compelled to follow her boy, yet young, to his grave, the character of her grief, and the degree of distress and anguish which it will occasion her, will depend very much upon the memories which his life and his relations to her have left in her soul. When she returns to her home, bowed down by the terrible burden of her bereavement, and wanders over the now desolated rooms which were the scenes of his infantile occupations and joys, and sees the now useless playthings and books, and the various objects of curiosity and interest with which he was so often and so busily engaged, there can, of course, be nothing which can really assuage her overwhelming grief; but it will make a vital difference in the character of this grief, whether the image of her boy, as it takes its fixed and final position in her memory and in her heart, is associated with recollections of docility, respectful regard for his mother's wishes, and of ready and unquestioning submission to her authority and obedience to her commands; or whether, on the other hand, the picture of his past life, which is to remain forever in her heart, is to be distorted and marred by memories of outbreaks, acts of ungovernable impulse and insubordination, habitual disregard of all authority, and disrespectful, if not contemptuous, treatment of his mother.

There is a sweetness as well as a bitterness of grief; and something like a feeling of joy and gladness will spring up in the mother's heart, and mingle with and soothe her sorrow, if she can think of her boy, when he is gone, as always docile, tractable, submissive to her authority, and obedient to her commands. Such recollections, it is true, can not avail to remove her grief—perhaps not even to diminish its intensity; but they will greatly assuage the bitterness of it, and wholly take away its *sting*.

CHAPTER IV. GENTLE PUNISHMENT OF DISOBEDIENCE

Children have no natural instinct of obedience to their parents, though they have other instincts by means of which the habit of obedience, as an acquisition, can easily be formed.

The true state of the case is well illustrated by what we observe among the lower animals. The hen can call her chickens when she has food for them, or when any danger threatens, and they come to her. They come, however, simply under the impulse of a desire for food or fear of danger, not from any instinctive desire to conform their action to their mother's will; or, in other words, with no idea of submission to parental authority. It is so, substantially, with many other animals whose habits in respect to the relation between parents and offspring come under human observation. The colt and the calf follow and keep near the mother, not from any instinct of desire to conform their conduct to her will, but solely from love of food, or fear of danger. These last are strictly instinctive. They act spontaneously, and require no training of any sort to establish or to maintain them.

The case is substantially the same with children. They run to their mother by instinct, when want, fear, or pain impels them. They require no teaching or training for this. But for them to come simply because their mother wishes them to come—to be controlled, in other words, by her will, instead of by their own impulses, is a different thing altogether. They have no instinct for that. They have only a *capacity for its development*.

Instincts and Capacities

It may, perhaps, be maintained that there is no real difference between instincts and capacities, and it certainly is possible that they may pass into each other by insensible gradations. Still, practically, and in reference to our treatment of any intelligent nature which is in course of gradual development under our influence, the difference is wide. The dog has an instinct impelling him to attach himself to and follow his master; but he has no instinct leading him to draw his master's cart. He requires no teaching for the one. It comes, of course, from the connate impulses of his nature. For the other he requires a skillful and careful training. If we find a dog who evinces no disposition to seek the society of man, but roams off into woods and solitudes alone, he is useless, and we attribute the fault to his own wolfish nature. But if he will not fetch and carry at command, or bring home a basket in his mouth from market, the fault, if there be any fault, is in his master, in not having taken the proper time and pains to train him, or in not knowing how to do it. He has an instinct leading him to attach himself to a human master, and to follow his master wherever he goes. But he has no instinct leading him to fetch and carry, or to draw carts for any body. If he shows no affection for man, it is his own fault—that is, the fault of his nature. But if he does not fetch and carry well, or go out of the room when he is ordered out, or draw steadily in a cart, it is his teacher's fault. He has not been properly trained.

Who is Responsible?

So with the child. If he does not seem to know how to take his food, or shows no disposition to run to his mother when he is hurt or when he is frightened, we have reason to suspect something wrong, or, at least, something abnormal, in his mental or physical constitution. But if he does not obey his mother's commands—no matter how insubordinate or unmanageable he may be—the fault does not, certainly, indicate any thing at all wrong in *him*. The fault is in his training. In witnessing his disobedience, our reflection should be, not "What a bad boy!" but "What an unfaithful or incompetent mother!"

I have dwelt the longer on this point because it is fundamental. As long as a mother imagines, as so many mothers seem to do, that obedience on the part of the child is, or ought to be, a matter of course, she will never properly undertake the work of training him. But when she thoroughly understands and feels that her children are not to be expected to submit their will to hers, *except so far as she forms in them the habit of doing this by special training*, the battle is half won.

Actual Instincts of Children

The natural instinct which impels her children to come at once to her for refuge and protection in all their troubles and fears, is a great source of happiness to every mother. This instinct shows itself in a thousand ways. "A mother, one morning"—I quote the anecdote from a newspaper² which came to hand while I was writing this chapter—"gave her two little ones books and toys to amuse them, while she went to attend to some work in an upper room. Half an hour passed quietly, and then a timid voice at the foot of the stairs called out:

"Mamma, are you there?"

"Yes, darling."

"All right, then!" and the child went back to its play.

"By-and-by the little voice was heard again, repeating,

"Mamma, are you there?"

"Yes."

"All right, then;" and the little ones returned again, satisfied and reassured, to their toys."

The sense of their mother's presence, or at least the certainty of her being near at hand, was necessary to their security and contentment in their plays. But this feeling was not the result of any teachings that they had received from their mother, or upon her having inculcated upon their minds in any way the necessity of their keeping always within reach of maternal protection; nor had it been acquired by their own observation or experience of dangers or difficulties which had befallen them when too far away. It was a native instinct of the soul—the same that leads the lamb and the calf to keep close to their mother's side, and causes the unweaned babe to cling to its mother's bosom, and to shrink from being put away into the crib or cradle alone.

The Responsibility rests upon the Mother

The mother is thus to understand that the principle of obedience is not to be expected to come by nature into the heart of her child, but to be implanted by education. She must understand this so fully as to feel that if she finds that her children are disobedient to her commands—leaving out of view cases of peculiar and extraordinary temptation—it is *her* fault, not theirs. Perhaps I ought not to say her *fault* exactly, for she may have done as well as she knows how; but, at any rate, her failure. Instead, therefore, of being angry with them, or fretting and complaining about the trouble they give her, she should leave them, as it were, out of the case, and turn her thoughts to herself, and to her own management, with a view to the discovery and the correcting of her own derelictions and errors. In a word, she must set regularly and systematically about the work of *teaching* her children to subject their will to hers.

² The "Boston Congregationalist."

Three Methods

I shall give three principles of management, or rather three different classes of measures, by means of which children may certainly be made obedient. The most perfect success will be attained by employing them all. But they require very different degrees of skill and tact on the part of the mother. The first requires very little skill. It demands only steadiness, calmness, and perseverance. The second draws much more upon the mother's mental resources, and the last, most of all. Indeed, as will presently be seen, there is no limit to the amount of tact and ingenuity, not to say genius, which may be advantageously exercised in the last method. The first is the most essential; and it will alone, if faithfully carried out, accomplish the end. The second, if the mother has the tact and skill to carry it into effect, will aid very much in accomplishing the result, and in a manner altogether more agreeable to both parties. The third will make the work of forming the habit of obedience on the part of the mother, and of acquiring it on the part of the child, a source of the highest enjoyment to both. But then, unfortunately, it requires more skill and dexterity, more gentleness of touch, so to speak, and a more delicate constitution of soul, than most mothers can be expected to possess.

But let us see what the three methods are.

First Method

1. The first principle is that the mother should so regulate her management of her child, that he should *never* gain any desired end by any act of insubmission, but *always* incur some small trouble, inconvenience, or privation, by disobeying or neglecting to obey his mother's command. The important words in this statement of the principle are *never* and *always*. It is the absolute certainty that disobedience will hurt him, and not help him, in which the whole efficacy of the rule consists.

It is very surprising how small a punishment will prove efficacious if it is only *certain* to follow the transgression. You may set apart a certain place for a prison—a corner of the sofa, a certain ottoman, a chair, a stool, any thing will answer; and the more entirely every thing like an air of displeasure or severity is excluded, in the manner of making the preliminary arrangements, the better. A mother without any tact, or any proper understanding of the way in which the hearts and minds of young children are influenced, will begin, very likely, with a scolding.

"Children, you are getting very disobedient. I have to speak three or four times before you move to do what I say. Now, I am going to have a prison. The prison is to be that dark closet, and I am going to shut you up in it for half an hour every time you disobey. Now, remember! The very next time!"

Empty Threatening

Mothers who govern by threatening seldom do any thing but threaten. Accordingly, the first time the children disobey her, after such an announcement, she says nothing, if the case happens to be one in which the disobedience occasions her no particular trouble. The next time, when the transgression is a little more serious, she thinks, very rightly perhaps, that to be shut up half an hour in a dark closet would be a disproportionate punishment. Then, when at length some very willful and grave act of insubordination occurs, she happens to be in particularly good-humor, for some reason, and has not the heart to shut "the poor thing" in the closet; or, perhaps, there is company present, and she does not wish to make a scene. So the penalty announced with so much emphasis turns out to be a dead letter, as the children knew it would from the beginning.

How Discipline may be both Gentle and Efficient

With a little dexterity and tact on the mother's part, the case may be managed very differently, and with a very different result. Let us suppose that some day, while she is engaged with her sewing or her other household duties, and her children are playing around her, she tells them that in some great schools in Europe, when the boys are disobedient, or violate the rules, they are shut up for punishment in a kind of prison; and perhaps she entertains them with invented examples of boys that would not go to prison, and had to be taken there by force, and kept there longer on account of their contumacy; and also of other noble boys, tall and handsome, and the best players on the grounds, who went readily when they had done wrong and were ordered into confinement, and bore their punishment like men, and who were accordingly set free all the sooner on that account. Then she proposes to them the idea of adopting that plan herself, and asks them to look all about the room and find a good seat which they can have for their prison—one end of the sofa, perhaps, a stool in a corner, or a box used as a house for a kitten. I once knew an instance where a step before a door leading to a staircase served as penitentiary, and sitting upon it for a minute or less was the severest punishment required to maintain most perfect discipline in a family of young children for a long time.

When any one of the children violated any rule or direction which had been enjoined upon them—as, for example, when they left the door open in coming in or going out, in the winter; or interrupted their mother when she was reading, instead of standing quietly by her side and waiting until she looked up from her book and gave them leave to speak to her; or used any violence towards each other, by pushing, or pulling, or struggling for a plaything or a place; or did not come promptly to her when called; or did not obey at once the first command in any case, the mother would say simply, "Mary!" or "James! Prison!" She would pronounce this sentence without any appearance of displeasure, and often with a smile, as if they were only playing prison, and then, in a very few minutes after they had taken the penitential seat, she would say *Free!* which word set them at liberty again.

Must begin at the Beginning

I have no doubt that some mothers, in reading this, will say that such management as this is mere trifling and play; and that real and actual children, with all their natural turbulence, insubordination, and obstinacy, can never be really governed by any such means. I answer that whether it proves on trial to be merely trifling and play or not depends upon the firmness, steadiness, and decision with which the mother carries it into execution. Every method of management requires firmness, perseverance, and decision on the part of the mother to make it successful, but, with these qualities duly exercised, it is astonishing what slight and gentle penalties will suffice for the most complete establishment of her authority. I knew a mother whose children were trained to habits of almost perfect obedience, and whose only method of punishment, so far as I know, was to require the offender to stand on one foot and count five, ten, or twenty, according to the nature and aggravation of the offense. Such a mother, of course, begins early with her children. She trains them from their earliest years to this constant subjection of their will to hers. Such penalties, moreover, owe their efficiency not to the degree of pain or inconvenience that they impose upon the offender, but mainly upon their *calling his attention, distinctly*, after every offense, to the fact that he has done wrong. Slight as this is, it will prove to be sufficient if it *always* comes—if no case of disobedience or of willful wrong-doing of any kind is allowed to pass unnoticed, or is not followed by the infliction of the proper penalty. It is in all cases the certainty, and not the severity, of punishment which constitutes its power.

Suppose one is not at the Beginning

What has been said thus far relates obviously to cases where the mother is at the commencement of her work of training. This is the way to *begin*; but you can not begin unless you are at the beginning. If your children are partly grown, and you find that they are not under your command, the difficulty is much greater. The principles which should govern the management are the same, but they can not be applied by means so gentle. The prison, it may be, must now be somewhat more real, the terms of imprisonment somewhat longer, and there may be cases of insubordination so decided as to require the offender to be carried to it by force, on account of his refusal to go of his own accord, and perhaps to be held there, or even to be tied. Cases requiring treatment so decisive as this must be very rare with children under ten years of age; and when they occur, the mother has reason to feel great self-condemnation—or at least great self-abasement—at finding that she has failed so entirely in the first great moral duty of the mother, which is to train her children to complete submission to her authority from the beginning.

Children coming under New Control

Sometimes, however, it happens that children are transferred from one charge to another, so that the one upon whom the duty of government devolves, perhaps only for a time, finds that the child or children put under his or her charge have been trained by previous mismanagement to habits of utter insubordination. I say, trained to such habits, for the practice of allowing children to gain their ends by any particular means is really training them to the use of those means. Thus multitudes of children are taught to disobey, and trained to habits of insubmission and insubordination, by the means most effectually adapted to that end.

Difficulties

When under these circumstances the children come under a new charge, whether permanently or temporarily, the task of re-form in or their characters is more delicate and difficult than where one can begin at the beginning; but the principles are the same, and the success is equally certain. The difficulty is somewhat increased by the fact that the person thus provisionally in charge has often no natural authority over the child, and the circumstances may moreover be such as to make it necessary to abstain carefully from any measures that would lead to difficulty or collision, to cries, complaints to the mother, or any of those other forms of commotion or annoyance, which ungoverned children know so well how to employ in gaining their ends. The mother may be one of those weak-minded women who can never see any thing unreasonable in the crying complaints made by their children against other people. Or she may be sick, and it may be very important to avoid every thing that could agitate or disturb her.

George and Egbert

This last was the case of George, a young man of seventeen, who came to spend some time at home after an absence of two years in the city. He found his mother sick, and his little brother, Egbert, utterly insubordinate and unmanageable.

"The first thing I have to do," said George to himself, when he observed how things were, "is to get command of Egbert;" and as the first lesson which he gave his little brother illustrates well the principle of gentle but efficient punishment, I will give it here.

Egbert was ten years of age. He was very fond of going a-fishing, but he was not allowed to go alone. His mother, very weak and vacillating about some things, was extremely decided about this. So Egbert had learned to submit to this restriction, as he would have done to all others if his mother had been equally decided in respect to all.

The first thing that Egbert thought of the next morning after his brother's return was that George might go a-fishing with him.

"I don't know," replied George, in a hesitating and doubtful tone. "I don't know whether it will do for me to go a-fishing with you. I don't know whether I can depend upon your always obeying me and doing as I say."

Egbert made very positive promises, and so it was decided to go. George took great interest in helping Egbert about his fishing-tackle, and did all in his power in other ways to establish friendly relations with him, and at length they set out. They walked a little distance down what was in the winter a wood road, and then came to a place where two paths led into a wood. Either of them led to the river. But there was a brook to cross, and for one of these paths there was a bridge. There was none for the other. George said that they would take the former. Egbert, however, paid no regard to this direction, but saying simply "No, I'd rather go this way," walked off in the other path.

"I was afraid you would not obey me," said George, and then turned and followed Egbert into the forbidden path, without making any further objection. Egbert concluded at once that he should find George as easily to be managed as he had found other people.

The Disobedience

When they came in sight of the brook, George saw that there was a narrow log across it, in guise of a bridge. He called out to Egbert, who had gone on before him, not to go over the log until *he* came. But Egbert called back in reply that there was no danger, that he could go across alone, and so went boldly over. George, on arriving at the brook, and finding that the log was firm and strong, followed Egbert over it. "I told you I could go across it," said Egbert. "Yes," replied George, "and you were right in that. You did cross it. The log is very steady. I think it makes quite a good bridge."

Egbert said he could hop across it on one foot, and George gave him leave to try, while he, George, held his fishing-pole for him. George followed him over the log, and then told him that he was very sorry to say it, but that he found that they could not go a-fishing that day. Egbert wished to know the reason. George said it was a private reason and he could not tell him then, but that he would tell him that evening after he had gone to bed. There was a story about it, too, he said, that he would tell him at the same time.

Egbert was curious to know what the reason could be for changing the plan, and also to hear the story. Still he was extremely disappointed in having to lose his fishing, and very much disposed to be angry with George for not going on. It was, however, difficult to get very angry without knowing George's reason, and George, though he said that the reason was a good one—that it was a serious difficulty in the way of going a-fishing that day, which had only come to his knowledge since they left home, steadily persisted in declining to explain what the difficulty was until the evening, and began slowly to walk back toward the house.

Egbert becomes Sullen

Egbert then declared that, at any rate, he would not go home. If he could not go a-fishing he would stay there in the woods. George readily fell in with this idea. "Here is a nice place for me to sit down on this flat rock under the trees," said he, "and I have got a book in my pocket. You can play about in the woods as long as you please. Perhaps you will see a squirrel; if you do, tell me, and I will come and help you catch him." So saying, he took out his book and sat down under the trees

and began to read. Egbert, after loitering about sullenly a few minutes, began to walk up the path, and said that he was going home.

George, however, soon succeeded in putting him in good-humor again by talking with him in a friendly manner, and without manifesting any signs of displeasure, and also by playing with him on the way. He took care to keep on friendly terms with him all the afternoon, aiding him in his various undertakings, and contributing to his amusement in every way as much as he could, while he made no complaint, and expressed no dissatisfaction with him in any way whatever.

Final Disposition of the Case

After Egbert had gone to bed, and before he went to sleep, George made him a visit at his bedside, and, after a little playful frolic with him, to put him in special good-humor, said he would make his explanation.

"The reason why I had to give up the fishing expedition," he said, "was, I found that I could not depend upon your obeying me."

Egbert, after a moment's pause, said that he did not disobey him; and when George reminded him of his taking the path that he was forbidden to take, and of his crossing the log bridge against orders, he said that that path led to the river by the shortest way, and that he knew that the log was firm and steady, and that he could go over it without falling in. "And so you thought you had good reasons for disobeying me," rejoined George. "Yes," said Egbert, triumphantly. "That is just it," said George. "You are willing to obey, except when you think you have good reasons for disobeying, and then you disobey. That's the way a great many boys do, and that reminds me of the story I was going to tell you. It is about some soldiers."

George then told Egbert a long story about a colonel who sent a captain with a company of men on a secret expedition with specific orders, and the captain disobeyed the orders and crossed a stream with his force, when he had been directed to remain on the hither side of it, thinking himself that it would be better to cross, and in consequence of it he and all his force were captured by the enemy, who were lying in ambush near by, as the colonel knew, though the captain did not know it. George concluded his story with some very forcible remarks, showing, in a manner adapted to Egbert's state of mental development, how essential it was to the character of a good soldier that he should obey implicitly all the commands of his superior, without ever presuming to disregard them on the ground of his seeing good reason for doing so.

He then went on to relate another story of an officer on whom the general could rely for implicit and unhesitating obedience to all his commands, and who was sent on an important expedition with orders, the reasons for which he did not understand, but all of which he promptly obeyed, and thus brought the expedition to a successful conclusion. He made the story interesting to Egbert by narrating many details of a character adapted to Egbert's comprehension, and at the end drew a moral from it for his instruction.

The Moral

This moral was not, as some readers might perhaps anticipate, and as, indeed, many persons of less tact might have made it, that Egbert ought himself, as a boy, to obey those in authority over him. Instead of this he closed by saying: "And I advise you, if you grow up to be a man and ever become the general of an army, never to trust any captain or colonel with the charge of an important enterprise, unless they are men that know how to obey." Egbert answered very gravely that he was "determined that he wouldn't."

Soon after this George bade him good-night and went away. The next day he told Egbert not to be discouraged at his not having yet learned to obey. "There are a great many boys older than you,"

he said, "who have not learned this lesson; but you will learn in time. I can't go a-fishing with you, or undertake any other great expeditions, till I find I can trust you entirely to do exactly as I say in cases where I have a right to decide; but you will learn before long, and then we can do a great many things together which we can not do now."

The Principles Illustrated

Any one who has any proper understanding of the workings of the juvenile mind will see that George, by managing Egbert on these principles, would in a short time acquire complete ascendancy over him, while the boy would very probably remain, in relation to his mother, as disobedient and insubordinate as ever. If the penalty annexed to the transgression is made as much as possible the necessary and natural consequence of it, and is insisted upon calmly, deliberately, and with inflexible decision, but without irritation, without reproaches, almost without any indications even of displeasure, but is, on the contrary, lightened as much as possible by sympathy and kindness, and by taking the most indulgent views, and admitting the most palliating considerations in respect to the nature of the offense, the result will certainly be the establishment of the authority of the parent or guardian on a firm and permanent basis.

There are a great many cases of this kind, where a child with confirmed habits of insubordination comes under the charge of a person who is not responsible for the formation of these habits. Even the mother herself sometimes finds herself in substantially this position with her own children; as, for example, when after some years of lax and inefficient government she becomes convinced that her management has been wrong, and that it threatens to bring forth bitter fruits unless it is reformed. In these cases, although the work is somewhat more difficult, the principles on which success depends are the same. Slight penalties, firmly, decisively, and invariably enforced—without violence, without scolding, without any manifestation of resentment or anger, and, except in extreme cases, without even expressions of displeasure—constitute a system which, if carried out calmly, but with firmness and decision, will assuredly succeed.

The real Difficulty

The case would thus seem to be very simple, and success very easy. But, alas! this is far from being the case. Nothing is required, it is true, but firmness, steadiness, and decision; but, unfortunately, these are the very requisites which, of all others, it seems most difficult for mothers to command. They can not govern their children because they can not govern themselves.

Still, if the mother possess these qualities in any tolerable degree, or is able to acquire them, this method of training her children to the habit of submitting implicitly to her authority, by calmly and good-naturedly, but firmly and invariably, affixing some slight privation or penalty to every act of resistance to her will, is the easiest to practice, and will certainly be successful. It requires no ingenuity, no skill, no contrivance, no thought—nothing but steady persistence in a simple routine. This was the first of the three modes of action enumerated at the commencement of this discussion. There were two others named, which, though requiring higher qualities in the mother than simple steadiness of purpose, will make the work far more easy and agreeable, where these qualities are possessed.

Some further consideration of the subject of punishment, with special reference to the light in which it is to be regarded in respect to its nature and its true mode of action, will occupy the next chapter.

CHAPTER V. THE PHILOSOPHY OF PUNISHMENT

It is very desirable that every parent and teacher should have a distinct and clear conception of the true nature of punishment, and of the precise manner in which it is designed to act in repressing offenses. This is necessary in order that the punitive measures which he may employ may accomplish the desired good, and avoid the evils which so often follow in their train.

Nature and Design of Punishment

The first question which is to be considered in determining upon the principles to be adopted and the course to be pursued with children in respect to punishment, is, which of the two views in respect to the nature and design of punishment which prevail in the minds of men we will adopt in shaping our system. For,

1. Punishment may be considered in the light of a vindictive retribution for sin—a penalty demanded by the eternal principles of justice as the natural and proper sequel and complement of the past act of transgression, with or without regard to any salutary effects that may result from it in respect to future acts. Or,

2. It may be considered as a remedial measure, adopted solely with reference to its influence as a means of deterring the subject of it, or others, from transgression in time to come.

According to the first view, punishment is a *penalty* which *justice* demands as a satisfaction for the past. According to the other it is a *remedy* which *goodness* devises for the benefit of the future.

Theologians have lost themselves in endless speculations on the question how far, in the government of God, punishment is to be considered as possessing one or the other of these two characters, or both combined. There seems to be also some uncertainty in the minds of men in relation to the precise light in which the penalties of violated law are to be regarded by civil governments, and the spirit in which they are to be administered—they being apparently, as prescribed and employed by most governments, in some respects, and to some extent, retributive and vindictive, and in other respects remedial and curative.

It would seem, however, that in respect to school and family government there could be no question on this point. The punishment of a child by a parent, or of a pupil by a teacher, ought certainly, one would think, to exclude the element of vindictive retribution altogether, and to be employed solely with reference to the salutary influences that may be expected from it in time to come. If the injunction "Vengeance is mine, I will repay it, saith the Lord" is to be recognized at all, it certainly ought to be acknowledged here.

This principle, once fully and cordially admitted, simplifies the subject of punishment, as administered by parents and teachers, very much. One extremely important and very striking result of it will appear from a moment's reflection. It is this, namely:

It excludes completely and effectually all manifestations of irritation or excitement in the infliction of punishment—all harsh tones of voice, all scowling or angry looks, all violent or threatening gesticulations, and every other mode, in fact, of expressing indignation or passion. Such indications as these are wholly out of place in punishment considered as the *application of a remedy* devised beneficently with the sole view of accomplishing a future good. They comport only with punishment considered as vengeance, or a vindictive retribution for the past sin.

This idea is fundamental. The mother who is made angry by the misconduct of her children, and punishes them in a passion, acts under the influence of a brute instinct. Her family government is in principle the same as that of the lower animals over their young. It is, however, at any rate, a *government*; and such government is certainly better than none. But human parents, in the training

of their human offspring, ought surely to aim at something higher and nobler. They who do so, who possess themselves fully with the idea that punishment, as they are to administer it, is wholly remedial in its character—that is to say, is to be considered solely with reference to the future good to be attained by it, will have established in their minds a principle that will surely guide them into right ways, and bring them out successfully in the end. They will soon acquire the habit of never threatening, of never punishing in anger, and of calmly considering, in the case of the faults which they observe in their children, what course of procedure will be most effectual in correcting them.

Parents seem sometimes to have an idea that a manifestation of something like anger—or, at least, very serious displeasure on their part—is necessary in order to make a proper impression in respect to its fault on the mind of the child. This, however, I think, is a mistake. The impression is made by what we *do*, and not by the indications of irritation or displeasure which we manifest in doing it. To illustrate this, I will state a case, narrating all its essential points just as it occurred. The case is very analogous, in many particulars, to that of Egbert and George related in the last chapter.

Mary's Walk

"Mary," said Mary's aunt, Jane, who had come to make a visit at Mary's mother's in the country, "I am going to the village this afternoon, and if you would like you may go with me."

Mary was, of course, much pleased with this invitation.

"A part of the way," continued her aunt, "is by a path across the fields. While we are there you must keep in the path all the time, for it rained a little this morning, and I am afraid that the grass may not be quite dry."

"Yes, Aunt Jane; I'll keep in the path," said Mary.

So they set out on the walk together. When they came to the gate which led to the path across the fields, Aunt Jane said, "Remember, Mary, you must keep in the path."

Mary said nothing, but ran forward. Pretty soon she began to walk a little on the margin of the grass, and, before long, observing a place where the grass was short and where the sun shone, she ran out boldly upon it, and then, looking down at her shoes, she observed that they were not wet. She held up one of her feet to her aunt as she came opposite to the place, saying,

"See, aunt, the grass is not wet at all."

"I see it is not," said her aunt. "I *thought* it would not be wet; though I was not sure but that it might be. But come," she added, holding out her hand, "I have concluded not to go to the village, after all. We are going back home."

"Oh, Aunt Jane!" said Mary, following her aunt as she began retracing her steps along the path. "What is that for?"

"I have altered my mind," said her aunt.

"What makes you alter your mind?"

By this time Aunt Jane had taken hold of Mary's hand, and they were walking together along the path towards home.

"Because you don't obey me," she said.

"Why, auntie," said Mary, "the grass was not wet at all where I went."

"No," said her aunt, "it was perfectly dry."

"And it did not do any harm at all for me to walk upon it," said Mary.

"Not a bit of harm," said her aunt.

"Then why are you going home?" asked Mary.

"Because you don't obey me," replied her aunt.

"You see," said her aunt, "there is one thing about this that you don't understand, because you are such a little girl. You will understand it by-and-by, when you grow older; and I don't blame you for not knowing it now, because you are so young."

"What is it that I don't know?" asked Mary.

"I am afraid you would not understand it very well if I were to explain it," replied her aunt.

"Try me," said Mary.

"Well, you see," replied her aunt, "I don't feel safe with any child that does not obey me. This time no harm was done, because the grass happened to be dry; but farther on there was a brook. I might have told you not to go near the brink of the brook for fear of your falling in. Then you might have gone, notwithstanding, if you thought there was no danger, just as you went out upon the grass because you thought it was not wet, notwithstanding my saying that you must keep in the path. So you see I never feel safe in taking walks in places where there is any danger with children that I can not always depend upon to do exactly what I say."

Mary was, of course, now ready to make profuse promises that she would obey her aunt in future on all occasions and began to beg that she would continue her walk to the village.

"No," said her aunt, "I don't think it would be quite safe for me to trust to your promises, though I have no doubt you honestly mean to keep them. But you remember you promised me that you would keep in the path when we planned this walk; and yet when the time of temptation came you could not keep the promise; but you will learn. When I am going on some perfectly safe walk I will take you with me again; and if I stay here some time you will learn to obey me so perfectly that I can take you with me to any place, no matter how dangerous it may be."

Aunt Jane thus gently, but firmly, persisted in abandoning the walk to the village, and returning home; but she immediately turned the conversation away from the subject of Mary's fault, and amused her with stories and aided her in gathering flowers, just as if nothing had happened; and when she arrived at home she said nothing to any one of Mary's disobedience. Here now was punishment calculated to make a very strong impression—but still without scolding, without anger, almost, in fact, without even any manifestations of displeasure. And yet how long can any reasonable person suppose it would be before Mary would learn, if her aunt acted invariably on the same principles, to submit implicitly to her will?

A Different Management

Compare the probable result of this mode of management with the scolding and threatening policy. Suppose Aunt Jane had called to Mary angrily,

"Mary! Mary! come directly back into the path. I told you not to go out of the path, and you are a very naughty child to disobey me. The next time you disobey me in that way I will send you directly home."

Mary would have been vexed and irritated, perhaps, and would have said to herself, "How cross Aunt Jane is to-day!" but the "next time" she would have been as disobedient as ever.

If mothers, instead of scowling, scolding, and threatening now, and putting off doing the thing that ought to be done to the "next time," would do that thing at once, and give up the scowling, scolding, and threatening altogether, they would find all parties immensely benefited by the change.

It is evident, moreover, that by this mode of management the punishment is employed not in the way of retribution, but as a remedy. Mary loses her walk not on the ground that she deserved to lose it, but because it was not safe to continue it.

An Objection

Some mother may perhaps say, in reference to the case of Mary and her aunt, that it may be all very well in theory, but that practically mothers have not the leisure and the means for adopting such moderate measures. We can not stop, she may say, every time we are going to the village, on

important business perhaps, and turn back and lose the afternoon on account of the waywardness of a disobedient child.

My answer is that it will not have to be done *every time*, but only very seldom. The effect of acting once or twice on this principle, with the certainty on the part of the child that the mother or the aunt will always act so when the occasion calls for it, very soon puts an end to all necessity for such action. Indeed, if Mary, in the instance above given, had been managed in this way from infancy, she would not have thought of leaving the path when forbidden to do so. It is only in some such case as that of an aunt who knows how to manage right, coming as a visitor into the family of a mother who manages wrong, that such an incident as this could occur.

Still it must be admitted that the gentle methods of discipline, which reason and common sense indicate as the true ones for permanently influencing the minds of children and forming their characters, do, in each individual case, require more time and care than the cuffs and slaps dictated by passion. A box on the ear, such as a cat gives to a rebellious kitten, is certainly the *quickest* application that can be made. The measures that are calculated to reach and affect the heart can not vie with blows and scoldings in respect to the promptness of their action. Still, the parent or the teacher who will begin to act on the principles here recommended with children while they are young will find that such methods are far more prompt in their action and more effectual in immediate results than they would suppose, and that they will be the means of establishing the only kind of authority that is really worthy of the name more rapidly than any other.

The special point, however, with a view to which these illustrations are introduced, is, as has been already remarked, that penalties of this nature, and imposed in this spirit, are not vindictive, but simply remedial and reformatory. They are not intended to satisfy the sense of justice for what is past, but only to secure greater safety and happiness in time to come.

The Element of Invariableness

Punishments may be very light and gentle in their character, provided they are certain to follow the offense. It is in their *certainty*, and not in their *severity*, that the efficiency of them lies. Very few children are ever severely burnt by putting their fingers into the flame of a candle. They are effectually taught not to put them in by very slight burnings, on account of the *absolute invariableness* of the result produced by the contact.

Mothers often do not understand this. They attempt to cure some habitual fault by scoldings and threats, and declarations of what they will certainly do "next time," and perhaps by occasional acts of real severity in cases of peculiar aggravation, instead of a quiet, gentle, and comparatively trifling infliction in *every instance* of the fault, which would be altogether more effectual.

A child, for example, has acquired the habit of leaving the door open. Now occasionally scolding him, when it is specially cold, and now and then shutting him up in a closet for half an hour, will never cure him of the fault. But if there were an automaton figure standing by the side of the door, to say to him *every time* that he came through without shutting it, *Door!* which call should be a signal to him to go back and shut the door, and then sit down in a chair near by and count ten; and if this slight penalty was *invariably* enforced, he would be most effectually cured of the fault in a very short time.

Now, the mother can not be exactly this automaton, for she can not always be there; but she can recognize the principle, and carry it into effect as far as possible—that is, *invariably, when she is there*. And though she will not thus cure the boy of the fault so soon as the automaton would do it, she will still do it very soon.

Irritation and Anger

Avoid, as much as possible, every thing of an irritating character in the punishments inflicted, for to irritate frequently the mind of a child tends, of course, to form within him an irritable and unamiable temper. It is true, perhaps, that it is not possible absolutely to avoid this effect of punishment in all cases; but a great deal may be done to diminish the evil by the exercise of a little tact and ingenuity on the part of the mother whose attention is once particularly directed to the subject.

The first and most important measure of precaution on this point is the absolute exclusion of every thing like angry looks and words as accompaniments of punishment. If you find that any wrong which your child commits awakens irritation or anger in your mind, suspend your judgment of the case and postpone all action until the irritation and anger have subsided, and you can consider calmly and deliberately what to do, with a view, not of satisfying your own resentment, but of doing good to the child. Then, when you have decided what to do, carry your decision into effect in a good-natured manner—firmly and inflexibly—but still without any violence, or even harshness, of manner.

Co-operation of the Offender

There are many cases in which, by the exercise of a little tact and ingenuity, the parent can actually secure the *co-operation* of the child in the infliction of the punishment prescribed for the curing of a fault. There are many advantages in this, when it can be done. It gives the child an interest in curing himself of the fault; it makes the punishment more effectual; and it removes almost all possibility of its producing any irritation or resentment in his mind. To illustrate this we will give a case. It is of no consequence, for the purpose of this article, whether it is a real or an imaginary one.

Little Egbert, seven years old, had formed the habit so common among children of wasting a great deal of time in dressing himself, so as not to be ready for breakfast when the second bell rang. His mother offered him a reward if he would himself devise any plan that would cure him of the fault.

"I don't know what to do, exactly, to cure you," she said; "but if you will think of any plan that will really succeed, I will give you an excursion in a carriage."

"How far?" asked Egbert.

"Ten miles," said his mother. "I will take you in a carriage on an excursion anywhere you say, for ten miles, if you will find out some way to cure yourself of this fault."

"I think you ought to punish me," said Egbert, speaking in rather a timid tone.

"That's just it," said his mother, "It is for you to think of some kind of punishment that won't be too disagreeable for me to inflict, and which will yet be successful in curing you of the fault. I will allow you a fortnight to get cured. If you are not cured in a fortnight I shall think the punishment is not enough, or that it is not of a good kind; but if it works so well as to cure you in a fortnight, then you shall have the ride."

Egbert wished to know whether he must think of the punishment himself, or whether his sister Mary might help him. His mother gave him leave to ask any body to help him that he pleased. Mary, after some reflection, recommended that, whenever he was not dressed in time, he was to have only one lump of sugar, instead of four, in his tumbler of water for breakfast.

His usual drink at breakfast was a tumbler of water, with four lumps of sugar in it. The first bell was rung at half-past six, and breakfast was at half-past seven. His sister recommended that, as half an hour was ample time for the work of dressing, Egbert should go down every morning and report himself ready before the clock struck seven. If he failed of this, he was to have only one lump of sugar, instead of four, in his glass of water.

There was some question about the necessity of requiring him to be ready before seven; Egbert being inclined to argue that if he was ready by breakfast-time, that would be enough. But Mary said

no. "To allow you a full hour to dress," she said, "when half an hour is enough, may answer very well in respect to having you ready for breakfast, but it is no way to cure you of the fault. That would enable you to play half of the time while you are dressing, without incurring the punishment; but the way to cure you is to make it sure that you will have the punishment to bear if you play at all."

So it was decided to allow only half an hour for the dressing-time.

Egbert's mother said she was a little afraid about the one lump of sugar that was left to him when he failed.

"The plan *may* succeed," she said; "I am very willing that you should try it; but I am afraid that when you are tempted to stop and play in the midst of your dressing, you will say, I shall have *one* lump of sugar, at any rate, and so will yield to the temptation. So perhaps it would be safer for you to make the rule that you are not to have any sugar at all when you fail. Still, *perhaps* your plan will succeed. You can try it and see. I should wish myself to have the punishment as slight as possible to produce the effect."

By such management as this, it is plain that Egbert is brought into actual co-operation with his mother in the infliction of a punishment to cure him of a fault. It is true, that making such an arrangement as this, and then leaving it to its own working, would lead to no result. As in the case of all other plans and methods, it must be strictly, firmly, and perseveringly followed up by the watchful efficiency of the mother. We can not *substitute* the action of the child for that of the parent in the work of early training, but we can often derive very great advantage by securing his cooperation.

Playful Punishments

So true is it that the efficacy of any mode of punishment consists in the *certainty of its infliction*, that even playful punishments are in many cases sufficient to accomplish the cure of a fault. George, for example, was in the habit of continually getting into disputes and mild quarrels with his sister Amelia, a year or two younger than himself. "I know it is very foolish," he said to his mother, when she was talking with him on the subject one evening after he had gone to bed, and she had been telling him a story, and his mind was in a calm and tranquil state. "It is very foolish, but somehow I can't help it. I forget."

"Then you must have some punishment to make you remember," said his mother.

"But sometimes *she* is the one to blame," said George, "and then she must have the punishment."

"No," replied his mother. "When a lady and a gentleman become involved in a dispute in polite society, it is always the gentleman that must be considered to be to blame."

"But Amelia and I are not polite society," said George.

"You ought to be," said his mother. "At any rate, when you, an older brother, get into disputes with your sister, it is because you have not sense enough to manage so as to avoid them. If you were a little older and wiser you would have sense enough."

"Well, mother, what shall the punishment be?" said George.

"Would you really like to have a punishment, so as to cure yourself of the fault?" asked his mother.

George said that he *would* like one

"Then," said his mother, "I propose that every time you get into a dispute with Amelia, you turn your jacket wrong side out, and wear it so a little while as a symbol of folly."

George laughed heartily at this idea, and said he should like such a punishment as that very much. It would only be fun, he said. His mother explained to him that it would be fun, perhaps, two or three times, but after that it would only be a trouble; but still, if they decided upon that as a punishment, he must submit to it in every case. Every time he found himself getting into any dispute

or difficulty with his sister, he must stop at once and turn his jacket inside out; and if he did not himself think to do this, she herself, if she was within hearing, would simply say, "Jacket!" and then he must do it.

"No matter which of us is most to blame?" asked George.

"You will always be the one that is most to blame," replied his mother, "or, at least, almost always. When a boy is playing with a sister younger than himself, *he* is the one that is most to blame for the quarrelling. His sister may be to blame by doing something wrong in the first instance; but he is the one to blame for allowing it to lead to a quarrel. If it is a little thing, he ought to yield to her, and not to mind it; and if it is a great thing, he ought to go away and leave her, rather than to stop and quarrel about it. So you see you will be the one to blame for the quarrel in almost all cases. There may possibly be some cases where you will not be to blame at all, and then you will have to be punished when you don't deserve it, and you must bear it like a man. This is a liability that happens under all systems."

"We will try the plan for one fortnight," she continued. "So now remember, every single time that I hear you disputing or quarrelling with Amelia, you must take off your jacket and put it on again wrong side out—no matter whether you think you were to blame or not—and wear it so a few minutes. You can wear it so for a longer or shorter time, just as you think is best to make the punishment effectual in curing you of the fault. By the end of the fortnight we shall be able to see whether the plan is working well and doing any good."

"So now," continued his mother, "shut up your eyes and go to sleep. You are a good boy to wish to cure yourself of such faults, and to be willing to help me in contriving ways to do it. And I have no doubt that you will submit to this punishment good-naturedly every time, and not make me any trouble about it."

Let it be remembered, now, that the efficacy of such management as this consists not in the devising of it, nor in holding such a conversation as the above with the boy—salutary as this might be—but in the *faithfulness and strictness with which it is followed up* during the fortnight of trial.

In the case in question, the progress which George made in diminishing his tendency to get into disputes with his sister was so great that his mother told him, at the end of the first fortnight, that their plan had succeeded "admirably"—so much so, she said, that she thought the punishment of taking off his jacket and turning it inside out would be for the future unnecessarily severe, and she proposed to substitute for it taking off his cap, and putting it on wrong side before.

The reader will, of course, understand that the object of such an illustration as this is not to recommend the particular measure here described for adoption in other cases, but to illustrate the spirit and temper of mind in which all measures adopted by the mother in the training of her children should be carried into effect. Measures that involve no threats, no scolding, no angry manifestations of displeasure, but are even playful in their character, may be very efficient in action if they are firmly and perseveringly maintained.

Punishments that are the Natural Consequence of the Offense

There is great advantage in adapting the character of the punishment to that of the fault—making it, as far as possible, the natural and proper consequence of it. For instance, if the boys of a school do not come in promptly at the close of the twenty minutes' recess, but waste five minutes by their dilatoriness in obeying the summons of the bell, and the teacher keeps them for *five minutes beyond the usual hour of dismissal*, to make up for the lost time, the punishment may be felt by them to be deserved, and it may have a good effect in diminishing the evil it is intended to remedy; but it will probably excite a considerable degree of mental irritation, if not of resentment, on the part of the children, which will diminish the good effect, or is, at any rate, an evil which is to be avoided if possible.

If now, on the other hand, he assigns precisely the same penalty in another form, the whole of the good effect may be secured without the evil. Suppose he addresses the boys just before they are to go out at the next recess, as follows:

"I think, boys, that twenty minutes is about the right length of time for the recess, all told—that is, from the time you go out to the time when you are *all* back in your seats again, quiet and ready to resume your studies. I found yesterday that it took five minutes for you all to come in—that is, that it was five minutes from the time the bell was rung before all were in their seats; and to-day I shall ring the bell after *fifteen* minutes, so as to give you time to come in. If I find to-day that it takes ten minutes, then I will give you more time to come in to-morrow, by ringing the bell after you have been out *ten* minutes."

"I am sorry to have you lose so much of your recess, and if you can make the time for coming in shorter, then, of course, your recess can be longer. I should not wonder if, after a few trials, you should find that you could all come in and get into your places in *one* minute; and if so, I shall be very glad, for then you can have an uninterrupted recess of *nineteen* minutes, which will be a great gain."

Every one who has had any considerable experience in the management of boys will readily understand how different the effect of this measure will be from that of the other, while yet the penalty is in both cases precisely the same—namely, the loss, for the boys, of five minutes of their play.

The Little Runaway

In the same manner, where a child three or four years old was in the habit, when allowed to go out by himself in the yard to play, of running off into the street, a very appropriate punishment would be to require him, for the remainder of the day, to stay in the house and keep in sight of his mother, on the ground that it was not safe to trust him by himself in the yard. This would be much better than sending him to bed an hour earlier, or subjecting him to any other inconvenience or privation having no obvious connection with the fault. For it is of the greatest importance to avoid, by every means, the exciting of feelings of irritation and resentment in the mind of the child, so far as it is possible to do this without impairing the efficiency of the punishment. It is not always possible to do this. The efficiency of the punishment is, of course, the essential thing; but parents and teachers who turn their attention to the point will find that it is much less difficult than one would suppose to secure this end completely without producing the too frequent accompaniments of punishment—anger, ill-temper, and ill-will.

In the case, for example, of the child not allowed to go out into the yard, but required to remain in the house in sight of his mother, the mother should not try to make the punishment *more heavy* by speaking again and again of his fault, and evincing her displeasure by trying to make the confinement as irksome to the child as possible; but, on the other hand, should do all in her power to alleviate it. "I am very sorry," she might say, "to have to keep you in the house. It would be much pleasanter for you to go out and play in the yard, if it was only safe. I don't blame you very much for running away. It is what foolish little children, as little as you, very often do. I suppose you thought it would be good fun to run out a little way in the street. And it is good fun; but it is not safe. By-and-by, when you grow a little larger, you won't be so foolish, and then I can trust you in the yard at any time without having to watch you at all. And now what can I get for you to amuse you while you stay in the house with me?"

Punishment coming in this way, and administered in this spirit, will irritate the mind and injure the temper comparatively little; and, instead of being less; will be much more effective in accomplishing the *right kind* of cure for the fault, than any stern, severe, and vindictive retribution can possibly be.

The Question of Corporal Punishment

The question of resorting to corporal punishment in the training of the young has been much, very much, argued and discussed on both sides by writers on education; but it seems to me to be mainly a question of competency and skill. If the parent or teacher has tact or skill enough, and practical knowledge enough of the workings of the youthful mind, he can gain all the necessary ascendancy over it without resort to the violent infliction of bodily pain in any form. If he has not these qualities, then he must turn to the next best means at his disposal; for it is better that a child should be trained and governed by the rod than not trained and governed at all. I do not suppose that savages could possibly control their children without blows; while, on the other hand, Maria Edgeworth would have brought under complete submission to her will a family of the most ardent and impulsive juveniles, perhaps without even a harsh word or a frown. If a mother begins with children at the beginning, is just and true in all her dealings with them, gentle in manner, but inflexibly firm in act, and looks constantly for Divine guidance and aid in her conscientious efforts to do her duty, I feel quite confident that it will never be necessary for her to strike them. The necessity may, however, sooner or later come, for aught I know, in the case of those who act on the contrary principle. Under such management, the rod may come to be the only alternative to absolute unmanageableness and anarchy.

There will be occasion, however, to refer to this subject more fully in a future chapter.

CHAPTER VI. REWARDING OBEDIENCE

The mode of action described in the last two chapters for training children to habits of obedience consisted in discouraging disobedience by connecting some certain, though mild and gentle disadvantage, inconvenience, or penalty, with every transgression. In this chapter is to be considered another mode, which is in some respects the converse of the first, inasmuch as it consists in the encouragement of obedience, by often—not necessarily always—connecting with it some advantage, or gain, or pleasure; or, as it may be stated summarily, the cautious encouragement of obedience by rewards.

This method of action is more difficult than the other in the sense that it requires more skill, tact, and delicacy of perception and discrimination to carry it successfully into effect. The other demands only firm, but gentle and steady persistence. If the penalty, however slight it may be, *always comes*, the effect will take care of itself. But judiciously to administer a system of rewards, or even of commendations, requires tact, discrimination, and skill. It requires some observation of the peculiar characteristics of the different minds acted upon, and of the effects produced, and often some intelligent modification of the measures is required, to fit them to varying circumstances and times.

Obedience must not be Bought

If the bestowing of commendation and rewards is made a matter of mere blind routine, as the assigning of gentle penalties may be, the result will become a mere system of *bribing*, or rather paying children to be good; and goodness that is bought, if it deserves the name of virtue at all, is certainly virtue of a very inferior quality.

Whether a reward conferred for obedience shall operate as a bribe, or rather as a price paid—for a *bribe*, strictly speaking, is a price paid, not for doing right, but for doing wrong—depends sometimes on very slight differences in the management of the particular case—differences which an indiscriminating mother will not be very ready to appreciate.

A mother, for example, going into the village on a summer afternoon, leaves her children playing in the yard, under the general charge of Susan, who is at work in the kitchen, whence she can observe them from time to time through the open window. She thinks the children will be safe, provided they remain in the yard. The only thing to be guarded against is the danger that they may go out through the gate into the road.

Two Different Modes of Management

Under some circumstances, as, for example, where the danger to which they would be exposed in going into the road was very great, or where the mother can not rely upon her power to control her children's conduct by moral means in any way, the only safe method would be to fasten the gate. But if she prefers to depend for their safety on their voluntary obedience to her commands, and wishes, moreover, to promote the spirit of obedience by rewarding rather than punishing, she can make her rewards of the nature of hire or not, according to her mode of management.

If she wishes to *hire* obedience, she has only to say to the children that she is going into the village for a little time, and that they may play in the yard while she is gone, but must not go out of the gate; adding, that she is going to bring home some oranges or candies, which she will give them if she finds that they have obeyed her, but which she will not give them if they have disobeyed.

Such a promise, provided the children have the double confidence in their mother which such a method requires—namely, first, a full belief that she will really bring home the promised rewards, if

they obey her; and secondly—and this is a confidence much less frequently felt by children, and much less frequently deserved by their mothers—a conviction that, in case they disobey, no importunities on their part or promises for the next time will induce their mother to give them the good things, but that the rewards will certainly be lost to them unless they are deserved, according to the conditions of the promise—in such a case—that is, when this double confidence exists, the promise will have great influence upon the children. Still, it is, in its nature, *hiring* them to obey. I do not say that this is necessarily a bad plan, though I think there is a better. Children may, perhaps, be trained gradually to habits of obedience by a system of direct rewards, and in a manner, too, far more agreeable to the parent and better for the child than by a system of compulsion through threats and punishment.

The Method of Indirect Rewarding

But there is another way of connecting pleasurable ideas and associations with submission to parental authority in the minds of children, as a means of alluring them to the habit of obedience—one that is both more efficient in its results and more healthful and salutary in its action than the practice of bestowing direct recompenses and rewards.

Suppose, for example, in the case above described, the mother, on leaving the children, simply gives them the command that they are not to leave the yard, but makes no promises, and then, on returning from the village with the bonbons in her bag, simply asks Susan, when she comes in, whether the children have obeyed her injunction not to leave the yard. If Susan says yes, she nods to them, with a look of satisfaction and pleasure, and adds: "I thought they would obey me. I am very glad. Now I can trust them again."

Then, by-and-by, towards the close of the day, perhaps, and when the children suppose that the affair is forgotten, she takes an opportunity to call them to her, saying that she has something to tell them.

"You remember when I went to the village to-day, I left you in the yard and said that you must not go out of the gate, and you obeyed. Perhaps you would have liked to go out into the road and play there, but you would not go because I had forbidden it. I am very glad that you obeyed. I thought of you when I was in the village, and I thought you would obey me. I felt quite safe about you. If you had been disobedient children, I should have felt uneasy and anxious. But I felt safe. When I had finished my shopping, I thought I would buy you some bonbons, and here they are. You can go and sit down together on the carpet and divide them. Mary can choose one, and then Jane; then Mary, and then Jane again; and so on until they are all chosen."

Difference in the Character of the Effects

It may, perhaps, be said by the reader that this is substantially the same as giving a direct reward for the obedience. I admit that it is in some sense *substantially* the same thing, but it is not the same in form. And this is one of those cases where the effect is modified very greatly by the form. Where children are directly promised a reward if they do so and so, they naturally regard the transaction as of the nature of a contract or a bargain, such that when they have fulfilled the conditions on their part the reward is their due, as, indeed, it really is; and they come and demand it as such. The tendency, then, is, to divest their minds of all sense of obligation in respect to doing right, and to make them feel that it is in some sense optional with them whether to do right and earn the reward, or not to do right and lose it.

In the case, however, last described, which seems at first view to differ only in form from the preceding one, the commendation and the bonbons would be so connected with the act of obedience as to associate very agreeable ideas with it in the children's minds, and thus to make doing right appear attractive to them on future occasions, while, at the same time, they would not in any degree

deprive the act itself of its spontaneous character, as resulting from a sense of duty on their part, or produce the impression on their minds that their remaining within the gate was of the nature of a service rendered to their mother for hire, and afterwards duly paid for.

The lesson which we deduce from this illustration and the considerations connected with it may be stated as follows:

The General Principle

That the rewards conferred upon children with a view of connecting pleasurable ideas and associations with good conduct should not take the form of compensations stipulated for beforehand, and then conferred according to agreement, as if they were of the nature of payment for a service rendered, but should come as the natural expression of the satisfaction and happiness felt by the mother in the good conduct of her child—expressions as free and spontaneous on her part as the good conduct was on the part of the child.

The mother who understands the full import of this principle, and whose mind becomes fully possessed of it, will find it constantly coming into practical use in a thousand ways. She has undertaken, for example, to teach her little son to read. Of course learning to read is irksome to him. He dislikes extremely to leave his play and come to take his lesson. Sometimes a mother is inconsiderate enough to be pained at this. She is troubled to find that her boy takes so little interest in so useful a work, and even, perhaps, scolds him, and threatens him for not loving study. "If you don't learn to read," she says to him, in a tone of irritation and displeasure, "you will grow up a dunce, and every body will laugh at you, and you will be ashamed to be seen."

Children's Difficulties

But let her imagine that she herself was to be called away two or three times a day, for half an hour, to study Chinese, with a very exacting teacher, always more or less impatient and dissatisfied with her progress; and yet the irksomeness and difficulty for the mother, in learning to decipher Chinese, would be as nothing compared with that of the child in learning to read. The only thing that could make the work even tolerable to the mother would be a pretty near, distinct, and certain prospect of going to China under circumstances that would make the knowledge of great advantage to her. But the child has no such near, distinct, and certain prospect of the advantages of knowing how to read. He has scarcely any idea of these advantages at all. You can describe them to him, but the description will have no perceptible effect upon his mind. Those faculties by which we bring the future vividly before us so as to influence our present action, are not yet developed. His cerebral organization has not yet advanced to that condition, any more than his bones have advanced to the hardness, rigidity, and strength of manhood. His mind is only capable of being influenced strongly by what is present, or, at least, very near. It is the design of Divine Providence that this should be so. The child is not made to look forward much yet, and the mother who is pained and distressed because he will not look forward, shows a great ignorance of the nature of the infantile mind, and of the manner of its development. If she finds fault with her boy for not feeling distinctly enough the future advantages of learning to lead him to love study now, she is simply finding fault with a boy for not being possessed of the most slowly developed faculties of a man.

The way, then, to induce children to attend to such duties as learning to read, is not to reason with them on the advantages of it, but to put it simply on the ground of authority. "It is very irksome, I know, but you must do it. When you are at play, and having a very pleasant time, I know very well that it is hard for you to be called away to puzzle over your letters and your reading. It was very hard for me when I was a child. It is very hard for all children; but then it must be done."

The way in this, as in all other similar cases, to reduce the irksomeness of disagreeable duties to a minimum is not to attempt to convince or persuade the child, but to put the performance of them simply on the ground of submission to authority. The child must leave his play and come to take his lesson, not because he sees that it is better for him to learn to read than to play all the time, nor because he is to receive a reward in the form of compensation, but because his mother requires him to do it.

Indirect Rewarding

If, therefore, she concludes, in order to connect agreeable ideas with the hard work of learning to read, that she will often, at the close of the lessons, tell him a little story, or show him a picture, or have a frolic with him, or give him a piece of candy or a lump of sugar, or bestow upon him any other little gratification, it is better not to promise these things beforehand, so as to give to the coming of the child, when called, the character of a service rendered for hire. Let him come simply because he is called; and then let the gratifications be bestowed as the expressions of his mother's satisfaction and happiness, in view of her boy's ready obedience to her commands and faithful performance of his duty.

Obedience, though Implicit, need not be Blind.

It must not be supposed from what has been said that because a mother is not to *rely upon*

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