

Gilman Charlotte Perkins

Concerning Children



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I

THE PRECIOUS TEN

According to our religious belief, the last best work of God is the human race. According to the observation of biologists, the highest product of evolution is the human race. According to our own natural inner conviction, this twofold testimony is quite acceptable: we are the first class.

Whatever our merits when compared with lower species, however, we vary conspicuously when compared with one another. Humanity is superior to equinity, felinity, caninity; but there are degrees of humanness.

Between existing nations there is marked difference in the qualities we call human; and history shows us a long line of advance in these qualities in the same nation. The human race is still in the making, is by no means done; and, however noble it is to be human, it will be nobler to be humaner. As conscious beings, able to modify our own acts, we have power to improve the species, to promote the development of the human race. This brings us to the children. Individuals may improve more or less at any time, though most largely and easily in youth; but race improvement must be made in youth, to be transmitted. The real progress of man is born in him.

If you were buying babies, investing in young human stock as you would in colts or calves, for the value of the beast, a sturdy English baby would be worth more than an equally vigorous young Fuegian. With the same training and care, you could develop higher faculties in the English specimen than in the Fuegian specimen, because it was better bred. The savage baby would excel in some points, but the qualities of the modern baby are those dominant to-day. Education can do much; but the body and brain the child is born with are all that you have to educate. The progress of humanity must be recorded in living flesh. Unless the child is a more advanced specimen than his father and mother, there is no racial improvement. Virtues we still strive for are not yet ours: it is the unconscious virtues we are born with that measure the rise of nations.

Our mechanical products in all their rich variety serve two purposes, – to show the measure of the brains that made them, and to help make better ones.

The printing-press, for instance, marked a century of ability; but its main value is to develop centuries of greater ability. Society secretes, as it were, this mass of material wherewith to nourish its countless young; and, as this material is so permanent and so mobile, it is proportionately more advantageous to our posterity than the careful preparation of some anxious insect for her swarm of progeny. Unless the creature is born better than his creators, they do not save him. He sinks back or is overcome by others, perhaps lingering decadent among the traces of lost arts, like degenerate nomad savages who wander among the ruins of ancestral temples. We see plenty of such cases, individually, showing this arrested social development, – from the eighteenth-century man, who is only a little behind his age and does not hinder us much, to the dragging masses of dull peasantry and crude savagery, which keep us back so seriously. This does not include the reversions and degenerates, the absolutely abortive members of society; but merely its raw stock, that heavy proportion of the people who are not bred up to the standard of the age. To such we may apply every advantage of education, every facile convenience of the latest day; and, though these things do help a little, we have still the slow-minded mass, whose limited range of faculties acts as a steady check on the success of our best intellects. The surest, quickest way to improve humanity is to improve the stock, the people themselves; and all experience shows that the time to improve people is while they are young. As in

a growing cornstalk the height is to be measured from joint to joint, not counting the length of its long, down-flowing leaves, so in our line of ascent the height is to be measured from birth to birth, not counting the further development of the parent after the child is born.

The continued life of the parent counts in other ways, as it contributes to social service; and, in especial, as it reacts to promote the further growth of the young. But the best service to society and the child is in the progress made by the individual before parentage, for that progress is born into the race. Between birth and birth is the race bred upward. Suppose we wish to improve a race of low savages, and we carefully select the parents, subjecting them to the most elaborate educational influences, till they are all dead. Then we return, and take a fresh set of parents to place under these advantageous conditions, leaving the children always to grow up in untouched savagery. This might be done for many generations, and we should always have the same kind of savages to labour with, what improvement was made being buried with each set of parents. Now, on the other hand, let us take the children of the tribe, subject them to the most advantageous conditions, and, when they become parents, discontinue our efforts on that generation and begin on the next. What gain was made in this case would be incorporated in the stock; we should have gradually improving relays of children.

So far as environment is to really develop the race, that development must be made before the birth of the next generation.

If a young man and woman are clean, healthy, vigorous, and virtuous before parenthood, they may become dirty, sickly, weak, and wicked afterward with far less ill effect to the race than if they were sick and vicious before their children were born, and thereafter became stalwart saints. The sowing of wild oats would be far less harmful if sowed in the autumn instead of in the spring.

Human beings are said to have a longer period of immaturity than other animals; but it is not prolonged childhood which distinguishes us so much as prolonged parenthood. In early forms of life the parent promptly dies after having reproduced the species. He is of no further use to the race, and therefore his life is discontinued. In the evolution of species, as the parent becomes more and more able to benefit the young, he is retained longer in office; and in humanity, as it develops, we see an increasing prolongation of parental usefulness. The reactive value of the adult upon the young is very great, covering our whole range of conscious education; but the real worth of that education is in its effects on the young before they become parents, that the training and improvement may become ours by birth, an inbred racial progress.

It may be well here to consider the objections raised by the Weissman theory that "acquired traits are not transmissible." To those who believe this it seems useless to try to improve a race by development of the young with a view to transmission. They hold that the child inherits a certain group of faculties, differing from the parents perhaps through the "tendency to vary," and that, although you may improve the individual indefinitely through education, that improvement is not transmissible to his offspring. The original faculties may be transmitted, but not the individual modification. Thus they would hold that, if two brothers inherited the same kind and amount of brain power, and one brother was submitted to the finest educational environment, while the other was entirely neglected, yet the children of the two brothers would inherit the same amount of brain development: the training and exercise which so visibly improved the brain of the educated brother would be lost to his children.

Or, if two brothers inherited the same physical constitution, and one developed and improved it by judicious care and exercise, while the other wasted strength and contracted disease, the children of either would inherit the original constitutional tendencies of the parent, unaffected by that parent's previous career.

This would mean that the whole tremendous march of race-modification has been made under no other influence than the tendency to vary, and that individual modification in no way affects the race.

Successive generations of individuals may be affected by the cumulative pressure of progress, but not the race itself. Under this view the Fuegian baby would be as valuable an investment as the

English baby, unless, indeed, successive and singularly connected tendencies to vary had worked long upon the English stock and peculiarly neglected the Fuegian. In proof of this claim that "acquired traits are not transmissible," an overwhelming series of experiments are presented, as wherein many consecutive generations of peaceful guinea pigs are mutilated in precisely the same way, and, lo! the last guinea pig is born as four-legged and symmetrically-featured as the first.

If it had been so arranged that the crippled guinea pigs obtained some advantage because of their injuries, they might have thus become "fittest"; and the "tendency to vary" would perhaps have launched out a cripple somewhere, and so evolved a triumphant line of three-legged guinea pigs.

But, as proven by these carefully conducted scientific experiments, it does not "modify the species" at all to cut off its legs, – not in a score of generations. It modifies the immediate pig, of course, and is doubtless unpleasant to him; but the effect is lost with his death.

It has always seemed to me that there was a large difference between a mutilation and an acquired trait. An acquired trait is something that one uses and develops, not something one has lost.

The children of a soldier are supposed to inherit something of his courage and his habit of obedience, not his wooden leg.

The dwindled feet of the Chinese ladies are not transmitted; but the Chinese habits are. The individual is most modified by what he does, not by what is done to him; and so is the race.

Let a new experiment be performed on the long-suffering guinea pig. Take two flourishing pair of the same family (fortunately, the tendency to vary appears to be but slight in guinea pigs, so there is not serious trouble from that source), and let one pair of guinea pigs be lodged in a small but comfortable cage, and fed and fed and fed, – not to excess, but so as to supply all guinea-piggian desires as soon as felt, – them and their descendants in their unnumbered generations. Let the other pair be started on a long, slow, cautious, delicate but inexorable system of exercise, not exercise involving any advantage, with careful mating of the most lively, – for this would be claimed as showing only the "tendency to vary" and "survival of the fittest," – but exercise forced upon the unwilling piggies to no profit whatever.

A wheel, such as mitigates the captivity of the nimble squirrel, should be applied to these reluctant victims; a well-selected, stimulating diet given at slowly increasing intervals; and the physical inequalities of their abode become greater, so that the unhappy subjects of scientific research would find themselves skipping ever faster and farther from day to day.

If, after many generations of such training, the descendants of these cultivated guinea pigs could not outrun the descendants of the plump and puffy cage-fed pair, the Weissman theory would be more strongly re-enforced than by all the evidence of his suffering cripples. Meanwhile the parent and teacher in general is not greatly concerned about theories of pan-genesis or germ-plasm. He knows that, "as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined," and that, if the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children's teeth are pretty certain to be set on edge.

Inherit we must to some degree; and whatever comes to us by that method must belong to the parent before he is a parent. Traits acquired after parentage are certainly not transmissible, whatever may be the case before. Our inherited constitution, temper, character, tendency, is like an entailed estate. It is in the family, belongs to the family in succession, not to the individual. It is "owned" by the individual in usufruct, but cannot be sold, given away, or otherwise alienated. It must be handed on to the next heir, somewhat better or worse, perhaps, for the current ownership. When the new heir takes possession of his estate, he confers with the steward, and becomes thoroughly acquainted with his holdings. Here are the assets, – this much in permanent capital, this much in income, which he may use as he will. It would be possible for him to overspend that income, to cut down the timber and sell it, to incur debts, impoverishing the next heir. Perhaps this has been done; and he finds himself with neglected lands, buildings in disrepair, restricted resources, and heavy debts. In such case the duty of the heir is to live carefully, avoiding every extravagance, and devote all he can save to clearing off the encumbrances on the estate, thus handing it on to the next heir in better shape than he received

it. If this is not done, if one generation after another of inheritors draws relentlessly on the burdened estate and adds to its encumbrances, there comes a time when the heavy mortgages are foreclosed, and that estate is lost.

So with the human constitution. We inherit such and such powers and faculties; such and such weaknesses, faults, tendencies to disease. Our income is the available strength we have to spare without drawing on our capital. Perhaps our ancestors have overdrawn already, wasting their nerve force, injuring their organisms, handing down to us an impoverished physique, with scarce income enough for running expenses, yet needing a large sinking fund for repairs.

In this case it is our plain duty to live "within our means" in nerve force, however limited, and to devote all we can spare to building up the constitution, that we may transmit it in an improved condition to the next heir. If we do not do this, if successive generations overdraw their strength, neglect necessary rest and recreation, increase their weaknesses and diseases, then there comes a time when the inexorable creditor called Nature forecloses the mortgage, and that family is extinct. The heir of the entailed estate in lands and houses has an advantage over the heir of blood and brain. He does not transmit his property until he dies. He has a lifetime to make the needed improvements. But the inheritor of poor eyesight, weak lungs, and a bad temper has a shorter period for repairs. If a woman, she is likely to become a mother by the time she is twenty-five, – perhaps sooner; the man, a father by thirty.

Taking the very early marriages of the poor into consideration (and they are a heavy majority of the population), we may take twenty-five as the average beginning of parenthood. Of course there is still room for improvement before the later children appear; but the running expenses increase so heavily that there is but a small margin to be given to repairs. The amount of nerve force hitherto set aside to control the irritable temper will now be drawn upon by many new demands: the time given to special exercises for the good of the lungs will now be otherwise used. However good the intentions afterward, the best period for self-improvement is before the children come. This reduces the time in which to develop humanity's inheritance to twenty-five years. Twenty-five years is not much at best; and that time is further limited, as far as individual responsibility goes, by subtracting the period of childhood. The first, say, fifteen years of our lives are comparatively irresponsible. We have not the judgment or the self-control to meddle with our own lives to any advantage; nor is it desirable that we should. Unconscious growth is best; and the desired improvement during this period should be made by the skilful educator without the child's knowledge. But at about fifteen the individual comes to a keen new consciousness of personal responsibility.

That fresh, unwarped sense of human honour, the race-enthusiasm of the young; and the fund of strength they bear with them; together with the very light expenses of this period, all the heavy drains of life being met by the parent, – these conditions make that short ten years the most important decade of a lifetime.

It is no wonder that we worship youth. On it depends more than on the most care-burdened age. It is one of the many follies of our blundering progression that we have for so long supposed that the value of this period lay merely in its enjoyableness. With fresh sensations and new strength, with care, labour, and pain largely kept away, youth naturally enjoys more heartily than age, and has less to suffer; but these are only incidental conditions. Every period has its advantage and accompanying responsibilities. This blessed time of youth is not ours to riot through in cheerful disregard of human duty. The biological advantage of a longer period of immaturity is in its cumulative value to the race, the older parent having more development to transmit.

The human animal becomes adult comparatively early, – that is, becomes capable of reproducing the species; and in states of low social grade he promptly sets about it.

But the human being is not only an individual animal: he is a social constituent. He may be early ready to replace himself by another man as good, but he is not yet able to improve upon the past and give the world a man much better. He is not yet developed as a member of society, – trained

in those special lines which make him not only a healthier, stronger, rounder individual, but a more highly efficient member of society. Our people to-day are not only larger and longer-lived than earlier races, but they are capable of social relations immeasurably higher than those open to a never-so-healthy savage.

The savage as an individual animal may be equal – in some ways superior – to the modern man; but, as a social constituent, he is like a grain of sand in a heap compared to some exquisitely fitted part of an intricate machine, – a living machine, an organism. In this social relation man may grow and develop all his life; and that is why civilisation, socialisation, brings us useful and honourable age, while savagery knocks its old folk on the head.

But while the social structure grows in beauty, refinement, and power, and eighty years may be spent in its glorious service, that service must be given by individuals. Unless these individuals improve from age to age, showing a finer, subtler, stronger brain and unimpaired physique, there can be no genuine or enduring social improvement. We have seen repeatedly in history a social status lodged in comparatively few individuals, a narrow fragile upper-class civilisation; and we have seen it always fall, – fall to the level of its main constituents, the mass of the people.

One per cent. of sane men in a society of lunatics would make but a foolish state; one per cent. of good men in a society of criminals would make a low grade of virtue; one per cent. of rich men in a society of poor peasants does not make a rich community. A society is composed of the people who compose it, strange to say, – all of them; and, as they are, it is. The people must be steadily made better if the world is to move. The way to make people better is to have them born better. The way to have them born better is to make all possible improvement in the individual before parentage. That is why youth is holy and august: it is the fountain of human progress. Not only that "the child is father to the man," but the child is father to the state – and mother.

The first fifteen years of a child's life should be treated with a view to developing the power of "judgment" and "will," that he may be able to spend his precious ten in making the best possible growth. A boy of fifteen is quite old enough to understand the main principles of right living, and to follow them. A girl of fifteen is quite old enough to see the splendid possibilities that lie before her, both in her individual service to society and the almost limitless power of motherhood. It is not youth which makes our boys and girls so foolish in their behaviour. It is the kind of training we give the little child, keeping back the most valuable faculties of the brain instead of helping them to grow. A boy cast out upon the street to work soon manifests both the abilities and vices of an older person. A girl reared in a frivolous and artificial society becomes a practising coquette while yet a child. These conditions are bad, and we do not wish to parallel them by producing a morbidly self-conscious and prematurely aged set of youngsters. But, if the child has been trained in reason and self-control, – not forced, but allowed to grow in the natural use of these qualities, – he will be used to exercising them when he reaches the freer period of youth, and not find it so difficult to be wise. It is natural for a child to reason, and the power grows with encouragement and use. It is natural for a child to delight in the exercise of his own will upon himself in learning to "do things."

The facility and pleasure and strong self-control shown by a child in playing some arbitrary game prove that it is quite natural for him to govern his acts to a desired end, and enjoy it.

To a desired end, however. We have not yet succeeded in enlisting the child's desires to help his efforts. We rather convince him that being good is tedious and unprofitable, often poignantly disagreeable; and, when he passes childhood, he is hampered with this unfortunate misbelief of our instilling.

But, with a healthy brain and will, a youth of fifteen, with the knowledge easily available at that age, should be not only able and willing, but gloriously eager for personal development. It is an age of soaring ambition; and that ambition, directed in lines of real improvement, is one of Nature's loveliest and strongest forces to lift mankind.

There is a splendid wealth of aspiration in youth, a pure and haughty desire for the very highest, which ought to be playing into the current of our racial life and lifting it higher and higher with each new generation.

The love of emulation, too, so hurtful in the cheap, false forms it so often takes, is a beautiful force when turned to self-improvement. We underrate the power of good intention of our young people. We check and irritate them all through childhood, confusing and depressing the upward tendencies; and then wag our aged heads pityingly over "the follies of youth."

There is wisdom in youth, and power, if we would but let it grow. A simple unconscious childhood, shooting upward fast and strong along lines of rational improving growth, would give to the opening consciousness of youth a healthy background of orderly achievement, and a glorious foreground, – the limitless front of human progress. Such young people, easily appreciating what could be done for themselves and the world by right living, would pour their rich enthusiasm and unstrained powers into real human growing, – the growing that can be done so well in that short, wonderful ten years, – that must be done then, if the race is to be born better. Three or four generations of such growth would do more for man's improvement than our present methods of humaniculture accomplish in as many centuries.

II

THE EFFECT OF MINDING ON THE MIND

Obedience, we are told, is a virtue. This seems simple and conclusive, but on examination further questions rise.

What is "a virtue"?

What is "obedience"?

And, if a virtue, is it always and equally so?

"There is a time when patience ceases to be a virtue." Perhaps obedience has its limits, too.

A virtue is a specific quality of anything, as the virtue of mustard is in its biting quality; of glass, transparency; of a sword, its edge and temper. In moral application a virtue is a quality in mankind whereby we are most advantaged. We make a distinction in our specific qualities, claiming some to be good and some bad; and the virtues are those whereby we gain the highest good. These virtues of humanity change in relative value with time, place, and circumstance. What is considered a virtue in primitive life becomes foolishness or even vice in later civilisation; yet each age and place can show clear reason for its virtues, trace their introduction, rise into high honour, and gradual neglect.

For instance, the virtue of endurance ranks high among savages. To be able to bear hunger and heat and cold and pain and dire fatigue, – this power is supreme virtue to the savage, for the simple reason that it is supremely necessary to him. He has a large chance of meeting these afflictions all through life, and wisely prepares himself beforehand by wilfully undergoing even worse hardships.

Chastity is a comparatively modern virtue, still but partially accepted. Even as an ideal, it is not universally admired, being considered mainly as a feminine distinction. This is good proof of its gradual introduction, – first, as solely female, a demand from the man, and then proving its value as a racial virtue, and rising slowly in general esteem, until to-day there is a very marked movement toward a higher standard of masculine chastity.

Courage, on the other hand, has been held almost wholly as a masculine virtue, from the same simple causes of sociological development; to this day one hears otherwise intelligent and respectable women own themselves, without the slightest sense of shame, to be cowards.

A comparative study of the virtues would reveal a mixed and changeful throng, and always through them all the underlying force of necessity, which makes this or that quality a virtue in its time.

We speak of "making a virtue of necessity." As a matter of fact, all virtues are made of necessity.

A virtue, then, in the human race is that quality which is held supremely beneficial, valuable, necessary, at that time. And what, in close analysis, is obedience? It is a noun made from the verb "to obey."

What is it to obey? It is to act under the impulse of another will, – to submit one's behaviour to outside direction.

It involves the surrender of both judgment and will. Is this capacity of submission of sufficient value to the human race to be called a virtue? Assuredly it is – sometimes. The most familiar instance of the uses of obedience is among soldiers and sailors, always promptly adduced by the stanch upholders of this quality.

They do not speak of it as particularly desirable among farmers or merchants or artists, but cling to the battlefield or the deck, as sufficient illustrations. We may note, also, that, when our elaborate efforts are made to inculcate its value to young children, we always introduce a railroad accident, runaway, fire, burglar, or other element of danger; and, equally, in the stories of young animals designed for the same purpose, the disobedient little beast is always exposed to dire peril, and the obedient saved.

All this clearly indicates the real basis of our respect for obedience.

Its first and greatest use is this: where concerted action is necessary, in such instant performance that it would be impossible to transmit the impulse through a number of varying intelligences.

That is why the soldier and sailor have to obey. Military and nautical action is essentially collective, essentially instant, and too intricate for that easy understanding which would allow of swift common action on individual initiative. Under such circumstances, obedience is, indeed, a virtue, and disobedience the unpardonable sin.

Again, with the animals, we have a case where it is essential that the young should act instantly under stimuli perceptible to the mother and not to the young. No explanation is possible. There is not speech for it, even if there were time. A sudden silent danger needs a sudden silent escape. Under this pressure of condition has been evolved a degree of obedience absolutely instinctive and automatic, as so beautifully shown in Mr. Thompson's story of the little partridges flattening themselves into effacement on their mother's warning signal.

With deadly peril at hand, with no brain to give or to receive explanation, with no time to do more than squeak an inarticulate command, there is indeed need for obedience; and obedience is forthcoming. But is this so essential quality in rearing young animals as essential in human education? So far in human history, our absolute desideratum in child-training is that the child shall obey. The child who "minds" promptly and unquestioningly is the ideal: the child who refuses to mind, who, perhaps, even says, "I won't," is the example of all evil.

Parental success is judged by ability to "make the children mind": to be without that is failure. All this has no reference whatever to the kind of behaviour required. The virtue in the child is simply to do what it is told, in any extreme of folly or even danger. Witness the immortal fame of Casabianca. Being told to "stay," this sublime infant stayed, though every instinct and reason was against it, and he was blown up unflinching in pursuance of duty. The effect of minding on the mind is here shown in extreme instance. Under the pressure of the imposed will and judgment of his father, the child restrained his own will and judgment, and suffered the consequences. The moral to be drawn is a very circuitous one. Although obedience was palpably injurious in this case, it is held that such perfect surrender would in most cases be highly beneficial.

That other popular instance, beginning

"Old 'Ironsides' at anchor lay
In the harbor of Mahon."

is more practical. The judicious father orders the perilously poised son to

"Jump! Jump, boy, far into the deep!"

and he jumps, and is hauled out by the sailors.

As usual, we see that the reason why obedience is so necessary is because of imminent danger, which only obedience can escape. With this for a practical background, and with the added proviso that, unless obedience is demanded and secured when there is no danger, it will not be forthcoming when there is, the child is "trained to obey" from the first. No matter how capricious and unnecessary the command, he must "mind," or be punished for not "minding." We may fall short of success in our efforts; but this is our ideal, – that a child shall do what he is told on the instant, and thus fulfil his whole scale of virtue as well as meet all the advantages of safety.

Our intense reverence for the virtue of obedience is easily traceable. In the first place there is the deep-seated animal instinct, far outdating human history. For uncounted ages our brute mother ancestors had reared their brute young in automatic obedience, – an obedience bred in the bone by those who obeyed and lived, any deficiency in which was steadily expurgated by the cutting off of the hapless youngster who disobeyed. This had, of course, a reflex action on the mother. When one's nerve-impulse finds expression through another body, that expression gives the same sense of relief and pleasure as a personal expression. When one wills another to do something which the other

promptly does, it gives one an even larger satisfaction than doing what one wills one's self. That is the pleasure we have in a good dog, – our will flows through his organism uninterrupted. It is a temporary extension of self in activity that does not weary.

This is one initial reason for the parental pleasure in obedience and displeasure in disobedience. When the parent emits an impulse calling for expression through the child, and the child refuses to express it, there is a distinct sense of distress in the parent, quite apart from any ulterior advantage to either party in the desired act. Almost any mother can recall this balked feeling, like the annoyance of an arrested sneeze.

To this instinct our gradually enlarging humanness has added the breadth of wider perceptions and the weight of growing ideas of authority, with the tremendous depth of tradition and habit. Early races lived in constant danger, military service was universal, despotism the common government, and slavery the general condition. The ruling despot exacted obedience from all; and it was by each grade exacted remorselessly from its inferiors. No overseer so cruel as the slave. Where men were slaves to despotic sovereigns, their women were slaves to them; and the women tyrannised in turn over their slaves, if they had any. But under every one else were always the children, defenceless absolutely, inferior physically and mentally. Naturally, they were expected to obey. As we built out of our clouded brains dim and sinister gods, we predicated of them the habits so prominent in our earthly rulers: the one thing the gods would have was obedience, which, therefore, grew to have first place in our primitive religion. The early Hebrew traditions of God, with which we are all so familiar, picture him as in a continuous state of annoyance because his "children" would not "mind." In the centuries of dominance of the Roman Catholic Church, obedience became additionally exalted. The power and success of that magnificent organisation depended so absolutely on this characteristic that it was given high place in the vows of religious societies, – highest of all by the Jesuits, who carried it to its logical extreme, the subordinate being required to become as will-less as a corpse, actuated solely by the commands of his superior. Even militarism offers no better instance of the value and power of obedience than does "the Church."

It now becomes clear why we so naturally venerate this quality: first, the deep brute instinct; second, the years of historic necessity and habit; third, the tremendous sanction of religion. It is only a few centuries since the Protestant Reformation broke the power of church dominance and successfully established the rebellion of free thought. It is less than that since the American Revolution and the French Revolution again triumphantly disobeyed, and established the liberty of the individual in matters temporal. Since then the delighted brain has spread and strengthened, thinking for itself and doing what it thought; and we have seen some foretaste of what a full democracy will ultimately bring to us. But this growth of individual freedom has but just begun to penetrate that stronghold of all habit and tradition, the Home. Men might be free, but women must still obey. Women are beginning to be free, but still the child remains, – the under-dog always; and he, at least, must obey. On this we are still practically at one, – Catholic and Protestant, soldier and farmer, subject and citizen.

Let us untangle the real necessity from this vast mass of hoary tradition, and see if obedience is really the best thing to teach a child, – if "by obedience" is the best way to teach a child. And let careful provision here be made for a senseless inference constantly made when this question is raised. Dare to criticise a system of training based on obedience, and you are instantly assumed to be advocating no system at all, no training, merely letting the child run wild and "have his own way." This is a most unfair assumption. Those who know no other way of modifying a child's behaviour than through "making him mind" suppose that, if he were not made to mind, he must be utterly neglected. Child-training to their minds is to be accomplished only through child-ordering; and many think the training quite accomplished if only the subject is a model of obedience. Others, a little more open-minded, and who have perhaps read something on the subject, assume that, if you do not demand obedience of the child, it means that you must "explain" everything to him, "reason" with him from deed to deed; and this they wearily and rightly declare to be impossible. But neither of

these assumptions is correct. One may question the efficacy of the Salisbury method without being thereby pledged to vegetarianism. One may criticise our school system, yet not mean that children should have no education.

The rearing of children is the most important work, and it is here contended that, in this great educational process, obedience, as a main factor, has a bad effect on the growing mind. A child is a human creature. He should be reared with a view to his development and behaviour as an adult, not solely with a view to his behaviour as a child. He is temporarily a child, far more permanently a man; and it is the man we are training. The work of "parenthood" is not only to guard and nourish the young, but to develop the qualities needed in the mature.

Obedience is defended, first, as being necessary to the protection of the child, and, second, as developing desirable qualities in the adult. But the child can be far better protected by removing all danger, which our present civilisation is quite competent to do; and "the habit of obedience" develops very undesirable qualities. On what characteristics does our human pre-eminence rest? On our breadth and accuracy of judgment and force of will. Because we can see widely and judge wisely, because we have power to do what we see to be right, therefore we are the dominant species in the animal kingdom; therefore we are consciously the children of God.

These qualities are lodged in individuals, and must be exercised by individuals for the best human progress. If our method of advance were that one person alone should be wise and strong, and all other persons prosperous through a strict subservience to his commands, then, indeed, we could do no better for our children than to train them to obey. Judgment would be of no use to them if they had to take another's: will-power would be valueless if they were never to exercise it.

But this is by no means the condition of human life. More and more is it being recognised that progress lies in a well-developed average intelligence rather than in a wise despot and his stupid serfs. For every individual to have a good judgment and a strong will is far better for the community than for a few to have these qualities and the rest to follow them.

The "habit of obedience," forced in upon the impressible nature of a child, does not develop judgment and will, but does develop that fatal facility in following other people's judgment and other people's wills which tends to make us a helpless mob, mere sheep, instead of wise, free, strong individuals. The habit of submission to authority, the long, deeply impressed conviction that to "be good" is to "give up," that there is virtue in the act of surrender, – this is one of the sources from which we continually replenish human weakness, and fill the world with an inert mass of mind-less, will-less folk, pushed and pulled about by those whom they obey.

Moreover, there is the opposite effect, – the injurious reaction from obedience, – almost as common and hurtful as its full achievement; namely, that fierce rebellious desire to do exactly the opposite of what one is told, which is no nearer to calm judgment than the other.

In obeying another will or in resisting another will, nothing is gained in wisdom. A human creature is a self-governing intelligence, and the rich years of childhood should be passed in the guarded and gradual exercise of those powers.

Now this will, no doubt, call up to the minds of many a picture of a selfish, domineering youngster, stormily ploughing through a number of experimental adventures, with a group of sacrificial parents and teachers prostrate before him. Again an unwarranted assumption. Consideration of others is one of the first laws of life, one of the first things a child should be taught; but consideration of others is not identical with obedience. Again, it will be imagined that the child is to be left to laboriously work out for himself the accumulated experiments of humanity, and deprived of the profits of all previous experience. By no means. On the contrary, it is the business of those who have the care of the very young to see to it that they do benefit by that previous experience far more fully than is now possible.

Our system of obedience cuts the child off from precisely this advantage, and leaves him longing to do the forbidden things, generally doing them, too, when he gets away from his tutelage. The

behaviour of the released child, in its riotous reaction against authority as such, as shown glaringly in the action of the average college student, tells how much judgment and self-control have been developing behind the obedience.

The brain grows by exercise. The best time to develop it is in youth. To obey does not develop the brain, but checks its growth. It gives to the will a peculiar suicidal power of aborting its own impulse, not controlling it, but giving it up. This leaves a habit of giving up which weakens our power of continued effort.

All this is not saying that obedience is never useful in childhood. There are occasions when it is; and on such occasions, with a child otherwise intelligently trained, it will be forthcoming. We make a wide mistake in assuming that, unless a child is made to obey at every step, it will never obey. A grown person will obey under sharp instant pressure.

If there is a sudden danger, and you shriek at your friend, "Get up – quick!" or hiss a terrified, "Sh! Sh! Be still!" your friend promptly obeys. Of course, if you had been endeavouring to "boss" that friend with a thousand pointless caprices, he might distrust you in the hour of peril; but if he knew you to be a reasonable person, he would respond promptly to a sudden command.

Much more will a child so respond where he has full reason to respect the judgment of the commander. Children have the automatic habit of obedience by the same animal inheritance that gives the mother the habit of command; but we so abuse that faculty that it becomes lost in righteous rebellion or crushed submission. The animal mother never misuses her precious authority. She does not cry, "Wolf! Wolf!" We talk glibly about "the best good of the child," but there are few children who are not clearly aware that they are "minding" for the convenience of "the grown-ups" the greater part of the time. Therefore, they suspect self-interest in even the necessary commands, and might very readily refuse to obey in the hour of danger.

It is a commonplace observation that the best children —*i. e.*, the most submissive and obedient – do not make the best men. If they are utterly subdued, "too good to live," they swell the Sunday-school list of infant saints, die young, and go to heaven: whereas the rebellious and unruly boy often makes the best citizen.

The too obedient child has learned only to do what he is told. If not told, he has no initiative; and, if told wrong, he does wrong. Life to him is not a series of problems to be solved, but a mere book of orders; and, instead of understanding the true imperious "force" of natural law, which a wise man follows because he sees the wisdom of the course, he takes every "must" in life to be like a personal command, – a thing probably unreasonable, and to be evaded, if possible.

The escaped child, long suppressed under obedience, is in no mood for a cheerful acceptance of real laws, but imagines that there is more "fun" in "having his own way." The foolish parent claims to be obeyed as a god; and the grown-up child seeks to evade God, to treat the laws of Nature as if she, too, were a foolish parent.

Suppose you are teaching a child arithmetic. You tell him to put down such and such figures in such a position. He inquires, "Why?" You explain the reason. If you do not explain the reason, he does not understand the problem. You might continue to give orders as to what figures to set down and in what places; and the child, obeying, could be trotted through the arithmetic in a month's time. But the arithmetic would not have gone through him. He would be no better versed in the science of numbers than a type-setter is in the learned books he "sets up." We recognise this in the teaching of arithmetic, and go to great lengths in inventing test problems and arranging easy stages by which the child may gradually master his task. But we do not recognise it in teaching the child life. The small acts of infancy are the child's first problems in living. He naturally wishes to understand them. He says, "Why?" To which we reply inanelly, "Because I tell you to!" That is no reason. It is a force, no doubt, a pressure, to which the child may be compelled to yield. But he is no wiser than he was before. He has learned nothing except the lesson we imagine so valuable, – to obey. At the very best, he may remember always, in like case, that "mamma would wish me to do so," and do it. But, when

cases differ, he has no guide. With the best intentions in life, he can but cast about in his mind to try to imagine what some one else might tell him to do if present: the circumstances themselves mean nothing to him. Docility, subservience, a quick surrender of purpose, a wavering, untrained, easily shaken judgment, – these are the qualities developed by much obedience.

Are they the qualities we wish to develop in American citizens?

III

TWO AND TWO TOGETHER

"If not trained to obedience, what shall the child be trained to?" naturally demands the outraged parent. To inculcate that first of virtues has taken so much time and effort that we have overlooked the subsequent qualities which require our help, and feel rather at sea when this sheet anchor is taken from us.

But it is not so hard a problem, when honestly faced. A child has a body and a mind to be nourished, sheltered, protected, allowed to grow, and judiciously trained.

We are here considering the brain training; but that is safely comparable to – is, indeed, part of – the body training, for the brain as much as the lungs or liver is an organ of the body. In training the little body, our main line of duty is to furnish proper food, to insure proper rest, and to allow and encourage proper exercise. Exactly this is wanted to promote right brain growth. We do not wish to overstimulate the brain, to develop it at the expense of other organs; but we do wish to insure its full natural growth and to promote its natural activities by a wise selection of the highest qualities for preferred use. And we need more knowledge of the various brain functions than is commonly possessed by those in charge of young children.

The office of the brain we are here considering is to receive, retain, and collate impressions, and, in retaining them, to hold their original force as far as possible, so that the ultimate act, coming from a previous impression, may have the force of the original impulse. The human creature does not originate nervous energy; but he does secrete it, so to speak, from the impact of natural forces. He has a storage battery of power we call the will. By this high faculty we see a well-developed human being working steadily for a desired object, without any present stimulus directed to that end, even in opposition to prevent stimulus tending to oppose that end. This width of perception, length of retention, storage of force, and power of steady, self-determined action distinguish the advanced human brain.

Early forms of life had no brains to speak of. They received impressions and transmitted them in expressions without check or discrimination. With the development of more complex organisms and their more complex activities came the accompanying complexity of brain, which could co-ordinate those activities to the best advantage. Action is the main line of growth. Conditions press upon all life, but life is modified through its own action under given conditions. And the relative wisdom and success of different acts depend on the brain power of the organism.

The superiority of races lies in better adaptation to condition. In human life, in the long competition among nations, classes, and individuals, superiority still lies in the same development. Power to receive and retain more wide, deep, and subtle impression; power to more accurately and judiciously collate these impressions; power to act steadily on these stored and selected impulses rather than on immediate impulses, – this it is which marks our line of advance.

The education of the child should be such as to develop these distinguishing human faculties. The universe, speaking loudly, lies around every creature. Little by little we learn to hear, to understand, to act accordingly. And this we should teach the child, to recognise more accurately the laws about him and to act upon them.

A very little child does this in his narrow range exactly as does the adult in wider fields. He receives impressions, such as are allowed to reach him. He stores and collates those impressions with increasing vigour and accuracy from day to day; and he acts on the sum of those impressions with growing power. Naturally, his range of impression is limited, his power of retention is limited, his ability to relate the impression retained is limited; and his action is at first far more open to immediate outside stimulus, and less responsive to the inner will-force, than that of an adult. That is the condition

of childhood. It is for us to gently, delicately, steadily surround the child with such conditions as shall promote this orderly sequence of brain function rather than to forcibly develop and retain his more primitive methods.

Before going further, let us look at the average mental workings of the human creature, and see if it seems to us in smooth running order. We have made enormous progress in brain development, and we manifest wide differences in brain power. But clearly discernible through all the progress and all the difference is this large fault in our mental machinery, – a peculiar discrepancy between the sum of our knowledge and the sum of our behaviour. Man being conscious and intelligent, it would seem that to teach him the desirability of a given course of action would be sufficient. That it is not sufficient, every mother, every teacher, every preacher, every discoverer, inventor, reformer, knows full well.

Instruction may be poured in by the ton: it comes out in action by the ounce. You may teach and preach and pray for two thousand years, and very imperfectly Christianise a small portion of the human race. You may exhort and command and reiterate; and yet the sinner, whether infant or adult, remains obdurate. No wonder we imagined an active Enemy striving to oppose us, so difficult was good behaviour in spite of all our efforts. It has never occurred to us that we were pursuing an entirely erroneous method. We uttered like parrots the pregnant proverb, "Example is better than precept," learning nothing by it.

What does that simple saying mean? That one learns better by observation than by instruction, especially when instruction is coupled with command. This being a clearly established fact, why have we not profited by it? Because our brains, all of our brains from the beginning of time, have been blurred and blinded and weakened by the same mistake in infant education.

What is this mistake? What is it we have done so patiently and faithfully all these years to every one of the human race which has injured the natural working of the brain? This: we have systematically checked in our children acts which were the natural sequence of their observation and inference; and enforced acts which, to the child's mind, had no reason. Thus we have carefully trained a world of people to the habit of acting without understanding, and also of understanding without acting. Because we were unable even to entirely subvert natural brain processes, because our children must needs do some things of their own motion and not in obedience to us, therefore some power of judgment and self-government has grown in humanity. But because we have been so largely successful in our dealings with the helpless little brain is there so little power of judgment and self-government among us.

Observe, too, that our most intelligent progress is made in those arts, trades, professions, sciences, wherein little children are not trained; and that our most palpable deficiencies are in the morals, manners, and general personal relations of life, wherein little children are trained. The things we are compelled to do in obedience we make no progress in. They are either obeyed or disobeyed, but are not understood and improved upon: they stand like the customs of China. The things we learn by understanding and practising are open to further knowledge and growth.

A normal human act, as distinguished from the instinctive behaviour of lower animals or from mere excito-motary reaction, involves always these three stages, – impression, judgment, expression. These are not separate, but are orderly steps in the great main fact of life, – action. It is all a part of that transmission of energy which appears to be the business of the universe.

The sun's heat pours upon the earth, and passes through whatever substance it strikes, coming out transformed variously, according to the nature of the substance. Man receives his complement of energy, like every other creature, – physical stimulus from food and fire, psychical stimulus from its less known sources; and these impressions tend to flow through him into expression as naturally as, though with more complexity than, in other creatures.

The song of the skylark and Shelley's "Skylark" show this wide difference in the amount and quality of transmission, yet are both expressions of the same impressions, plus those wider impressions to which the poet's organism was open.

The distinctive power of man is that of connected action. Our immense capacity for receiving and retaining impressions gives us that world-stock of stored information and its arrested stimulus which we call knowledge. But wisdom, the higher word, refers to our capacity for considering what we know, – handling and balancing the information in stock, and so acting judiciously from the best impression or group of impressions, instead of indiscriminately from the latest or from any that happens to be uppermost.

This power, in cases of immediate danger, we call "presence of mind." Similarly, when otherwise intelligent persons do visibly foolish things, we call it "absence of mind." The brain, as an organ, is present in both cases; but in the former it is connected with action, in the latter the connection is broken. The word "thoughtless," as applied to so large a share of our walk and conversation, describes this same absence of the mind from the place where it is wanted.

In training the brain of the child, first importance lies in cultivating this connection between the mind and the behaviour. As with eye or hand, we should induce frequent repetition of the desired motions, that the habit of right action be formed. If the child is steadily encouraged to act in this natural connection, in orderly sequence of feeling, thought, and action, he would grow into constant "presence of mind" in his behaviour. Habits work in all directions; and a habit of thoughtful behaviour is as easy to form, really easier, than a habit of obedience, – easier, because it would be the natural function of the brain to govern behaviour if we did not so laboriously contradict it. We have preferred submission to intelligence, and have got neither, – not intelligence because we have so violently discouraged it, and not submission because the healthy upward forces of human brain growth will not submit. Those races where the children are most absolutely subservient, as with the Chinese and Hindu, where parents are fairly worshipped and blindly obeyed, are not races of free and progressive thought and healthy activity.

The potential attitude of mind involved in our method is shown in that perfect expression of "childish faith," – "It's so because mamma says so; and, if mamma says so, 'tis so if 'tain't so." That position makes it very easy for mamma as long as "childish faith" endures; but how does it help the man she has reared in this idyllic falsehood? The painful truth is that we have used childish weaknesses to make our government easy for us, instead of cultivating the powers that shall make life easy to them. A child's limitless credulity is the open door of imposition, and is ruthlessly taken advantage of by mother and father, nurse and older companion generally.

As a feature in brain-training, this, of course, works absolute harm. It prolongs the infant weakness of the racial brain, keeps us credulous and open to all imposture, hinders our true growth. What we should do is to help the child to question and find out, – teach him to learn, not to believe. He does learn, of course. We cannot shut out the workings of natural laws from him altogether. Gradually he discovers that fire is hot and water wet, that stone is hard to fall on, and that there are "pins in pussy's toes." His brain is always being healthily acted upon by facts, his power of discrimination he practises as best he may, and his behaviour follows inevitably.

Given such a child, with such and such an inheritance of constitution and tendency, submit him to certain impressions, and he behaves accordingly. He has felt. He has thought. He is about to do. Here comes in our universal error. We concern ourselves almost wholly with what the child does, and ignore what he feels and thinks. We check the behaviour which is the logical result of his feeling and thinking, and substitute another and different behaviour for his adoption.

Now it is a direct insult to the brain to try to make the body do something which the brain does not authorise. It is a physical shock: it causes a sort of mental nausea. There are many subconscious activities which go on without our recognition; but to call on the body to consciously go through certain motions, undirected by previous mental processes, is an affront to any healthy brain. It is sharply

distasteful to us, because it is against the natural working of the machinery. The vigorous functional activity of the young brain cries out against it; and the child says, "Why?" "Why" is an articulate sound to express the groping of the brain for relation, for consistency. We have so brow-beaten and controverted this natural tendency, so forced young growing brains to accept the inconsistent, that consistency has become so rare in human conduct as to be called "a jewel." Yet the desire for consistency is one of the most inherent and essential of our mental appetites. It is the logical tendency, the power to "put two and two together," the one great force that holds our acts in sequence and makes human society possible.

We demand consistency in others, and scoff at the lack of it, even in early youth. "What yer talkin' about, anyway?" we cry. "There's no sense in that!" We expect consistency of ourselves, too. It is funny, though painful, to see the ordinary warped brain trying to square its own conduct with its own ideals. Square they must, somehow, however strained and thin is our patchwork connection. We check the child's act, the natural sequence of his feeling and thought, so incessantly as to give plenty of basis for that pathetic tale of the little girl who said her name was Mary. "And what is your last name?" "Don't," said she. "Mary Don't." By doing this, we constantly send back upon the brain its own impulses, and accustom it to such continual discouragement of natural initiative that it gradually ceases to govern the individual behaviour. In highest success, this produces the heavy child, whining, "What shall I do now?" always hanging about, fit subject for any other will to work on; and the heavy adult, victim of ennui, and needing constant outside stimulus to "pass away the time."

The slowness, the inertia, the opaque conservatism, and the openness to any sort of external pressure, easiest, of course, on the down side, – which so blocks the path of humanity, – largely come back to that poor child's surname, Mary Don't. It is thoroughly beaten into us when young, and for the rest of life we mostly "Don't." But beyond the paralysing "Don't!" checking the natural movement of the organism, comes a galvanising "Do!" shocking it into unnatural activity. We tell the child to perform a certain action toward which his own feeling and thought have made no stir whatever. "Why?" he demands. And we state as reason our authority, and add an immediate heaven or hell arrangement of our own making to facilitate his performance. He does it. Hell is very near. He does it many, many times. He becomes habituated to a course of behaviour which comes to its expression not through his own previous impression and judgment, but through ours; that is, he is acting from another person's feeling and thinking. We have asserted our authority just before his act, between it and his thought. We have made a cleft which widens to a chasm between what he feels and thinks and what he does. Into that chasm pours to waste an immeasurable amount of human energy. The struggles of the dethroned mind to get possession of its own body again, as the young man or woman grows to personal freedom, ought to strike remorse and shame to the parental heart. They do not, because the devoted parent knows no more of these simple psychic processes than the Goths knew of the priceless manuscripts they destroyed so cheerfully. With the slow, late kindling of the freed mind, under the stimulus perhaps of noble thoughts from others, or just the inner force of human upgrowth, the youth tries to take the rudder, and steer straight. But the rudder chains are stretched to useless slackness or rusted and broken. He feels nobly. He thinks nobly. He starts to do nobly, but his inner pressure meets no quick response in outer act. The connection is broken. The habit of "don't" is strong upon him. Following each upward impulse which says, "Do!" is that automatic check, artificial, but heavily driven in, which has so thoroughly and effectually taught the brain to stop at thinking, not to do what it thought. What he felt and thought was not allowed to govern his action these fifteen years past. Why should it now? It takes years of conscientious work to re-establish this original line of smooth connection, and the mended place is never so strong as it would have been if it had not been broken.

Also, the work of those who seek to educate our later youth, and of those who are forever pouring out their lives to lead the world a little higher, is rendered million-fold more difficult by this same gulf, this terrible line of cleavage which strikes so deep to the roots of life, and leaves

our beautiful feelings and wise thoughts to mount sky-high in magnificent culture, while our action, which is life's real test, grovels slowly along, scarce moved by all our fine ideas.

A more general discourager of our racial advancement than this method of brain-training we could hardly have invented. It is universal in its application, and grinds down steadily on all our people during the most impressionable years of life. That we grow as we do in spite of it is splendid proof of the beneficent forces of our unconscious life, always stronger than our conscious efforts; and that our American children grow more freely, and so have more power of initiative and self-government, is the best work of our democracy.

"But what else can we do?" will ask the appalled parents. Without authority they feel no grip upon the child, and see themselves exposed to infant tyranny, and the infant growing up neglected and untrained. This shows how little progress we have made in child-culture, how little grasp we have of the real processes of education. Any parent, no matter how ignorant, is wiser than a baby and larger. Therefore, any parent can direct a child's action and enforce it, to some extent. But to understand how to modify the child's action by such processes as shall keep it still his own, to alter his act by first altering his feeling and thought and so keeping the healthy sequence unbroken, that is a far more subtle and difficult task. A typical instance of this difference in method may be illustrated in that common and always difficult task, teaching a child table manners. Here is a case in which there is no instinct in the child to be appealed to. The noise, clumsiness, and carelessness to which we object are not at all unpleasant to him. In what way can we reach the child's range of reasoning, and convince him of the desirability of this artificial code of ours? We can, of course, state that it displeases us, and appeal to his good will not to give us pain. This is rational enough; but consideration for others, based on a mere statement of distaste, – a distaste he cannot sympathise with, – is a rather weak force with most children. It is a pity to over-strain this delicate feeling. It should be softly tested from time to time, and used enough to encourage a healthy growth; but to continually appeal to a sympathy none too strong is often to strain and weaken it. In table manners it seldom works well. The alleged distress of the parent requires too much imagination, the desired self-control has too slight a basis.

But there is a far safer and better way. Carefully work out in your own mind the real reason why you wish the child to conform to this particular code of table ethics. It is not wholly on the ground of displeasing you by the immediate acts. The main reason why they displease you, and why you are so concerned about the matter, is that this is the accepted standard among the people with whom you associate and with whom you expect the child to associate; and, if he does not conform to this code, he will be excluded from desirable society.

Reasons why table manners exist at all, or are what they are, require further study; but the point at issue is not why it is customary to eat with the fork instead of the knife, but why your child should do so. When he gets to the point of analysing these details, and asks why he should fold his napkin in one case and leave it crumpled in another, you will of course be prepared with the real reasons. Meanwhile the real reason why the child should learn not to do these undesirable things is that such manners, if pursued, will deprive him of desirable society.

We usually content ourselves with an oral statement to this effect: "Nobody will want to eat with you if you do so!" Right here let a word be said to those who are afraid of over-stimulating a child's brain by a more rational method of training. Training by observation and deduction is far easier to a young brain than training by oral statements. To take into the mind by ear a statement of fact, and to hold that statement in memory and preserve its force to check a natural action, is a difficult feat for an adult. But to see that such a thing has such a consequence, and "take warning" by that, is the "early method," the natural method, the quickest, easiest, surest way. So, instead of saying to the child, "If you behave so, people will not want to eat with you," we should let him see that this is the case, and feel the lack.

His most desirable society is usually that of his parents; and his first entrance upon that plane should be fairly conditioned upon his learning to play the game as they do. No compulsion, no

penalties, no thought of "naughtiness," merely that, if he wants to eat with them, why, that is the way they eat, and he must do so, too. If he will not, exit the desirable society. By very gradual steps, – not by long, tiresome grown-up meals, but by a graduated series of exercises that should recognise the physical difficulty of co-ordinating the young faculties on this elaborate "manual of arms," – a child could learn the whole performance in a reasonable time, and lose neither nervous force nor clearness of perception in the process.

As we do these things now, pulling this string and that, appealing to feelings half developed, urging reasons which find no recognition, using compulsion which to the child's mind is arbitrary and unjust, we may superinduce a tolerable system of table manners, but we have more or less injured the instrument in so doing. A typewriter could, perhaps, be worked with a hammer; but it would not improve the machine. We have had far more consideration for "the machinery of the household" than for the machinery of a child's mind, and yet the real foundation claim of the home is that it is necessary to rear children in. If the ordinary conditions of household life are unsuitable to convey the instruction we desire, it is for us to so arrange those conditions as to make them suitable.

There are cases, many cases, in a child-time, where we cannot command the conditions necessary for this method of instruction, where the child must act from our suggestion with no previous or accompanying reasoning. This makes it all the more necessary that such reasoning should be open to him when we can command it. Moreover, the ordinary events in a young life are not surprises to the parent. We know in advance the things that are so unexpected to the child. Why should we not be at some pains to prepare him for these experiences? The given acts of each day are not the crucial points we make of them. What is important is that the child shall gradually establish a rational and connected scheme of life and method of action, his young faculties improving as he uses them, life growing easier and plainer to him from year to year. It is for the parent, the educator, the brain-trainer, to study out details of method and delicate applications. The main purpose is that the child's conduct shall be his own, – his own chosen course of action, adopted by him through the use of his own faculties, not forced upon him by immediate external pressure.

It is our business to make plain to him the desirability of the behaviour we wish produced, carefully establishing from day to day his perceptions of the use and beauty of life, and his proven confidence in us as interpreters. The young brain should be regularly practised in the first easy steps of sequential reasoning, arguing from the interesting causes we so carefully provide to the pleasant or not too painful effects we so honestly let it feel, always putting two and two together as it advances in the art and practice of human conduct. Then it will grow into a strong, clear, active, mature brain, capable of relating the facts of life with a wider and juster vision than has been ours, and acting unflinchingly from its own best judgment, as we have striven to do in vain these many years.

IV

THE BURNT CHILD DREAMS THE SLIPPER

The question of discipline is a serious one to every young mother; and most mothers are young to begin with. She feels the weight of maternal responsibility and the necessity for bringing up her child properly, but has studied nothing whatever on the subject.

What methods of discipline are in general use in the rearing of children? The oldest and commonest of all is that of meeting an error in the child's behaviour with physical pain. We simply hurt the child when he does wrong, in order that he may so learn not to do wrong. A method so common and so old as this ought to be clearly justified or as clearly condemned by its results.

Have we succeeded yet in simplifying and making easy the training of children, – easy for the trainer and for the trained; and have we developed a race of beings with plain, strong, clear perceptions of right and wrong behaviour and an easy and accurate fulfilment of those perceptions?

It must be admitted that we have not; but two claims will be made in excuse: first, that, however unsuccessful, this method of discipline is better than any other; and, second, that the bad behaviour of humanity is due to our inherent depravity, and cannot be ameliorated much even by physical punishment. Some may go further, and say that whatever advance we have made is due to this particular system. Unfortunately, we have almost no exact data from which to compute the value of different methods of child-training.

In horse-training something definite is known. On one of the great stock ranches of the West, for instance, where some phenomenal racers have been bred, the trainers of colts not only forbid any rough handling of the sensitive young animals, but even rough speaking to them. It has been proven that the intelligent and affectionate horse is trained more easily and effectually by gentleness than by severity. But with horses the methods used are open to inspection, and also the results.

With children each family practises alone on its own young ones, and no record is kept beyond the casual observation and hearsay reports of the neighbours. Yet, even so, there is a glimmer of light. The proverbial uncertainty as to "ministers' sons" indicates a tendency to reaction when a child has been too severely restrained; and the almost sure downfall of the "mamma's darling," the too-much-mothered and over-indulged boy, shows the tendency to foolish excesses when a child has not been restrained enough.

Again, our general uncertainty as to methods proves that even the currently accepted "rod" system is not infallible. If it were, we should have peace of mind and uncounted generations of good citizens. As it is, we have the mixed and spotty world we all know so well, – a heavy percentage of acknowledged criminals, a much larger grade of those who just do not break the law, but whose defections from honesty, courage, truth, and honour weigh heavily upon us all. Following that comes the vast mass of "good people," and their behaviour is sometimes more trying than that of the bad ones.

Humanity does gain, but not as fast as so intelligent a race should. In penology something has been learned. Here, dealing with the extreme criminal, we are slowly establishing the facts that arbitrary and severe punishment does not proportionately decrease crime; that crime has causes, which may be removed; and that the individual needs to be treated beforehand, preventively, rather than afterward, retributively. This would seem to throw some light on infant penology. If retributive punishment does not proportionately decrease crime in adult criminals, perhaps it does not decrease "naughtiness" among little children. If there is an arrangement of conditions and a treatment which may prevent the crime, perhaps there may be an arrangement of conditions and a treatment which will prevent the naughtiness.

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