

I have sometimes thought that the conventional usages of society, especially among the higher classes, are unfavourable, to some extent, to the free utterance of those precious words which exert so kindly an influence. It may not be so, but I have scarcely been able, at times, to resist the conviction of its truth. When I have yielded my seat in a crowded omnibus to a lady of genteel appearance, and exposed myself to the tender mercies of a thunder-storm for her sake, without so much as a glance, still less a word of an acknowledgment, I have thought it must be true. If such is the fact, it were certainly better to break away from the forms of genteel life, at least so far as these words of civility and kindness are concerned. The caprices of fashion should not be allowed to control implicitly all the indices by which the heart reveals what is going on within it. This world is not so full of the fountains of happiness that we can afford to have them dried up by the factitious arrangements of society.

But the value of this simple specific, sufficiently apparent in all relations, is especially marked in the family. The whole domestic economy may be entirely vitiated by an occasional harsh word among its members. On the other hand, where the utmost pains are taken to cultivate the habit of speaking kindly and affectionately, every wheel in this beautiful and delicate machinery moves without the least jar or friction.

All this may be sufficiently apparent to most people of ordinary discernment; but I apprehend that with many it may be admitted in the abstract, but denied or neglected in its practical details. Persons often find a great deal of fault with their children for any considerable infraction of the laws of kindness in their intercourse with each other, and perhaps punish them severely for it, although they have omitted to instil into the minds of their children the sentiment of this philosophy of kind words. In most lessons where virtue and ethics are concerned, positive precepts are of more worth than negative injunctions. If I tell my child not to say a harsh word to his sister, for it is very wrong, and makes her feel unhappy, I give him good counsel, it is true; but the counsel were better still, it seems to me, if I said, "My son, you should learn to speak kindly to your sister always, for it makes her happy to hear you speak so."

I have said that different members of the family should form the habit of speaking kind words. I wish to repeat the proposition, and to add to it that they should use these words frequently, and even seek occasions for using them. Let no one say that this sentiment, reduced to practice, would induce a want of sincerity, and that it would engender hypocrisy. To speak frequently otherwise than as we feel would have this tendency; but that is not what I am pleading for. I simply ask that the habit be formed of exhibiting a spirit of tenderness in the selection of words, and in the tones of voice with which they are uttered. There is among many persons of mature years an inexhaustible fount of kind feeling and affection—all that could be desired in the bosom of the family—which, nevertheless, almost never finds any outlet. It is there, and that is well; though it were better if it could be expressed in words. It is said, that "actions speak louder than words." Perhaps they do. They have a voice of thunder sometimes, it cannot be denied. But if they speak louder, they are not always more grateful, methinks. The value of an observation is not invariably dependent upon the volume of voice with which it is uttered. The "still, small voice" that spoke to the seer of Israel, was more significant and more precious to him than the blast of the north wind.

It may be said that, as words are only the indices of ideas, and those who are dear to us are perfectly assured of our kindness and love, there is no necessity for the repetition of these indices. Grant, for a moment, that there is no absolute necessity in the case. If there is but a probability that their occasional use will add to the happiness of our friends, certainly, as the cost of them is so trifling, they ought not to be suppressed. But I am by no means sure they are not, in many cases, at least absolutely necessary. It does not follow, as a matter of course, that because we loved a person tenderly and ardently, half a dozen years ago, that we love him as tenderly and ardently now. And when the husband leads the object of his choice to the altar, and convinces her, by the various modes in which the affections of the heart are expressed, that she is as dear to him as his own life, and that she occupies the place in his heart next to God, it does not certainly follow that he will always love thus. There is a strong probability, it is true; but there is no absolute certainty. There is a mighty power in those words, once pronounced so often, and with so much fervour, "I love you." But when they fail to be used, and the other multifarious expressions of love become fewer and fewer, until they almost entirely cease, if a change gradually comes over the spirit of that wife, is it at all wonderful? Is it not, on the other hand, a result perfectly natural and philosophical? I think so. If, by the allotments of a wise Providence, the man's physical system was placed in a state of catalepsy, and he remained in this condition year after year, unable to utter a word or exhibit any signs of consciousness, while his friends had

reason to believe the operations of his intellect were undisturbed and as vigorous as ever, the case would be far different. But to know that his heart has the same avenues of communication with the outward world as in former years, and that through those avenues no rills, such as once flowed so freely from them may issue to gladden another heart—so closely connected with it—that is hard to bear. It is hard to bear, whichever the suffering party may be—whether a husband or wife, a brother or sister, a son or daughter, a father or mother. And it should not be so. What if it should seem to us that our friend—the dearest on earth, perhaps—expects none of these words of tenderness, looks for none of them, scarcely considers himself entitled to them? Shall we therefore deny them? Shall we refuse to scatter a few seeds which cost us nothing, and which we know will spring up and yield the fruits of gladness along the pathway of that friend?

There is a vast responsibility resting upon every parent, and especially upon every Christian parent, in this matter. The father and mother not only have power, by their example, to infuse a spirit of kindness and love into the entire family circle, which shall exhibit itself in corresponding words, but they can contribute greatly to form and foster this spirit in their children, in the green and tender period of childhood and early youth. They can teach them how to employ kind words, so that in time they will become their habitual mode of expression. Words have an effect on the individual who utters them, as well as on those to whom they are addressed. If a person is angry, and speaks angrily, his language will add fuel to the fire. So if a child is assiduously taught early to speak in words only of kindness, those very words will induce a kind and tender spirit.

There are a great many parents who regard those little acts of politeness which are accounted proper from members of one family to those of another, as entirely superfluous among members of the same family. But I do not so regard them—certainly the most of them. I see not, for instance, why those who assemble at the breakfast-table from different apartments in the same house, should not say as hearty a "good morning" to each other, as those who, not connected by family ties, meet accidentally in the street, or at each other's dwellings. I see no reason why such civilities should not be observed by all the members of the family, young and old, in their intercourse with each other. On the contrary, I think I can perceive abundant reason why they should be observed. To use them habitually is to draw the cords of love closer around the family circle; and no agency that will accomplish this is to be despised or lightly esteemed.

I have written more at length on this topic than many will think it demands. But for years I have been deeply impressed with a sense of its importance, and I cannot resist the conviction that it should occupy a higher place in the Christian family than is too frequently assigned to it.

REV. FRANCIS C. WOODWORTH.

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12. THE DOOR SCRAPER.

Those who have read "Northend's Teacher and Parent," a book which every teacher and every parent ought to read, and which is supplied to the public libraries of upper Canada, will recollect the following beautiful and instructive story. Read and see how cheaply a great good may be done.—*Ed. Journal.*

The silent, though powerful and expanding influence of example is so evident, that no one should be employed to train the young who is careless in his habits, or regardless of his personal appearance, "What the teacher is, in these respects, the pupils will generally be, and unless they see better patterns at home, the standard of the teacher will be theirs also. If they see the teacher addicted to any habit, they will think it manly to imitate him. If he smokes, they will be likely to do the same. If he spits upon the floor, they will imitate his example. If his boots are seldom cleaned, theirs will be quite as seldom." The following story will strongly illustrate our position. It was taken from the *Christian Register*, and the incidents took place in a village where the teacher was particular in his personal appearance, and required his pupils to regard theirs. "When he took charge of the school, he noticed that the pupils, in muddy weather, were accustomed to enter the school room, and stamp the mud upon the floor; or carry it to their seats, and soil the floor for a large space around them. No sweeping could clean such a floor; and, of course, none had been attempted oftener than once a week. Determined to make an attempt at reform, the teacher obtained a piece of iron hoop, and nailing one end to the door, he fastened the other to a walnut stake that he drove into the ground. Every child was required to scrape his shoes before he entered the room; and the consequence was, that the true floor became visible through the crust that covered it. The next step was, to get a rug for the entry; and a neat farmer's wife very readily gave them an old rug, that she could spare. It did not take him long to induce the habit of scraping and wiping the shoes; and a lad or a miss,