

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE MOTHER'S HEART.

By Rev. J. A. R. Dickson, D.D.

The mother makes the home. That is the sphere in which she puts forth her power. She lives her heroic life there, doing the thousand little things of which no note is taken by the eyes of a stranger, and doing them all for pure love. The home — that royal palace of the child, for it matters not to it whether it is a place with low roof and bare white walls and sanded floor, or a place with lofty ornamented ceiling, walls covered with the choicest paintings, and floors soft with the richest Axminster carpets — its abiding place is in the warm affection of the mother's heart. The mother's heart makes the home. According to the powers and principles that rule in her soul does the home take on its character. She is the presiding genius there. She in the quietest way sways an undisputed sceptre over every interest that finds footing there. And what a world that is to work in! It seems narrow, but in reality it is only the centre of a circle whose circumference may take in the utmost confines of the globe, for wherever the children go they carry with them the thoughts breathed into them there, and the impressions made upon them there. It seems short-lived, its age is only for a few brief years, and then dispersion comes to carry the family group apart, but in carrying them apart they do not lose, they cannot lose, the garnered and precious memories of those early years of love. These live on through time into eternity. It seems unimportant, the life of the little ones unfold like the summer flowers; yes, but they are cultivated unconsciously by the spirit, and the speech and the manners of those about them. Everything is for them a living seed. What made Robert Moffat a missionary? Was it not his mother, as she read to her children accounts of the missionary work of the Moravians? When she had set the boy's hands to work at darning stockings or sewing on buttons for themselves, she engaged their ears and hearts by these accounts of Christian enterprise.

What made John Wesley a man of prayer and a powerful preacher of the Gospel? Was it not his mother, as she took him apart, at least once a week, and prayed with him and for him, so showing to him her faith in the efficacy of prayer and her true affection for himself.

What made John Ruekin such a power for righteousness in his time, every book of his being a strong protest against some prominent evil, and a mighty plea for the good which that evil overthrew? Was it not his mother, as she insisted on his reading and memorizing the Word of God, so that he became indoctrinated with its truth and charmed by its justice?

What made Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry the commentator, so devout, so pious, so rich in godly experience and wisdom, so influential upon the times in which he lived and upon the character of his son? Was it not this fact, which Matthew records in his father's memoir? "His mother was a virtuous gentlewoman, and one that feared God above many. She was dead to the vanities and pleasures of the court, though she lived in the midst of them. She looked well to the ways of her household, prayed with them daily, catechized her children, and taught

them the good knowledge of the Lord betimes."

We might go on almost without end, calling the roll of honorable names that have graced the annals of the world, finding in each case the mother's influence to be paramount and unparalleled. There is no force equal to it. No marvel that Jane Taylor sings of it in that sweet poem for a child: "My Mother." It is not wonderful that William Cowper should celebrate in song the virtues of his mother, when his cousin sent him her portrait. That opened afresh the old fountains, and caused them to flow, sending their waters into the clear light of heaven. It rises far above the earth:

Yet oh, the thought, that thou art safe,
and he!

That thought is joy, arrive what may
to me.

My boast is not that I deduce my birth,
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the
earth;

But higher far my proud pretensions
rise—

The son of parents passed into the skies.

The love of the mother's heart never dies. It is imperishable. It is intensely interesting to trace it. Behold the young lad going away from home, even in the cold North, in Scotland, where love lives less upon the lip than in the heart, at such a time it flows forth into crystalline speech. When Walter Inglis went away from his moorland home in Brothershills, his mother went with him to see him on the way. Over the lonely moor they went, and when the time for parting came, mother and son knelt down upon the heath, and the mother prayed for the son, commending him to God, who alone could keep him from the evil powers about him. That done, the parting word was said: "Now, my dear bairn, if you go astray you will bring down your old mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." How grand is that! Nothing on earth grander. What a fine subject for a picture? The Scotch mother's farewell. This is not a singular case, but it is a typical one. Robert Moffat's leaving Inverkeithing for Chester had in it the same religious concern for his welfare on the part of his mother. She engaged him to read a chapter of the Bible every day, which eventually turned to his salvation. Dr. Thomas McCrie, when going to Edinburgh University, not being at that time a Christian, his mother accompanied him to a distance, and ere she parted from him, led him into a field and prayed for him and gave him counsel for his guidance. That prayer changed his life.

One of the painful things in the life of Thomas Carlyle is found in this fact, that after his great mental struggle which brought him, where? his mother's love, intense and formulated on the old Presbyterian dogmas, found in him, and from him, no hearty ringing response. She kept writing to him, kept praying for him, grand old woman that she was, true to her noble faith in Jesus Christ. But to the day of her death no assuring word ever proceeded from her son, to bring peace to her heart. But this very silence makes the mother's love more eloquent. Ah, it shines forth like the noontid sun.

It is because of her ministry of genuine, generous love that "her children rise up and call her blessed." The mother's heart is the source of the care that crowns the child through all his early days, of the wisdom that invests

the life of the youth, of the joy and gladness that accompany his manhood and old age. It is the principal formative force in the upbuilding of human character. Nothing can equal this "mothering." If it be enjoyed only during a limited space of time, as was the case with Moses, yet such impression is made as is not easily effaced or forgotten. Mothers cannot think too deeply or too seriously of this. Their life is in reality the life of the child. Every child naturally partakes most of the mother. Every child is most with the mother, and most under her influence. Every child being most the object of her attentions, and her 10,000 little kindnesses, is most tenderly drawn to her, and most strongly imbibes her thoughts and goes in her way. She to an almost unexpressed extent determines the destiny of the child.

Two remarkable testimonies may be adduced here in confirmation of this power, and that too from an unexpected quarter; namely, from the lips of two celebrated Frenchmen, Napoleon and Mirabeau. Napoleon said: "France needs nothing so much to promote her regeneration as good mothers." When Mirabeau was asked at what time he would begin the education of a boy, he is reported to have replied: "I would begin twenty years before he was born by educating his mother." Every intelligent person agrees with these utterances. The mother makes the man and so the world.

Canada needs good mothers. Has she got them? The best part of her religious element is composed of believing godly women. They are the chief part of the membership of the churches, the principal part of every prayer meeting, the mainstay of missionary enterprise in the Sabbath school, in mission churches, in collecting committees, in organizations. What would the churches be without godly women today. Poor, shrunken, shrivelled things. Let us thank God for the good women that are in the homes of Canada.

And let them be cheered on in the noble works to which they have put their hands. We cannot succeed without them. Let them know that they labor not in vain. The quiet unobtrusive work they do lives, and will stand forth confessed and acknowledged by and by. Patience! and the harvest will be gathered in an abundant and heavy crop. No failure can come in your work. Seeming failure may come, but real failure, never! never! All God's promises come to the support of the faithful, earnest prayerful mothers, who seek the spiritual good and upbuilding of their children. They speak to them assuringly: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I lease, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." He who works with God always wins.

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A very hopeful view of the "Future Prospect of Christianity," by a Japanese writer, Sakunosin Motoda, appears in The Living Age for December 5, reprinted from the International.