

## HOUSEHOLD.

## Strange Traits in Children.

(By Christine Beals, in 'New Crusade.')

In their early childhood children sometimes develop strange traits or habits that it is hard to account for. I once knew a child, a beautiful, blue-eyed, golden-haired boy, who from his earliest childhood would appropriate to his own use any article or plaything that came in his way, without the slightest regard for the rightful owner.

At a very early age his careful young mother noticed this inclination, and tried to check it. At one time when this baby was a little over two years old, the mother took him with her to spend the afternoon with a friend, and when she was ready to return home she found that her child had made a collection of all the movable playthings in the play-room, and loudly insisted that they should be taken away with him. The mother was somewhat dismayed when she saw that no effort could induce the baby to peaceably relinquish the coveted articles.

The lady to whom the visit was made assured the mother that the baby was too young to understand the problem of ownership. 'Let him take one or two of the articles with him to quiet him,' she said. 'It would make no difference; he was only a baby.'

But the mother, to whom the destiny of her child was a sacred trust, refused to compromise with him, and he was carried kicking and screaming home. Then the baby triumphantly produced from the pocket of his little coat, where he had carefully concealed them, a tiny whistling bird, a rubber ring and a toy monkey.

Now the mother's heart sank within her and her eyes filled with tears. But she quietly took the treasures from the child, refusing to let him have the benefit of the forbidden objects. 'Can it be,' thought the mother, who as we have said, was young, though very earnest and conscientious, 'can it be, that my child, my baby boy, has had blood in his veins? Can it be that he has the instincts of a—no, oh, no! It cannot be! I can teach him, surely I can teach him to be honest.' But her heart was tried before the victory was finally won. When he was three years old she had seemingly made no impression on him. When he was at play with other children whatever he could get, became at once in his own eyes his property. Whatever came within reach of his little fingers immediately became his.

Vain were all the mother's efforts to impress upon her child the rights of others. 'How would my little boy like it if Willie or Earle should carry away his things?' she would ask.

'Willie or Earle no do dat,' was the reply. 'But I keep what I want.'

She had reasoned and illustrated by many object lessons the wrongfulness of taking what belonged to another, and finally when the child was four years old yielded to the advice of a friend and tried harsh measures. The tender baby flesh had been caused to sting and quiver with pain when the child was found with an article belonging to another. And yet the habit was not broken. In other things the child yielded readily enough to authority, and was easily taught. He was generous and affectionate and honest in speech. He never denied his acts, nor tried to cover up his thefts, if such a harsh word should be used, but always maintained that what he could get was his. He would come straight to his mother with an article he had taken and triumphantly exclaim, 'I got it and I'll keep it.'

At one time when he was about four and a half years old he and his mother were staying on a large farm, at the season of the year when the threshing was being done. The car that did the cooking for the crew of men was situated within a few rods of the house. The mother well knew that she could not trust her boy inside the car—that he would appropriate to his own use anything he saw that he desired.

The car was left standing over Sunday and the men as well as the cook went away to spend the day. And in the quiet of the Sunday morning the mother, looking out of her window, saw her boy, her rosy-cheeked, flaxen-haired baby boy, climbing stealthily through the window of the car, which he had succeeded in sliding open. She silently waited. She knew her seemingly in-

nocent baby was perpetrating some theft. Her heart ached at the thought. After some minutes she saw him climb cautiously out again, slide the window back to its place, dismount on a box placed there by himself for that purpose, and start for the house. She knew he would come directly to her. What should she do? What should she say? While she was thinking about it he appeared before her carrying in his little kilt skirt which he was carefully holding up, a dozen red, rosy apples. He sat down opposite her, carefully guarding his kilt to keep the apples from escaping, and choosing an especially tempting one, he took it up in his chubby hands and began quietly crunching it. But there was the blue glitter in his eyes that told the mother that a struggle was at hand.

Do I hear some mother say that such habits in children are not to be taken seriously? That they will outgrow them in time or forget them? How do we know they will? And can we take any risks in such things?

It seemed afterwards to this mother that it was a sort of inspiration that led her to look calmly into the face of her offending child and say, 'Mother is going to tell you a story this morning.'

'A Bible story?' asked the child, for of these he was particularly fond.

'Yes, dear, a Bible story. A great many years ago, God desired that all of his people should know exactly what he wished them to do, and also the things that he did not wish them to do. So he called to him a good and wise man, and told him to write on great pieces of stone that all the people might learn the things that would please God, and the things that would displease him. So this good and wise man took two great smooth pieces of stone and on each one he wrote something that would please God or something that they must not do if they wished to please him.' The mother paused. The child had ceased munching his apple and sat with eager eyes and parted lips.

'And what did the man write, mamma?' he asked.

'I will tell my little boy this morning just one thing he wrote and some time I will tell him the others. On one of those pieces of stone this good and wise man wrote that God did not wish any of his people to take that which belonged to another.'

There was perfect silence in the room. The mother's heart smote her. Had she driven the lesson home too hard?

The blue eyes of the child were downcast and from beneath the curly lashes the tears slowly dropped, while the rosy lips twitched and quivered. Then a subdued little voice asked, 'Did God mean me, mamma?'

'Certainly, my dear. He meant all his people, and is grieved when anyone disobeys him.'

Slowly the little figure arose to its feet. Looking ruefully at the half-eaten apple in his hand he asked, 'What shall I do about what I have eaten, mamma? I am going to take the others back where I got them.'

'I think, dear, that God will forgive you for what you have eaten if you ask him. And to-morrow you can tell the cook you are sorry for what you have done.' She watched her child carefully mount again the box, slide the window and creep into the car and out again. Then he came and crept into her arms and told her that if God cared when he took other people's things he was never going to take anything that did not belong to him again.

And many times afterward the mother, ever watchful, heard her child say sternly to himself, as the little hand was withdrawn from some coveted object, 'God cares.' And so the habit was finally broken.

Who can say what the consequences might have been had the deplorable habit been allowed to grow with the growth of the child? Can we, as mothers, be too persistent in carefully and tactfully dealing with any undesirable habit we see fixing itself on our children in their tender years?

## A Near Opportunity.

The girl told the story herself. Her mother had for weeks been seriously ill, and she had borne the care and anxiety with her daily work. It was not easy to care for one's mother, run the household, and go to office besides. When the mother finally began to grow better the daughter was so worn out that she herself was in

danger of illness. She longed to get away, if only for two days, but there seemed no way. One Saturday when she came back from her work she found a note waiting for her from a friend on the next square.

'I know that you must be tired out,' the writer said, 'and somehow the impulse to send for you came to me very strongly. I want you to come over this afternoon, and stay over till office time on Monday. If you want to go to church all right, but if not you shall have the whole quiet house to yourself on Sunday morning, and you can rest in any way you please. Anything shall be yours except one—you are not to cross your own threshold for two days. You are to pretend that you are away on a vacation. You needn't answer. I shall expect you.'

So the girl went, and from the day and a half in a bright, restful atmosphere, gained the new strength and courage she had so sorely needed.

'I never shall forget it,' she said. 'Always now I am looking for a chance to pass it on.'—'Forward.'

## The Father at Home.

Whatever men may think of the vagaries of William III., of Germany, he is a good father, and in his home life is a shining example, worthy of imitation of all Christian fathers. When the day's work is over he goes home, and gathers about him his seven children, or his 'little gang,' as he fondly calls them, and enters heartily into all their fun and frolic, their conversations, and their studies. He is one of them. His home life is happy, and his word and influence outweighs all else in the formation of the life and character of his home. What we need widely to-day is that Christian fathers shall leave their frowns, their vexations, and over-strained temper in their stores and offices, and workshops, when they go home for the evening, and seek to shed a happy and wholesome influence upon their children and wives in the circle of the home. It is pathetic to think that in our fair and free land are thousands of fathers who seldom speak to their children, or whose influence in the home is nil. They go to their work so early the children are not awake, and when they come home it is so late their children are asleep. It is true we are compelled to adjust ourselves to the inevitable social and industrial conditions of life, but it is a profound mistake for men and women to become so completely lost in making a living that they forget to live, and have no time nor thought to teach their children to live.—Chicago 'Standard.'

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