

Only words! Not mean anything! Alas! whether you mean anything or not, you will find your words have a meaning, and a sad one too, I fear, in many cases. I dare say if I had gone down the lane, as perhaps I ought to have done, and spoken to that woman about using such violent words to her child, she would have made that very answer—"I don't mean anything." But that was the very thing that was wrong: at least one of the things. I knew she *didn't* mean all she said; and the boy knew it too, and therefore her words went for nothing with him. Mothers! you *ought* to mean what you say. Or, to speak more properly, you ought never to say anything to your children which you do not mean. Never think it does not much signify what you *say* to them, so long as you *do* what is right towards them. It *does* signify, and very much too.

For, in the first place, though you may not do all you say, and carry out your own rough words, yet your sayings and doings are much of a piece. A mother who speaks thoughtlessly, unkindly, and fiercely to her children, is not very likely to treat them wisely, kindly, and well. Besides, saying *is* doing; words are a part of your conduct. And perhaps there is no part which will have so much influence on your children, for good or for evil. Children have sharp ears. They see, and hear, and think far more than people suppose. They can tell right from wrong in what you say to them.

A mother's words *may* be the greatest blessing to a child. John Newton led a most wicked life for many years, but afterwards became a most devoted Christian minister. His mother died before he was seven years old; but he says of her, "She made it the chief business and pleasure of her life to instruct me, and bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Who can doubt that this pious mother's words to her little boy had much to do with the happy change that took place in him in after-life? Numberless other cases of the same kind might be named. And I venture to say (for I have done the thing myself) that if any one will go to a book-shelf, and take down, one after another, the volumes which contain the lives of good men, ministers, missionaries, and others, he will find that the greater part of them had pious mothers, who taught them aright when young.

Alas! no books need be written to show the opposite of this—how many bad men have had bad mothers. We all know too well, by what we see and hear, how boys and girls, who have heard little but evil from their parents' lips, turn into ungodly men and women.

Mothers, you are doing good or harm to your children by your words every day. Whatever you may think, your words do not go for nothing. Weigh them well. Mind how you speak to your children. Let me give you a few hints about it.

1. Never let your children hear *bad* words from your lips. Shall a child learn to slander, to lie, and to swear, from its own mother? For their sake, if for no other reason, watch against bad words of every sort. You would not wish *them* to grow up to swear and lie: take care you do not teach them. These things are easy to teach, but hard to un-teach.

2. Do not speak *harshly* to your little ones. I have heard many mothers do so, who I am sure did not feel harshly; only they had got a habit of speaking so. Remember, children have feelings. It gives pain