

The De-Microbized Infant.

(Helen Campbell, in 'Congregationalist'.)

'Yes,' said the chairman of the club section for Child Study, 'we have just had the nursery hospitalized, if I may coin a word. I mean that the woodwork is now all perfectly plain surfaces; not a hint of groove or ornament of any nature, and so, absolutely microbe proof. My aim is to eliminate all such possibility from infant life. The nursery of the future may probably be of glass, a mammoth incubator so to speak. Perhaps the public nurseries which are certainly to come, for the children of the poor at any rate, will be constructed on this plan.'

The speaker looked about her blandly, the smooth flow of her practiced voice evidently a source of satisfaction.

'You are so progressive, dear Mrs. Champney,' murmured the listeners in the little group which had lingered after the hour given to the Child Study section of the busiest club in a city where all women were expected to belong to at least one. This club demonstrated week by week, or believed that it did—which for the time being answered the same purpose—that women could meet every claim of this expansive Western social life and its free hospitality, dress to a charm, entertain through a whole season with no collapse, and at the same time keep pace with the latest word on any subject the club elected to handle. It handled everything.

To-day the subject under discussion brought terror to every young mother in the section—What We are to do with the Child. In the interrogative form there would have been a loophole of retreat, but the chairman had no intention of permitting it. The law was there, item by item. How were the mothers who handled moderate incomes, every dollar wanted two ways at once, to meet the requirements of the new faith?

Smooth surfaces? Not an inch of woodwork in any of the homes from which they came, not a piece of furniture but was grooved and bevelled and generally bejuggled to an extent calculated to fill every home-seeking microbe with joy. As for a trained nurse for each infant, that too was impossible, and the youngest mother sighed as she reflected on the crowding demands such active progressiveness made on the parent, and wondered if the chairman really lived up to them all.

'The child and the microbe,' she found herself saying half aloud, and her neighbor, a new-comer with beautiful dark eyes into which a twinkle had come, turned to the first speaker.

'May it not be, Mrs. Champney, that this anti-microbe crusade will end as the butter microbe one ended—a general devitalization all round, and a new culture school for the thing they had driven out?'

The chairman's face expressed both surprise and bland disapproval. 'I hardly understand the application, Mrs. Brenton. It surely cannot be your meaning that the child is not to be protected?'

'Not at all. I will tell you the butter microbe tale, which I know because my husband was the chemist then in charge of the laboratory and I was sometimes his assistant. It was the laboratory of an agricultural experiment station, and the question was how to secure absolute purity and fine flavor, the perfection of meth-

od, with some butter to be tested by experts—the utmost the nineteenth century could do with butter. It was done, and shelves, tins, churns and all receptacles—everything was disinfected, sterilized and all the rest, to the 'n'th degree. The product looked well; as golden and fine-grained as the most exacting could demand, and with the singular fact added, 'there was no taste in it.' To sum it all up, innumerable experiments proved that it was the banished microbe which had given the flavor; and the result is that butter bacteria of the true flavor are now cultivated and sent by mail! Total elimination of what nature put there for her own purposes does not always work.'

'Then you mean,' the young mother began, turning quickly. She had a fair portion of brains, though much cumbered by miscellaneous accumulation of unassorted knowledge. This woman she knew, silent as she had usually chosen to be, owned the sum and essence of all knowledge—wisdom. 'Tell us just what you mean,' she urged. 'You always help us.'

'It is only that I am quite convinced that "the child with a beautifully perfected non-bacterial life," in a sterilized nursery, is as distinctly what we don't want as the devitalized butter.'

'It is is all right perhaps in the beginning, for those first weeks are chiefly for feeding and sleep. But then in the helpless little animal there begins to dawn a will, a personality, the first unfolding of all that is the soul—the spiritual life of man. Now your baby needs a succession of interests much more than his elders; things to see and hear and handle, and he is 'bored,' yes, distinctly bored, if they are lacking, and cries because of that fact.'

'Do you know that Charles Booth, in that wonderful piece of work, Life and Labor of the People, contends that in respect to real entertainment the children of the relatively poor are least at a disadvantage? They see life in the family room, interesting domestic work on the part of the mother, and in the streets into which they are carried at all hours. Not hygienic, but surely never dull. Wherever the mother is busily at work in a round of household occupations—I do not mean the laboring woman, but she who perhaps does most of her own work—the child is sure of some entertainment as well as of natural development. The woman who understands this sees that she is already educator, the kindergarten coming presently to her aid, it is true, but not displacing the training of life itself. At just this point one could talk an hour, but I am going to let a very wise man sum it all up:

"In place of the fascinations of the life which holds the almost constant presence of the mother, part of whose education should have been to make her more various, more interesting, more untiring than the hired nurse is ever likely to be what does the latest thing call for? A carefully secluded, non-bacterial nursery, and guarded by a virtuous, punctual, invariable, conscientious rather than emotional nurses. . . . A fashionable mother can hardly visit it more than once a day or so, and thus the child relapses into the bored care of its bored hireling for another day, the nurse attending to the natural interests of her own life and the child considered good in proportion as it does not worry."

'You will none of you agree with the next bit, which follows his statement: "The ideal environment should no doubt centre about a nursery—a clean, airy, brightly lighted, brilliantly adorned room, into which there should be a frequent coming and going of things and of people. . . . In the homely, convenient, servantless abode over which the abled-bodied, capable, skilful, civilized women of the future will preside, the child will naturally follow its mother's morning activities from room to room."

The speaker paused. Something like a

muffled shriek sounded from the hearers, and the chairman flushed with indignation.

'Servantless? Such a condition can hardly apply to civilization as we understand it.'

'No, not as we understand it, perhaps, but we are approaching the dawn at last of a day in which just this is to happen. Don't be troubled. When it comes, only the noblest order of education will fit the woman for just the work she will know then to be the God-appointed one; mere drudgery will be cared for by science—her part is to be home-making at its highest.'

She was gone, but there had been tears in her eyes as she ended, and the chairman shook her head.

'Simply crazy notions,' she said, and went her way toward her own sterilized domain.

Tom's Discoveries

(Edgar W. Work, D.D., in 'Wellspring'.)

The way our friend Tom learned the everyday meaning of genius is worth remembering. Like many people, he thought that success depended upon genius, and that genius was some mysterious mental gift possessed by few. Tom is not to be blamed for this mistake, for many writers have discussed the subject in this light.

When Professor R— announced his lecture on 'Genius and Geniuses,' Tom determined to hear it. There was a good deal that Tom did not understand, but there was one sentence that clung to his mind like thistles to the clothing. The professor said, 'A genius is a man who has a great capacity for details.' Tom afterwards said that it was worth many times the price of the lecture to have heard that single sentence.

The fact is that there are many persons who are wasting a vast deal of time in lamenting their lack of success. They need to look their work 'deep in the eyes,' as the Germans say in their proverb, to discover all that is in it. They need nothing so much as the genius of hard work. They need to know that the first barrier to success is in not being thorough, 'scamp-ing' one's work, counting small things unimportant, not doing one's best in everything. The first thing is to have a heart for our work, and for the least as well as the greatest of our work. When the pastor asked the congregation, the night before Thanksgiving, what reasons they had for thankfulness, a very successful merchant said, 'I am thankful that I have an inclination to work.'

Oiled with Cheerfulness

When the sailors heave the anchor, they start a song, to the music of which they keep time. When a regiment marches to battle, the band plays martial airs, to stimulate and strengthen them. When the machinery of daily occupation runs very smoothly and without friction, the wheels must be well oiled with cheerfulness.

'Give us, O give us,' cried Carlyle, 'the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness; altogether past calculation is its power of endurance!'

The task may be heavy and full of drudgery, but if it be fulfilled in a brave and cheerful spirit, it will lose the grayness of its monotony, and shine with a new lustre. The dull day grows bright and the dreary burden grows light with the coming of cheerfulness.—Dr. Sutherland.

Autumn Offers.

See the special autumn offers announced in this issue. The boys and girls have the opportunity of securing a premium and at the same time extend the usefulness of the 'Messenger' by circulating it among their friends.