

## THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

(By Dr. G. Campbell Morgan).

New methods and new ideals concerning children have made men question the absolute accuracy of the Old Testament words in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." I, nevertheless, intend to treat it as an inspired statement, as a declaration of truth. The first thing I desire to say is that training involves an ideal. We are living in an age when even in the Christian Church the ideals we have for our children are very low. Too often the aim for our boys is that they shall be educated, gain a position for themselves, and "get on in the world." Too often for our girls we have the ideal that they also shall be educated, refined, and accomplished, and presently, again to use a phrase which, if I could, I would cancel absolutely from the thinking of Christian parents, "get settled." These are ideals are anti-Christian and pagan. I am not undervaluing education. It is the duty of every man to give his children the best education possible. I am not undervaluing position. Let every lad be ambitious to be the best carpenter, the best doctor, the best lawyer in the whole district. Let our girls, in very deed and truth, be educated, cultured, and refined; but if these constitute the ultimate, then in what are we removed from pagans?

What, then, should be our ideal? That the child should realize Jesus Christ's estimate of greatness. A man is great if his character is what it ought to be. In the manifesto of the King not a single blessing is pronounced upon having, nor upon doing. All the blessings are upon being. The true ideal toward which we are to move in the training of our children must be the realization of the character upon which Jesus Christ has set the seven-fold chapter of His benediction. That the boy may be a godly man, and the girl may be one of the King's daughters, is the supreme matter. To neglect that as the ultimate, to lose sight of that as the goal, is to ruin our children by a false love. Next, the training of a child involves personal discipline. You will make your boy what you are, and not what you tell him to be. You cannot expect your boy to be a Christian athlete if you are weak and anaemic in your Christianity. If you neglect prayer, and if the family altar is a thing you can lightly lay aside, your boy will not be likely to erect it in his own home. If I am to train my child, I must see the goal towards which I desire him to press, but I must go that way, too.

Then, again, training involves a recognition of certain facts about the child. First of all, account for it as you will—I care very little about the philosophy, but I care a great deal about the fact—there is enough iniquity in the heart of every child to effect the ruin of the race if it works itself out. I remember this also, that there is not a child born that is not born to the inheritance of the grace of God, and that is far mightier than the forces which are against them. So I have these two things to remember in the training of every child, that there is in the child, first of all, the capacity for evil, but beneath it, deeper than it, truer than it, is the capacity for good, and at the disposal of the child for the realization of the good as against the evil, is all the grace of God.

I suppose it is necessary in these days that we should teach children in crowds. Would to God we could escape from it. Every child is a lonely person-

ality, a special individuality. When God made you, he broke the mould, for no two men are alike. You cannot find in any one home two children alike. Train up your family of two, or three, or four, or five, on exactly the same lines, and you may hit the goal in the case of one and miss it in all the rest. No, you must specialize. Every child demands special consideration. We have suffered in every way, socially, politically, and most certainly religiously, by the habit of imagining that we can deal with children in crowds, and treat them all the same way. It cannot be done. For the teaching of certain things which they must know, it is necessary; but when you are going to train a child it is a matter of education rather than instruction. There is all the difference in the world between instructing and educating. To instruct is to build in; to educate is to draw out.

Training must be twofold. It must, first of all, be positive. The children must be taught that they belong to Christ, and led to the point of recognizing this fact and yielding themselves thereto. In the second place the children must be taught that sin is their enemy, and therefore God's enemy, and it is therefore to be fought perpetually. Our first business is to bring the child into a recognition of its actual relationship to Christ, and a personal yielding thereto. Let it be done easily and naturally. Do not be anxious that your child should pass through any volcanic experience, but as soon as possible the little one should be able to say, "Yes, I love Jesus, and I will be His." It should be as simple as the kiss of the morning upon the brow of the hall, as the distilling of moisture in the dew.

Now we must notice that it is only upon the fulfilment of the conditions enunciated that we have any right to expect a fulfilment of the promise made. We have no business to expect that our child will fulfil the true purpose of life if we neglect the training of the early days. It may be asserted that the untrained must go wrong. Not necessarily. You may neglect your child, and some godly Sunday-school teacher may do the work you have neglected. Or it may be said that the wrongly trained must go wrong. Not necessarily. It is not always so. There are children wrongly trained at home who yet at last have found life and its great fulfilment. People sometimes who have been very careless about training their children in godliness, who thought of all things except the supremely needful things, when their children are taken from them, speak of the hope that they will meet them when they cross the border line. Yes, perchance, but your child, if you fed, clothed and educated it, and neglected its relation to God, will be more eager to meet the Sunday-school teacher who led it to God than to meet you. Spiritual relationships are the final relationships.

With such an ideal, and such a training, and such a promise, the only fear we need have about our children is fear concerning ourselves. It is true that there have been great failures. Why? Children from Christian homes sometimes turn out ill because of the laxity which imagines that a child's happiness consists in self-pleasing, and in having its own will. There is all the difference between letting a child have its own will and training it in its own way. To train a child in its own way crosses the will sometimes. This, however, must never be done with passion. Passion burns to destruction. Reason fires to construction.

Or, it may be, on the other hand,

that there is the sternness which forgets the needs of young life. There is the method of the moral policeman. When it is adopted the boy crosses the threshold and with a sigh of abandonment plunges into every excess of evil.

Said a man to me some years ago: "How is it I have lost my children?" I replied: "I do not see that you have lost your children. They are sitting round your board, most of them, and they respect you." "Oh, yes," he said, "but there is not a boy round my board who trusts me." Then I said to him, more for the instruction of my own heart than with the idea that I could help him: "What do you mean?" "Why," he replied "there is not one of them who makes a confidant of me." I looked the man in the face and said: "Did you ever play marbles with them when they were little?" At once he replied: "Oh, certainly not." And I said: "That is why you lost them."

We do not lose our children when they are seventeen. We lose them when they are seven. You are a good man, and a hard man, and your children know it. They respect you, but they do not trust you, and you lose them. There may be a laxity that is too gentle, a love that is anaemic; but there may be too much iron in your blood, too much sternness.

How shall we find the happy medium? Be very much and very constantly in comradeship with Christ. If we are going to be so severe as to be true, and so tender as to hold, we must know him, the Man who could look right into the soul of a Pharisee and sear it with His look, and into the eye of a little child and make the child want to come and play with him. We must be much with Christ if we are to be with children. If you do not know Christ, keep your hands off the bairns."

## HALF-MAST.

By A. Lawrence Thomson.

From mountain to the lake the city lies  
unstirring  
Enwrapped in mists,  
And 'gainst the gray shadows of the  
dawning dim  
There hangs, weird and dark, a token  
mute,  
Yet ominous in meaning.

Somewhere 'neath some roof there lies  
a loved one sleeping  
Who will not wake again.  
No good morning, however tender, meets  
with response;  
No answering look in the dear eyes  
where the love-light  
Has gone out forever;  
And the gloom of the beginning day  
quite well the dismayed hearts  
That fall half-mast in the face of this  
dread mystery.

I look again,  
And, lo, a power called light touches  
the mists,  
Changes the gloom to gold; gilds steeple  
and roof,  
Grey shadows turn to radiant clouds,  
And the pennon no longer droops motionless  
and black,  
For the sweet morning airs shake it out  
And the light proves it to be crimson  
instead.

Come, hearts half-mast, run up above  
the clouds,  
And in the Sun of Love, bask and lave  
your wounds,  
Be healed with Love of God, and in  
the Light that lighteth this dark  
world  
Clearly see.

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