

Teaching Respect to Children

BY ROSE WOODALLEN CHAPMAN.

The other day I was asked this question, "What can we do to teach our children respect for their elders and reverence for things sacred?"

The question touches upon a vital problem of our national life, for lack of reverence and of respect seems to be a characteristic American failing. To my mind the great harm is not done those who should be respected, but rather those whose spirit of reverence has failed to be cultivated. It is for the sake of the child himself that I would urge the advisability of parents and teachers developing this virtue.

The first step in this direction is for parents to respect the individuality of the child. This should be done from the first moments of existence. Every detail of the child's life should be decided according to the best good of the child. When he grows old enough to show the slightest individuality, that individuality should be recognized just as far as possible. For instance, if a child is playing with his blocks on the floor, no one should be allowed, through a false idea of amusing him, to drag him away to some other game. I have seen parents and friends try to make a child enjoy his toys in their way. To the unthinking this might seem a trivial matter; to me it appears as a lack of respect for the individuality of the child. He has a right to his own methods of amusement as long as they do not trespass upon the rights and comforts of others.

This attitude on the part of the parents will build up the child's self-respect, which should always be carefully guarded. If it is necessary for the child to be disciplined, it should be done in such a way as not to endanger his self-respect.

The next step in teaching the child respect for others is for the parents to be worthy of that regard. Mother and father must respect each other, and that from them the child may get his first glimpse of the meaning of the word. Then they must require their child to respect them. The boy and girl should be taught to see to it that the mother has the easiest chair, that father is handed the newspaper when he comes into the room, and that in all possible ways evidence is shown that there is a realizing sense of the difference between the position of parent and of the child. In this matter it is easiest for the mother to teach the child to show respect to the father, and vice versa. It will help if it is pointed out to the child that father works all day for the sake of his family, and for that reason his family rejoice in showing every appreciation of his efforts by their attitude toward him when he is at home. In the same way the father teaches them that the mother devotes her whole life to their care and comfort, and consequently they should make what return is in their power.

The child should early be taught to respect the judgment of older people. In fact, he should be taught to respect the judgment and beliefs of everyone, in so far as they are sincere. It is not necessary for him to always agree with them, but he should be taught that it reflects discredit only upon himself for him to sneer at the opinions of others or to scoff at their judgments.

A child should be taught to respect his teacher's opinions. For this reason he should never hear his father or mother criticizing them in the home. It may be necessary for the parents to say, "It does not seem to me that this decision is a wise one; but you decide in such matters about the circumstances than we do. We know she wants your best good, and so we will try her way."

The children should not be allowed to

speak disrespectfully or familiarly of prominent people. Here, too, they can be taught that it is not because such speech would harm those to whom they refer, but rather they will be doing themselves injury by this flippant attitude of mind.

Especially should children be taught to show respect to old age. This is not, as some are inclined to think, because aged people are weak and therefore to be pitied and waited upon, but rather because they are the soldiers who have gone before, who have fought the good fight and have nearly reached victory. If all children could be given more of this idea, they would take a different attitude toward the stories which garrulous old age is fond of repeating. The stories themselves may seem trivial, but they mean much to the teller, and children would listen with respect, because of the work these people have done.—*Junior Workers' Quarterly.*

The Cultivation of Natural Tendencies

The following extract from an article by James L. Hughes, Chief Inspector of Schools, Toronto, published in *Religious Education*, is so rich in suggestion that no Junior worker should fail to make it a subject of careful study:

"By their works ye shall know them." Morality is not merely a system of principles.

"All children who are normal reveal three great tendencies very early in their lives. They love to do things; they love to do things planned by themselves; and they love to do things in co-operation with their fellows. These tendencies are the three central elements of true character. True moral life without them is an impossibility. To speak of a life in which these three elements are undeveloped, as a Christian life, is a degradation of Christ's highest ideals. They are the three elements that make human happiness and human progress possible. They are the chief causes that have led to the development of humanity. They are the three great elements of human power. They give those who possess them executive power and achieving tendency.

"The highest code of morals is that which makes men doers of good, doers of what they plan themselves, and doers in co-operation with others. Children have these three tendencies clearly and strongly defined in their characters, as soon as they are able to reveal themselves to us. They rarely, if ever, retain them in their full vigor as they grow older. Their loss is the greatest life tragedy.

"These three elements should be the dominant elements in control of the lives of men and women in adulthood. Every good element in a child may be developed—should be developed. To omit or retard the development of any element of power weakens every other good element in character.

"The saddest, saddest tragedy of the ages is the loss of power of the three fundamental elements of character as the child advances in years. No more conclusive evidence of the evil influence of the old co-operative training can be given than the fact that a boy in childhood has greater tendency to execute his plans, and to co-operate with his fellows, than he

has at maturity. The achieving tendency should be developed as a fundamental basis of real character. The highest citizenship consists in making and executing wise plans for transforming wrong or unsatisfactory conditions in harmony with our highest ideals and in co-operation with our fellow men. The child, when he first begins to walk, reveals the exact tendencies that should produce this type of citizens, provided that they are developed instead of dwarfed, when he reaches maturity, and has acquired wisdom and reasoning power. The loss of these tendencies through wrong training is the saddest tragedy.

"All training that interferes with a child's tendency to do things, to do things that he plans himself, or to do things in co-operation with others is unmoral, whether practised in the home or in the school. All training that reverently recognizes these tendencies, and makes their development its chief aim, is fundamental moral training. With these tendencies as the dominant elements of character, the race will be morally strong, and vital and progressive; without them the race is morally weak and inert, and lacking in achieving power.

"The ideals and processes of training in the past were all negative; the ideals and processes of the new training are all positive. The old training said 'don't,' the new training says 'do.' The old training said 'stop,' the new training says 'never give up.' The old training said 'be still,' the new training says 'achieve.' The men and women of the past and those of the present who are still in the negative stage, were and are honest, but they are dwarfed, and still dwarf the characters of the children because of negative ideals. A negative character, in the nature of things, be a weak character. Strength in some material things may mean the power to resist; strength in the human soul means



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power to achieve. The training that merely makes a 'don'ter,' or a 'stopper,' out of a being created in the image of the Divine must be essentially unmoral training."

It was time for baby girl to be in bed, and father offered to lie on the bed till she fell asleep. Off she went pick-back, and the tired mother leaned back in her chair. Ten minutes—twenty—half an hour, and she was wondering when father would be down when she heard a soft pit-pat. Then a little white-robed form stood in the doorway. "Hush, hush, muser," she said, "I's got farver to sleep."—*Ed.*