



Child Training.

(By M. C. Dawson.)

If I had to choose for my child among learning, wealth, power, and common sense, I hope that I should be courageous enough to choose the last. The other three may be acquired, but, as an old Scotch friend used to say, "If the Lord forgot to gi'e ye common sense, ye'll never get it." Then, having a child endowed with common sense, if I had to choose between his running wild and being over-trained, I should undoubtedly choose the former. For the child who runs wild has some chance to develop its own individuality, its own originality, and peculiar ability; but the over-trained child is cast in the mould of his mother's will. He is like a trimmed tree which is forced into some conventional shape by constantly using the shears to clip off every stray branch and thwart the natural inclination of the tree itself. I have in mind a boy of whom the neighbors always say, "Reginald is so well trained," and I never hear those words of praise without that same feeling of pitying protest with which I once watched the tricks of some trained dogs. They could walk erect, ride on horse-back, leap through fire-hoops, kneel as in prayer, and do other undoglike antics. He, the boy, can take off his hat with Chesterfieldian grace; his bow is the finest thing in its class with which I have ever had any experience; his walk is graceful perfection. He comes straight home from school. He always helps with his father's business, morning, noon and night. No one ever saw him play. He is, in fact, a perfect paragon. It was once suggested that, as his twin brother had died at birth, all this perfection was the result of having received the training which was meant for two. This theory may be correct, but, as he is the youngest of nine living children, I "ha'e ma doots." But what I would like to know is this—If he is always so right, so polite, so exactly just and conventional, will he ever be likely to develop anything so erratic as genius, or anything so out of the beaten path as original thought and action?

Women will tell you that children should be carefully trained, and they go at child-training just as they do at scrubbing floors or chasing buffalo moths. They intend to make a thorough job of it, and, unless some kindly providence intervenes, they will do it, too. They believe that it is their bounden duty to let no part of the child nature escape their vigilance, to leave no little nook or corner of the child-mind unexplored. Now, mothers, is this necessary? Surely we do not believe in original sin to such an extent that we cannot allow some of those graces of mind and some of those lovely traits of character to develop without fearing for the result. The more experience I have, the more I am inclined to think that children should not be carefully trained, as most women understand careful training. You do not want the trimmed tree, you want the tall, graceful, natural tree, and to get that, children should be "judiciously" trained. Train them to be honest, brave, courteous, reverent, generous, true to the right and loyal to God and the King. These are the big things. These will make a sweet, sound core to their characters, and, having that, you need not worry about the rest.

The woman with one child needs to set a watch on herself, for the task she has undertaken is, quite likely, too small for her. Nature intended every woman to be the mother of a family, and when she concentrates the attention which should have been shared by half a dozen, on one, the result is frequently disastrous. She wants that child to be good and

clever and wise, whereas, if she had three children, one would be good, one clever, and one wise. So she would be satisfied with her offspring without expecting the impossible of any one of the three. If you have only one little girl to dress, you do not expect to make for her a dress in every style which the fashion-book portrays,—you choose one or two models. So, if you have only one little mind to dress, be reasonable, and do not expect to find in the one all that the woman next door finds in her six. And, if you have only the one, try not to become so all-pervading as was the mother of a child of six years of age, who boasted that she never once had allowed Mary out of her sight in all those six years. A beautiful example of devoted mother-love, was it not? But when was Mary going to learn to rely on her-

self to sit, and so on, and so on, and she develops into a fretful whiner, can you blame her? What is the matter with her?—Just her mother.

"The folks at my house half the time are thinkin' about dirt, it sort of gives 'em horrors an' they act as if it hurt. The sight of just a little makes 'em daffy as can be— They're always washin' somethin', an' half the time it's me."

Every child is entitled to a little wholesome neglect, but, especially in towns and cities, it requires some strength of mind to give it. But with all a child's dainty spotlessness, what is she, too often, but a sop to her mother's vanity? For it is vanity when you subject it to analysis, just as good housekeeping, when overdone, is vanity. There was a woman so vain of her kitchen stove, that in the coldest weather she always used to take the frying-pan out on the veranda before she took off the lid and turned the meat over. And there are dozens of women so vain of their dainty, fairy-like little daughters, that they compel the poor darlings to wear lingerie dresses in play-time, and "dress clothes" in play-time are as much out of place as a silk dress at a paring-bee. If you want your child to place a proper value on things in after life, then do not teach him or her to place too high an estimate on clothes.



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self? Mother-love is the grandest thing on earth, when it is not the most ridiculous. Another mother sends a big boy of ten years to school with a soft rubber ball, which he bounces in a secluded corner of the yard, while his mates play baseball. If he happens to make an extra effort to catch his ball on the bounce, someone is always ready to remind him, "Be careful, dear! You will stretch your underwear." Still another mother sat on the doorstep, watch in hand, apparently intent on a game of tag in which her child was taking a happy part. It was a pretty picture which was speedily destroyed when the mother said, "Now, dear, you've played five minutes, and if you play any longer you will sweat!" What dire calamity would have befallen if a few drops had appeared on the child's lovely brow? I leave each reader to decide for herself. But was there ever a more shining example of mother-love which even went so far as to regulate the functions of the skin for her daughter! Canute, standing on the shore and bidding the waves recede, is the only scene in all history which would make a companion picture for such an assumption of authority as this.

Children would run a better chance of being well trained if they could go without clothes,—well, that is, without such clothes as are written with a capital "C." I mean, for if a child has had her dress changed for grass-stains, and for mud-stains, and for a tear, and has been washed and curled each time, and has been told not to climb, not to run, not to fall down, not to play mud-pies, not

sport, and to lose with a smile, and you will have done more for his success in life than you can realize. Does he "crow loud" when he wins? Teach him to consider the feelings of others, to wear his honors modestly, not to keep rubbing on a sore spot. Is he inclined to be selfish? Then teach him to lose purposely to those younger and less proficient than himself. Does he make a mis-play? Teach him to acknowledge his mistake frankly. Teach him, in short, all those little courtesies which make men civilized; implant the chivalrous idea that "might is not right," and that a true sport is a gentleman.

And after all is said and done, are our children really trained by the training we try to give them? Are they not rather trained by what we are ourselves? Can anyone train a child to be better than her own idea of right and wrong, to be better than her own ideal? Assuredly not. Then would it not be wise to pay more attention to fitting ourselves for the position we occupy, instead of saying, "Do as I say, and not as I do." For, teach as you will, the time will come when you will stand at the bar of your own conscience, and, sitting in judgment on yourself, will ask, "Where did my child acquire that imperfection of character?" And in the deepest humility, if you are an honest woman, you must answer, "I taught it to him by my life, for I lived it." God pity the mother who has to lay a charge like this at her own door, knowing that it is too late to undo her work. And God pity the faithful wife who, in spite of her teaching, finds a fault like this to lay at the door of him who should have helped instead of setting her work at naught.

Practising On Him.

An amateur charity worker, visiting a family in the tenement district, was alarmed to see the mother dash a cup of cold water in the face of the baby she had just finished dressing.



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No one wants a child to be so fastidious that she will stop three times in going as many blocks to wipe the dust from her patent-leathers with a rag carried for that purpose,—and I know a girl, the daughter of a good, honest, hard-working mother, who has been so trained that she goes to that extreme.

"Come, let us with our children play," is an excellent motto for mothers. In a game, you see the real child, and in a game you can teach so many lessons for the great game of life. Does your boy cheat to win? He will be dishonest in business, tricky in politics, and will achieve commercial success at any cost—unless you teach him otherwise. Does he get angry and "Won't play?" Teach him that if a man would lead, he must also yield. Teach him that it is really cowardice and lack of persistent effort in the face of failure or non-success which prompts such an action. Does he cry if he loses? Teach him to be a good



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Too polite to express her amazement, the visitor held her breath, expecting the air to be rent with screams. When none came, the child merely whimpering, she said: "Dear me, I should think he'd object more than that."

"Wouldn't ye now?" said the fond mother, admiringly; "sure I've been practising on him for three weeks. He won't yell when he's baptized next Sunday! He'll be used to it."