

HOUSEHOLD.

Children's Companionships.

(By Mary Wood-Allen, M.D., in 'Congregationalist'.)

A handsomely dressed little boy stood looking wistfully out of the window of an elegant house at the play of three bare-footed children in the yard of a small cottage across the street. 'Oh, do let me go and play with them,' he cried; 'they have such fun.'

'I really don't see, Robbie, why you want to go and play with those rude children. They have no nice toys like yours. Why can't you play with your express waggon or rocking-horse?'

'Robbie glanced contemptuously at the beautiful toys and replied frowningly: 'They don't need playthings; they have each other. Oh, mamma, let me go, they are such beautiful children.'

Mamma, looking out of the window, saw only three noisy urchins, 'tooting' horns, playing drum on a tin pan, hallooing, climbing fences, tearing clothes and occasionally squabbling among themselves, and she did not enjoy the thought of Robbie looking and behaving as they did, so she said quietly but firmly: 'I can't let you go to play with them, but I'll play with you.'

'Oh, mama,' said Robbie, despairingly, 'you don't real play, you only play play.'

What a keen insight into facts this little outcry displayed and what a longing for true companionship! It ought to have touched the heart of the mother with a new revelation of Scripture that, 'it is not good for man to be alone,' be the man six years old or twenty-six or sixty.

As the adult man must live with his kind, so the child-man should live with his kind, and in the varying phases of child life learn to adjust himself to the demands of society. The one child among a family of adults does not learn the social virtues. How can he? He is in a world not made for him, not suited to him, and he is debarred from the world where his interests and opportunities are. He may be taught the superficialities of good manners, but there is nothing to develop within him the emotions, thoughts and desires, which would engender the truest politeness. He does not seem selfish, it may be, because no demands for generosity are made of him. He is not learning the property rights of others, because no one wants his possessions. He is not receiving lessons in yielding to the wishes of others, for in important matters he obeys commands; in his plays he has his own way.

I knew a child who, brought up alone, did not know how to behave when other children came in to visit her. She would look at them timidly and then, perhaps, run to the piano and pound on it and sing at the top of her voice, or she would run up and down the room shouting loudly. Her mother could not understand why the child did not play with her little visitors, but the truth was she did not know how. The presence of another child elated her, and, as she knew no way to play with other children, she tried to entertain them by making a noise of some kind.

Observant parents can learn more of their children's true character by watching them in their play than in any other way, and if they are wise can use the knowledge thus obtained in helping the child to overcome his defects and strengthen his character. Even children may have character, but they can only attain it by mingling with their kind. If taught self-control, truthfulness, honor, fair dealing and purity in childhood, not by seclusion, but by meeting the problems of child life under the sympathetic and not too obtrusive guidance of their parents, they will be fitted to meet bravely the problems of adult life when they are perhaps deprived of parental counsel and sympathy.

In excessive fear that their children may be injured by evil influences, parents lose sight of another fact, namely, that children

may be taught to become positive moral forces for the influencing of their companions.

'He's not a good boy for you to play with,' said a mother to her little son.

'But, mamma, I'm a good boy for him to play with,' was the reply of the child, who consciously recognized his own moral worth.

This is suggestive. Why should not the child be taught that he is to be a moral power, taught that instead of being afraid of being led into wrong he is to be a conscious leader into righteousness. As he grows older he will meet evil in its various forms, and it may be that through negative training he will fall an easy victim to temptations; whereas, if he had been taught the positive side of virtue, had grown up with the consciousness of his own divinity and his obligation to lead others into paths of righteousness, evil would have had no power over him.

Child hermits are no more to be desired than adult hermits, but because children are immature of judgment their companionship must not be left to chance, nor must it be without supervision. The methods by which his associations shall be regulated must be left to the wisdom of the parent, but companionship of his peers the child must have if he is to grow naturally into the social life of the world, be it in business, pleasure, intellect or religion.

Reserve Toys.

Each year, with the arrival of Christmas, there rushes into the home in which children dwell a flood of toys that threatens to inundate the nursery, and make all semblance of order impossible. The playthings are so numerous that the satiated owners turn from one to the other without deriving thorough enjoyment from any one of them. The novelty soon wears off, and in a few weeks the pretty trifles are more or less broken or marred, and the little ones view them discontentedly, and long aloud for fresh fields and pastures new. To avert this certain reaction the judicious mother will select from among the mass of toys a number which are to be laid aside for future use. It is not necessary to tell the children of this scheme. A large box in the attic or the upper shelf in a closet may be a storehouse for many of these treasures. There they will rest unharmed until the playthings in the nursery become an old story, when they in their turn are relegated to the upper shelf, and the new toys appear. These will be hailed with delight by the little ones, by whom they have been forgotten. Or it may be that the children have been confined to the house by a storm, or, more trying still, to the nursery by some ailment that makes life seem dreary to their baby eyes. Then mamma appears with her reserve fund, and outdoor allurements, and indoor ailments are forgotten in the joy of new possessions. This system keeps the nursery from being overcrowded with toys, and preserves the toys from the breakages consequent upon such overcrowding. But, best of all, it provides the children with a variety of amusements through the monotonous winter days.—'Harper's Bazaar.'

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Make wars throughout the world to cease.
The wrath of sinful man restrain;
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

Remember, Lord, Thy works of old,
The wonders that our fathers told;
Remember not our sins' dark stain—
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

Whom shall we trust, but Thee, O Lord?
Where rest but on Thy faithful Word?
None ever called on Thee in vain—
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

Where saints and angels dwell above,
All hearts are knit in holy love;
O bind us in that holy chain;
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

H. W. Baker.

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