

and laid in a manger, with a star placed in the heavens to keep sentinel over His birthplace, while, not far from it, the gates of heaven opened, and the shepherds beheld the angels, and heard them singing and praising God. Or we can read to them of Joseph and his coat of many colors; of the shepherd king, David, the sweet singer, who, with his pebble and sling, went forth and slew the giant who had defied the armies of Israel—surely no giant of fairyland could equal the thrilling narrative connected with this one; of Daniel, and of Samuel, that sweet child, who, as soon as he was weaned, was presented to the Lord, and became of such an exalted character that, when in his old age, challenging Israel to bear witness whether he had ever injured any one or not, they had to declare his blameless life. There is also the story of Moses, placed in his little ark of bulrushes, watched by his sister and found by a princess. (What fairy tale contains more to excite the imagination than this?) My firm conviction is, the early years should be *entirely* filled with Bible story, so that the good obtained may be the most lasting. Charles Dudley Warner says "he believes that the present state of ignorance of the Bible on the part of college students is to be corrected only by attention to the fundamental cause of this ignorance—the neglect of the use of the Bible in the home in childhood"; and he adds, "In the family is where this education must begin, and it will then be as it used to be, an easy and *unconscious* education." We are told that in old age, when incidents of the moment make little or no impression on the mind, the aged person lives again in whatever constituted the *earliest* impressions of their life. Thus it is a safe thing to begin and end with the teachings of the sacred book.

But when the little one has come to the age when you must tell it of the things which pertain to material life, why not substitute for the "Babes in the Wood" the story of the "Princes in the Tower," and, instead of fairy princesses, let them learn of our own "Victoria the Good," who, when a little princess, was trained day by day to fit her to rule the greatest empire the world has ever seen; and so on, making history easy for them. Then there is fairyland in nature. You can let them read of all the wonders of the field and forest, of which there are innumerable graphic and entertaining writers, of river and lake, of bird and bee, ever keeping closely to the truth, and I do not think the little ones will ask for anything more inter-

esting or exciting, if they should teach them of the starry heavens above, with its myriads of worlds and suns, and there surely will be enough in all this to feed the most ardent imagination. We have begun with the theory of keeping closely to the truth, and I believe it will bear fruit. An eminent divine has said, "Give me the first seven years of a child's life, and I will not feel so anxious for the future."

When they have arrived at the stage when it is better for them to vary their reading, and they must have fiction, let them read such conscientious writers as "A.L.O.E.," Elinor Lewis, Hesba Stretton, Miss Mulock, Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Stowe, and many others. The Rev. Dyson Hague tells us in *PARISH AND HOME* of some of the dangers of reading fiction, even of the best. In the first place, he tells us, it is a waste of precious time to give as much as is frequently done to a custom, which, when indulged in, creates a slavishness of anxiety for a still greater waste of valuable time, to the exclusion of serious engagements and duties. In concluding the article, however, he says that he does not condemn the reading of fiction altogether, but begs that wise selections be made from such writers as Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Stanley J. Weyman, Lew Wallace, and others. I would include such stories as "Black Beauty" and "Beautiful Joe," stories which interest the youthful mind, while teaching them to know more of the nature of dumb animals, and to be kinder to them than they otherwise would. Annie E. Chase, in her "Stories from Animal Land," gives a pathetic little incident, which may not be inappropriate, and of which many thousands must occur daily, and which could be averted by making the children more familiar with their lives and habits. Then there is that sweet songstress, Frances Ridley Havergal, who must not be forgotten, and whose "Little Pillows" are read by myriads of children to-day; I would also advise selections from the poets Wordsworth, Longfellow, Whittier, Tennyson, etc. There are also the church papers and parish magazines, of which we cannot speak too highly. I again repeat that the power for good or evil which good or bad literature exerts over the youthful mind cannot be over-estimated. A writer in the *Methodist Protestant* said: "A pastor found many of his parishioners who were too poor to take their church paper, but who took several secular papers and tales of fiction, that cost four or five times as much. Cause: they had little relish for religious

reading. Effect: their relish for religious reading lessened every year. Mystery: they wondered why their spirituality was so dull, and that their children loathed everything of a religious character. Result: those children who married and left home ceased church attendance altogether."

A deeply pious clergyman told me that one of the greatest men of the age, and a seeker after truth, had told him that he would give all he was possessed of if he could disabuse his mind of the evils instilled into it by the early reading of skeptical works, but there is no room for skepticism, and no taste to read of it, if the mind, in its opening years, has been fed upon the Word of God. Shaftesbury, the great philanthropic earl of that name, was converted by his pious nurse at the age of seven years, and dying at the age of eighty-four years, after a life of usefulness, would fain have lived longer, there was still so much to be done in the Master's vineyard. One of our own bright jewels in the philanthropic field, Miss Bertha Wright, of Ottawa, who has achieved so much in the service of God, told me that she was deeply impressed at the age of eight years. Lincoln, the great emancipator of millions of slaves, lost his mother at the age of seven years, and yet he tells us, after overcoming, with herculean strength and courage, the many difficulties that beset his path, that he owed everything to his mother. To mothers and to those who have the care of the young, I would beg begin with the prayer at the cradle, thus seizing the first and earliest opportunity for impressing good; with the sacred hymn for a lullaby, and the Book of Books for primary instruction; and the character thus built on truth will be strong and self-reliant. The tastes formed aright will guard them for the future, and I urge upon the parents, at the same time, to be as vigilant in guarding what their children shall read as though the child was to pass through a plague-stricken country, and could only escape by the most watchful care of mother or guardian. Sin is a hydra-headed monster, ever on the alert to ensnare the innocent and capture the unwary and unsuspecting, and thoughtful womanhood can have no higher aim or object in life than to do all in their power to protect and guide the helpless and to form the tastes and inclinations of the young aright, so as to keep their minds pure and spotless, while being intelligent and well-informed, and to fit them to take their places in the world, when the time