

which has become so painfully common in these days of indulgent parents, whose weak nerves and overweening tenderness are often the prime cause of the mischief. Who shall pretend to estimate the amount of torture which falls to the lot of a child in whom this disposition, early manifested, has been nourished and exaggerated by injudicious treatment, by undue tenderness, or by undue harshness? Both are equally perilous; for this morbid plant, sensitiveness, is best fostered by extremes, and can be uprooted only by the greatest care and skill. It is not uncommon to see this defect regarded by a fond parent with almost admiring sympathy; and the child learns to pride itself on that excess of feeling which, if not subdued in early years, will become the bane of its life. Nothing is more true than that this lauded sensitiveness is ever a sign of an unhealthy imagination, and that it is sure to degenerate into one of the most subtle forms of self-love. A child can not be too early taught to despise it in himself as a weakness that prevents him from seeing and judging clearly. Do not tell him he is sensitive; that is a "grown-up" word he will take credit to himself for deserving, without understanding all the sad meaning of it. But by slow degrees, by gentle reasoning, by loving remonstrance even, this weakness of character may be braced, and the extreme tenderness for self be turned into delicate consideration for the feelings of others.

Another habit of mind allied to this one, but even more common and more difficult of cure, is an intense self-consciousness from which some children suffer severely, and which, if not checked, becomes a most serious impediment to the strong development of mind and character. The impossibility of losing the thought of self in the present interest either of work or amusement, stunts the energies so effectually that opportunities of improvement and enjoyment pass by half used or unheeded; and the dwarfed being, engrossed in its petty self-contemplation, loses more and more the capacity for extending its sphere healthy mental and moral action. It is impossible for any one who has not felt, or at least carefully watched, the fatal working of this mental disease to judge of the loss of power it entails. This self-consciousness is not simple shyness, for it is often active in solitude; nor distrust of self, for it is compatible with great self-esteem; nor is it self-conceit, for at times it causes agonies of self-reproach; it is not by any means but another word for vanity; but it partakes of the nature all these, showing itself as often in one form as in another. It is always ambitious to excel, yet is in itself a bar to all excellence.

Now how much of all this is the result either of neglect or error in the bringing up of the child? We all agree that there is no charm about childhood so great as the unconscious grace with which it shows itself what it genuinely is, without guile or premeditation; yet how often we thoughtlessly destroy the very attraction that fascinates us by unwise remark and untimely notice! A child learns so easily to think itself pretty, clever, engaging; and so slowly that the "weightier matters of the law" are not comprised in these. "A quick child will always find out the truth about such things." So it will; therefore do not help it to this knowledge, because with its immature judgment it can not weigh things great and small by just measure, and, dwelling on what it is, will forget that it never can be the half of what there is no safety but in its striving to become. And thus is the old advice to administer to children "a little wholesome neglect" still most valuable in regard to certain matters.

When this unfortunate temper of mind has grown with the growth and strengthened with maturing years, it is well-nigh ineradicable even by the sternest self-discipline; nay, often it has become so much a part of the nature

that its possessor remains forever ignorant how much his powers are cramped by it. Where it is constitutional, and not the consequence of the thoughtless folly of friends, it must be combated by awakening and bringing into activity the opposite tendencies. Let the child be drawn away from self-occupation by being led to take an interest in others; let him learn imperceptibly to feel how pleasant it is to think of a great variety of subjects; above all, if he shows a particular fondness or facility for any kind of work, encourage him to exercise it; awaken his enthusiasm, and you save him from himself.

When we turn from faults to be cured or avoided to virtues that must be cultivated and instilled, there can surely be no question. Entire truthfulness is the noblest foundation of character, and from the earliest age it should be insisted on in word and deed, by precept and example, as the one thing most needful; for it is the primary source of moral and mental health, without which whatever else is fair and beautiful will be stained with impurity. Most people allow this, but only half regard it. A child is ordered not to tell stories, is sometimes punished when he does; while often he detects words of untruth spoken by his elders—"innocent white lies" they are perhaps called. Falsehood is of different kinds, and we will not discuss its varying degrees of heinousness; but even these "*white lies*," comparatively innocent as they are, will be found, when narrowly looked into, to leave a stain on the conscience and to lower its moral tons; in so far, at least, they are never harmless.

Why is it that anxious parents who strive so earnestly to implant a heartfelt love in their children of all that is good and true, are so slow in calling to their aid the love of all that is beautiful? The connection that has existed from everlasting between these three ideas should never be lost sight of in our teaching. God has joined them together, and it is at his own peril that man disunites them. At what stage is the human mind so apt to catch a glimpse of their eternal harmony as when it is first opening, fresh and pure, for the reception of all wonderful truths? A riper age will better grasp abstract truth, will more keenly appreciate sacred beauty, will more highly prize the nobility of goodness; but only to innocent childhood is it given to accept trustingly, unquestioningly, and with absolute belief the thought that all these form but one great and inseparable whole. Older and stronger eyes see but can not unravel the interlacings of darkness with light; to the little child the "true light" may shine and all the dark lines be mercifully hidden. So let us never forget to teach the children that part of happiness which lies in the recognition of "all things bright and beautiful."

It is a pretty thought of an American authoress, and one worthy of being acted on, that children should be early led to the habit of observing the sky and its wonderful and perpetual change of beauty. And what an exquisite touch does Bulwer give to the description of one of the heroes in his best novel, when he says that Leonard's eyes had in them the look of having gazed much at heaven!

As regards that part of a child's education which is to be obtained from books, it seems very strange that doubt should ever arise as to the best instructor. Is it not self-evident that, where circumstance make it possible, the father and mother are the channels through which knowledge of every kind flows most easily, most beneficially, into the child's understanding? Who, if not they, will regard it with the love and interest needed to impart with patience, with sympathy, with delicate tact what is good for the food and growth of the young mind—that much of knowledge and no more, that sort of knowledge and no other?