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## Side Talks by Ruth Cameron

### THE CHILD'S RIGHTS QUESTION.



Is it right to make a child obey just "because I say so?" A letter friend who professes himself interested in the remarks on "Why We Forbid" brings up this old question.

"Doesn't a child," he goes on to ask, "have an inalienable right to know why he is asked to do this and so? Is it not unfair to him and degrading to his intelligence to enforce obedience without letting him understand your reasons and getting him to agree with you that what you ask is right?"

It is always a pleasure to let one letter-friend answer another, and so after receiving the above letter, I delved in my files for one I received some time ago from another letter-friend (mother of two) when some phase of this same subject was under discussion.

Don't We Stake Up a Growing Plant?

"To different natures, different methods," she writes, "but remember that children are more animal in nature than grown-ups. They are more affectionate, franker, dirtier in their habits as a rule, than adults. Therefore, discipline should be enforced absolutely because they are not fully developed enough to reason with as we do with ourselves."

"I recently heard a 'friendly' father, say about his ten-year-old girl, afflicted with enlarged tonsils, 'I will have an operation if Emma wishes it.' I longed to be a child again so I could be frankly rude and say, 'Don't you know what is right?'"

"Why do we stake up a growing plant or vine and protect it in the start and afterwards, let it stand on its own?"

Ideal if the Child Could Decide.

It seems to me that this excellent letter from a woman who, I happen to know, has both the habit of thinking things out and the chance to try them out, puts the "child's rights" question just about as it should be put.

It would be ideal if we could let the child reason everything out for himself. It is not good for him or

for us that we should exercise arbitrary power. But there are times when, leaving our own convenience aside, it is necessary that we should be arbitrary to protect the rights of outsiders and also to protect the child from himself.

### Is She to Endanger Her Health?

Witness Emma and the tonsils. Suppose Emma does not wish the operation—a highly likely supposition. My six-year-old niece was ruminating yesterday over the possibility of a second vaccination. She was vaccinated against whooping cough and disliked the experience. It is now proposed that she have her smallpox vaccination. She objects very much. "Once is enough," I heard her say firmly to her mother; and then after a moment's rumination, "Once is too much." Suppose Emma persists in not wishing the operation in spite of its becoming vitally necessary. Is she to be allowed to endanger her own health?

It seems to me that for the child's own sake and for the best interests of the home, she should be taught to obey, knowing that his father or mother will give all explanations possible and will be ready to listen to his point of view. In return for this obedience, it seems to me it is the parent's duty to interfere as little as possible and to let the child learn by his own experience so far as possible.

### How People Die in India.

A return of the number of inquests held by the Coroner of Bombay during 1919 gives us some very interesting particulars. Among the "suicide" we find that 6 cut their throats, 28 drowned themselves, 4 hanged themselves, 15 jumped out of windows, 20 took opium, arsenic or some other poison, 4 shot themselves, and 8 burned themselves. Drowning, therefore, took pride of place last year, whereas self-poisoning was the favorite method of quitting life in 1918, there being twenty-six cases reported. Other suicidal practices mentioned in the report are stabbing and the act of knocking one's head against a wall. No one has favoured either of these methods during the past two years, however.

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## Women and Secrets.

Women cannot keep secrets, if we rightly interpret the attitude of Freemasons toward women. Hitherto women have been denied the right of admittance to the Order, the impossibility of their being able to observe the rule, "silence in regard to Masonic secrets," being the main reason, so it has been contented of their exclusions. The only woman, who has been a Freemason was Elizabeth St. Leger, a daughter of a former Viscount Doneraile, who, by hiding herself behind the curtains of a room in which a lodge meeting was taking place, overheard secrets of such a nature that she was made a Freemason and bound over to secrecy. Her great-granddaughter, Miss Alicia St. Leger Ailworth, was initiated as a Co-Mason, an honorary distinction, some two years ago. Now, however, France proposes to admit women to the Order on the same terms as men, initiating them into all the rites and mysteries of Freemasonry. It is doubtful, according to inquiries, if a similar privilege will be granted to women in this country.

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## We're Living Longer Now.

Life insurance companies, whose profits depend entirely upon the hardest kind of statistics, who, to-day, give far better terms than they would have to our grandfathers. All the great corporations which take risks upon the duration of mortal life have been steadily removing one restriction after another.

One curious point which is shown in insurance tables is that those organic diseases which are so frequent in middle-life, develop at a period from five to ten years later than they did fifty years ago.

Medical science has, of course, done a lot for the race in the way of lengthening human life, but sanitary science has done more. Zymotic or infectious diseases are being slowly but steadily conquered by improved water supply, drainage and housing.

We use bad language about our climate, but for all that it is one which encourages long life. There are about 700 centenarians in the United Kingdom as against 250 in France.

Excessive heat and excessive cold are equally prejudicial to long life. In Iceland and in India alike seventy is extreme old age, and few attain to it.

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## THE RULE OF THE ROAD.

The rule of the road is keep to the right, don't drive at a reckless rate. You may go as you please when the course is clear and the stretch is smooth and straight. But watch your pace where the road-way bends and travel the curves with care. And be ready to meet the test should danger stop you there.

There are laws to govern the speed of men and the manner they shall go. And what's right and wrong as we drive along, we are all supposed to know.

But beyond the law and the statute books and the power of the courts to touch. Are numberless rules which we might observe which would help so very much.

The law will not stifle our selfishness—we must do that for ourselves. And there is no word in all of the books on all of the dusty leaves which says that we must be kindly folk or courteous or polite. We can drive as road hogs if we choose and legally be right.

The rule of the road is keep to the right, but the rule of a gentleman is to give to the neighbor who would pass as much of the road as he can. And there'd be less need for the laws in books and a happier world if we'd all obey on the roads of life the rules of courtesy.

## A Tip to Western Editors.

A correspondent of the New ork "Sun" sent in the following translation of a Chinese rejection slip, used in refusing would-be contributions: "We have read thy manuscript with infinite delight. Never before have we revealed in such a masterpiece. If we printed it the authorities would ordain us to take it for a model, and henceforth never print anything inferior to it. As it would be impossible to find its equal within ten thousand years, we are compelled, though shaken with sorrow, to return your divine manuscript, and for doing so we beg one thousand pardons."

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## MUTT AND JEFF

## JEFF'S IGNORANCE ABOUT BOAT TERMS IS INDEED REFRESHING.

—By Bud Fisher.

