

WITH OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Home and Education

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(The second of an important series of articles on the home.)

The parents are primarily responsible for the complete education of their children. God has ordained the home for that purpose. His law places the young child, with his plastic and responsive nature, in the keeping of the parents, whose daily influence is the one great factor which gives permanent direction to the child's life, before other agencies begin to wield their influence.

It is most unfortunate that in many homes this parental responsibility is weakened. In these cases the parents into whose charge the child is committed by God, seem to roll off this burden upon other institutions such as the school, the Church and other community agencies. This tendency is injurious both to the parent and to the child.

This does not mean that the parents must undertake personally and directly the whole of the child's educational discipline. To-day we have admirable agencies, designed and controlled by experts, ready to make their contribution. The public school is organized to help in the intellectual development of the child. The church is available for assisting in the education of his spiritual and religious nature. Other community agencies, such as public libraries and athletic organizations, are capable of taking some part in his mental and physical growth. But recognizing the legitimate assistance afforded by these agencies, the parents remain personally and primarily responsible for the complete education of their child through the influence in their home and by taking full advantage of the cooperation of these other institutions.

When we use the term education, we have not in mind simply the giving of information or the training of the intellect to think accurately. Education is a much more comprehensive thing than that. It means training for complete living. It involves the realizing of the total life capacity, the fulfillment of life's purpose, the full development of every latent power. This fulness of life has to do with the body, the intellect and the higher spiritual life. Complete education will involve perfect physical development in order that man's spirit will have the best instrument possible for the accomplishment of its task. The bodily powers,—to labor skilfully with the hand, to speak or sing

with the voice, to hear with the ear, to see accurately with the eye, must be so trained as to make their contribution to efficient and complete living. If the body in any respect is unsound, the spirit is hedged in by limitations.

This principle applies also to the mental life with its three-fold capacity to know, to feel and to will. The life is forever crippled if the individual is left without adequate knowledge or with his intellect untrained to think clearly and strongly with his aesthetic nature undeveloped, or with his will power weak.

It is not enough, however, that the body and mind be educated to the limit of their capacity. There is another element in the life,—that which was inbreathed by God himself and which constitutes the person a child of God. Without the education of this divine element in man, he is left very much on the level of the brute. A man may have an efficient body, a keen intellect, a strong will and æsthetic taste, but there may be quenched within him the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love and sympathy, the spirit of service and sacrifice, the spirit of self-forgetfulness and devotion to a noble ideal. Germany was a nation physically efficient and intellectually keen, but her higher soul, capable of appreciating life's truest values, was crushed, hence her damaging influence upon the world's life.

True and complete education involves, therefore, not only the body and the mind, but also those diviner qualities which constitute man's real self. It is the education of these deeper and more essential elements in the life that is the real difficult problem. It is comparatively easy to secure a reasonably effective body and a fairly well trained mind, but to make real and vital and strong those spiritual powers to love, to serve and to lose one's life with interests of the common weal is the task that demands the most exacting labors.

This is the responsibility that rests upon the parents of every child. It is not a matter of indifference religiously. It is the religious duty before God, of every parent to secure the fullest possible development of the child's every power. The will of God is not done, human welfare is not insured, the work of the Kingdom is not advanced when the latent powers stored away in the life by the Creator are left dormant. The world is