

TRAINING CHILDREN TO TRUTHFULNESS.

David seems to have observed the sad propensity to the sin of deceitfulness found in many children : for he says of the wicked, "They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." All who have to do with children—mothers and nurses in homes, and teachers in schools—find the practise of telling fibs, and habits of deception, most difficult to correct and cure ; and yet, if not eradicated, fatally mischievous in their influence upon character, becoming the root out of which grow the cheatings, forgeries, and general untrustworthiness of full age. We have heard a mother say : "I can be patient with all other infirmities and frailties of character, but I cannot be with lying." All who would deal faithfully with the young should feel as David did when he said to God, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts."

Are we directly practical enough in our Sunday School work, and do we act towards our class-children as mothers act towards the little ones in the nursery ? Do we keenly watch for the signs of the untruthful disposition, or the untruthful habit ; do we deal with it vigorously and wisely, and crush out the evil in its very beginnings ?

The things of which, as teachers, we should take due notice are, the habit of deception is often formed through the children's play. Success in games are frequently gained by schemes, and dodges, and over-reachings, which are acted lies ; and the very success blinds the children to the moral baseness by which the success was won. Then, too, children admire cleverness, and so do grown people ; and both are only too ready to condone the moral faults of clever children.

But the most constant beginning of untruthfulness is fear of punishment. We sometimes hear the mothers of such children as come to our classes shouting, in angry voices, to their children in the street, "I'll give you something when you come in," and we want to say to all such, and to those who have the care of children, "Do you know that you are manufacturing liars through fear ?" What can the poor, timid, frightened children do but fib and lie to escape the punishments ? There is nothing else for the little things to hide behind.

And we may do serious mischief to children by unwise and over-severe punishments when a child is accused of or found out in lying. An episode in our own child-history will afford a sufficient illustration. A frail child of some eight years old, we had been sent to the seaside to stay with an uncle, who had a little family, and lived in a pleasant little cottage, looking away to the fields. Playing in the garden one day, one of our little cousins fell on the path, and ran crying into the house, saying that we had pushed against her, and pushed her down. We firmly denied that we were even near her, but her word was taken before ours, we were regarded as convicted of lying, marched into an upstairs room, seated on a chair, and there left, with a Bible before us, opened to the words which we had to learn : "And all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." No one has any idea of the undurable cruelty of such a punishment to a sensitive and religiously toned boy. But the mischief it did is shown in the fact that the association of injustice with that passage has taken every bit of solemnity out of it for us. The wrong done rankles yet, and such a punishment might have set a child against all religion forever.

It is also especially important that we should treat children trustfully, never wounding or repressing them, or setting them upon schemes by the feeling that they are always suspected, and can never do right. Noble character can only be cultured in an atmosphere of "trust."

And we should do everything possible towards correcting the prevailing untruthful sentiments about "keeping up appearances," and about lies being of different colours, the "white" ones being permissible and almost commendable.

We may conclude with a bit of good advice given by Dr. Johnson. Giving counsel to an intimate friend, he said : "Above all, accustom your children constantly to tell the truth, without varying in any circumstance." A lady present impatiently exclaimed : "Nay, this is too much ; for a little variation in narrative must happen a thousand times in a day, if one is not perpetually watching." "Well, madam," replied the Doctor, "and you ought to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth than from inten-