

As the Twig is bent, the Tree's inclined.

WE have a proverb everywhere accepted as true, that the 'child is father of the man.' That is to say—what the child is (or what we make of him) that the grown man will be by-and-by. From which we argue that it is very important to bring up a child well.

How are children brought up nowadays? Well, there will of course always be people who neglect their children, which is one way of bringing them up badly; but besides this there are two other markedly different ways of bringing up the little ones—one to treat them as little Christians beloved of God, intended to live with Him in heaven; and the other to consider them merely as citizens of this world.

Which way is best? Some people say, 'Eternity will show.' I think time will show. God will not make us wait for Eternity in a matter of such importance.

In France men are daily trying to bring up the little ones more and more without God. They have thrust Him out of the schools, torn His image off the walls, scratched His name out of the children's books. Foolish people! As if they could drive Him out of the world He made!

Let me tell you a true story about this.

Two Frenchwomen, who had been brought up in the old days when God was not forgotten in the land, were lately talking over a great trouble which had fallen upon a neighbour. 'She will be ruined,' said one. 'It will break her heart,' said the other. 'Well, God's will be done!' returned the first.

A little girl was playing in the room, just come in from her new 'secular' school.

'God! Grandmother,' she said, 'God! C'est un mensonge.'

I give you the French words; I hardly like to translate them, they are so dreadful. Yet it was true that at her school this poor little girl had been openly taught that God was, as she expressed it, 'a lie,' a fancy conjured up by designing men.

She was only repeating the teaching of her schoolmistress.

Happily our nation has not yet fallen into such frightful depths of darkness and infidelity as this. Ignorance and neglect there is among our little ones, but not worse as yet.

A very untaught little child was received into one of our schools the other day, and for the first time heard of the existence of God. A gentle, teachable little heathen she was. After school hours she went home with a wrapt expression on her face, and, reaching her father's house, began to scrutinise walls and ceiling and corners of the poor kitchen. Then she went to the bedroom and looked curiously, yet reverently, round that too. The mother was surprised, and asked what she was doing?

'Mother!' said the child, seriously, 'did you know? God is here! In this room—in the other room too! The good God who made us and loves us! Yes, He is here!'

'She was so serious,' said the mother afterwards to the teacher, 'it gave me quite a turn.'

Even the irreligious mother could not say and do the same careless things with God in the room. It made an impression upon her too.

Which child had the better chance of growing up good, do you think—this little one, or the poor little French girl?

Oh, men and women of England, do not ever be tempted to do the least thing towards giving up your God, or letting the children give Him up. Send them, we pray you, to schools where they will have a religious education. Never mind if another school is grander or costs less, or lies nearer your home; make a push to get your little children brought up religiously.

Don't say, 'The children are so young, it doesn't matter for a bit where they are sent.' If you bring up a child without God, you are rearing a man who will not care for his God. And better had it been for that man that he had never been born.