

Parish and Home.

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"SUDDENLY."

"Absent from the body . . . at home with the Lord."—[Revised Version.]

SUDDENLY into the glory—

Suddenly face to face;

Suddenly past the mystic veil

Into the Holy Place.

Suddenly into the brightness

Out of a shadowed day;

Suddenly into fadless dawn—

The perfect Light always!

A sudden dropping of burden—

Sudden ceasing of sigh;

Sudden hush of a dear, dear voice—

A sudden song on high!

Standing so close to the portal.

One word—one low, swift "Come"—

Suddenly we may "absent" be,

Absent—because AT HOME.

—C. A. L., in *Parish Visitor*.

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

HOW TO PROVIDE GOOD READING FOR CHILDREN.

(A paper read before the Women's Association of Canada.)

Some one has said: "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you are"; and hardly a greater truth could be enunciated, for there is no greater agency in the world in building up or destroying character than the books read; it is, to a great extent, the pabulum on which the mind is fed, and it is the material from which either strength or weakness is drawn, and if mature minds can be affected by what is read, how much more so must it be in the impressionable time of childhood, and how lasting the consequences! The children are either stimulated to admire and imitate high and noble characters, or they are weakened and dwarfed by the bad example of the people set before them, and who have been absorbing their attention. It behooves all, then, who have the welfare of the young

at heart, to watch with care everything that can affect the youthful imagination or injure the tender mind.

As a natural starting point, we will begin with the birth of the young soul sent fresh from the realms of creation, and confided to the care of virtuous parentage. God has entrusted the little creature entirely to the father and mother, as if saying, "Here is one of the most precious of all gifts committed to your care—a priceless human soul, to be trained for eternity." The little creature is very helpless; it rests upon its mother's bosom. Soothing tones address it, warm love protects it, and every one is fully alive to the importance of guarding and caring for it physically. But do they as often realize the importance of guarding the opening intelligence of the immortal soul, which begins as early as, and keeps pace with, the development of the body? The whole being is like a piece of plastic wax, or the snowy pages of an unwritten book, and the mother or nurse in charge is leaving indelible impressions which are to last forever, for good or evil, for weal or woe. How the little body is guarded from all danger of contagion! How alarmed and distressed would they be if fever or skin disease should fasten itself upon the tender flesh, while, all unconsciously to them, the first insidious poison of a deadly disease may have already made its first attack upon the soul. The dearly loved child, the beautiful little creature, is, after all, but the casket of a priceless jewel. Surely the jewel must be of more consequence than the casket! Indeed, how often is the finest and loveliest physique marred by the unruliness of the spirit within! Hence by far the most important duty which the parent or guardian has to perform is to guard the mental growth and spiritual welfare of the child.

The first question asked is how to provide good reading for the child. We should say, in order to pave the way for it as early an age as possible, begin with a softly-breathed lullaby, for this is the age when impressions are possible, before there is any responsive intelligence. Let it be, then, spiritual as well as tender, so that the ear may gradually grow accustomed to the blending of sweet names with equally sweet strains, as:

"Our Father in heaven, we hallow Thy name,
May Thy kingdom holy on earth be the same,"

etc., sung to a suitable air. Unconscious impressions are thus made which are afterwards to influence the tastes and inclinations of the child. Then, as intelligence

increases, the little one is told that it must be good, because a loving Father, an all-seeing Presence, is ever about it. It confides and has implicit faith in these early instructors, and believes and trusts what it is told, and we know that the very foundation of the future character of a child can only be well and happily laid on the principles of *truth*.

Never to tell a child anything but what is true is an exceedingly safe course. I will, I fear, be challenging the prejudices of many when I condemn entirely all fairy tales and fictitious literature until the age of at least eight or ten years, when a child is old enough to understand what fiction means. A sensitive child can never forget the rude awakening it receives when it learns for the first time that the enchanting creatures for whom its heart has throbbled have no real existence. The child, never before having doubted anything that parents have told it, when awakened to the fact that these stories, so sweetly read and told, have no foundation in truth, is in a maze of perplexity and doubt, wondering that the teachers of truth have themselves told them things which were not true. It is a trying time to a child, and may tend to shake its belief in things of more lasting importance, and prove a shock difficult to recover from.

The story is told of a bright little boy who was once teased at Sunday-school for believing in Santa Claus. Being an only child, he was no doubt kept more petted and under the influence of childish fancies than he otherwise would have been. He protested that he believed in Santa Claus and knew it was true about him—"because his father and mother had told him, and they would not tell him anything that was not true." Going home, he demanded of his mother about Santa Claus, and she had to tell him it was a fiction; the child was greatly grieved, and said: "Oh, mother, you have told me about *God*, too; how am I to believe that that is true?"

I would advocate that the first reading for the young should always be taken from the Bible, that marvellous book, the grandeur of whose imagery and the purity of whose diction is unrivalled in all the world. In it can be found incidents of the most stirring and interesting character, well suited to please and satisfy the most exacting and imaginative of children, and which are at the same time true and undeniable, and more interesting than any that could be woven from the fanciful brain of man. We can read or tell them of the little child from heaven, born in a stable,