

which we once saw a mother do? How much love of justice and generosity is likely to be instilled by a father who, on having his attention drawn by his child's scream to the fact that its finger is jammed between the window-sash and the sill, forthwith begins to beat the child instead of releasing it? Yet that there are such fathers is testified to us by an eye-witness. Or, to take a still stronger case, also vouched for by direct testimony—what are the educational prospects of the boy who, on being taken home with a dislocated thigh, is saluted with a castigation? It is true that these are extreme instances—instances exhibiting in human beings that blind instinct which impels brutes to destroy the weakly and injured of their own race. But extreme though they are, they typify feelings and conduct daily observable in many families. Who has not repeatedly seen a child slapped by nurse or parent for a fretfulness probably resulting from bodily derangement? Who, when watching a mother snatch up a fallen little one, has not often traced, both in the tough manner and in the sharply-uttered exclamation—"You stupid little thing!" an irascibility foretelling endless future squabbles? Is there not in the harsh tones in which a father bids his children be quiet, evidence of a deficient fellow-feeling with them? Are not the constant, and often quite needless, thwartings that the young experience—the injunctions to sit still, which an active child can not obey without suffering great nervous irritation, the commands not to look out of the window when traveling by railway, which on a child of any intelligence entails serious deprivation—are not these thwartings, we ask, signs of a terrible lack of sympathy? The truth is, that the difficulties of moral education are necessarily of dual origin—necessarily result from the combined faults of parents and children. If hereditary transmission is a law of nature, as every naturalist knows it to be, and as our daily remarks and current proverbs admit it to be; then, on the average of cases, the defects of children mirror the defects of their parents; on the average of cases, we say, because, complicated as the results are by the transmitted traits of remoter ancestors, the correspondence is not special but only general. And if, on the average of cases, this inheritance of defects exists, then the evil passions which parents have to check in their children imply like evil passions in themselves: hidden, it may be, from the public eye; or perhaps obscured by other feelings; but still there. Evidently, therefore, the general practice of any ideal system of discipline is hopeless: parents are not good enough.

Moreover, even were there methods by which the desired end could be at once effected, and even had fathers and mothers sufficient insight, sympathy, and self-command to employ these methods consistently, it might still be contended that it would be of no use to reform family discipline faster than other things are reformed. What is it that we aim to do? Is it not that education of whatever kind has for its proximate end to prepare a child for the business of life—to produce a citizen who, at the same time that he is well conducted, is also able to make his way in the world? And does not making his way in the world (by which we mean, not the acquirement of wealth, but of the means requisite for properly bringing up a family)—does not this imply a certain fitness for the world as it now is? And if by any system of culture an ideal human being could be produced, is it not doubtful whether he would be fit for the world as it now is? May we not, on the contrary, suspect that his too keen sense of rectitude, and too elevated standard of conduct, would make life alike intolerable and impossible? And however admirable the result might be, considered individually, would it not be self-defeating in so far as society and posterity are concerned? It may, we think, be argued, with much reason, that as in a nation so in a family, the kind of government is, on the whole, about as good as the general state of human nature permits it to be. It may be said that in the one case, as in the other, the average character of the people determines the quality of the control exercised. It may be inferred that in both cases amelioration of the average character leads to an amelioration of system; and further, that were it possible to ameliorate the system without the average character being first ameliorated, evil, rather than good, would follow. It may be urged that such degree of harshness as children now experience from their parents and teachers, is but a preparation for that greater harshness which they will meet with on entering the world; and that were it possible for parents and teachers to behave towards them with perfect equity and entire sympathy, it would but intensify the sufferings which the selfishness of men must, in after life, inflict on them.

"But does not this prove too much?" some one will ask. "If no system of moral culture can forthwith make children altogether what they should be; if, even were there a system that would do this, existing parents are too imperfect to carry it out; and if, even could such a system be successfully carried out, its results would

be disastrously incongruous with the present state of society; does it not follow that a reform in the system now in use is neither practicable nor desirable?" No. It merely follows that reform in domestic government must go on, *pari passu*, with other reforms. It merely follows that methods of discipline neither can be nor should be ameliorated, except by instalments. It merely follows that the dictates of abstract rectitude will, in practice, inevitably be subordinated by the present state of human nature—by the imperfections alike of children, of parents, and of society; and can only be better fulfilled as the general character becomes better.

"At any rate, then," may rejoine our critic, "it is clearly useless to set up any ideal standard of family discipline. There can be no advantage in elaborating and recommending methods that are in advance of the time." Again we must contend for the contrary. Just as in the case of political government, though pure rectitude may be at present impracticable, it is requisite to know where the right lies, so that the changes we make may be towards the right instead of away from it; so in the case of domestic government, an ideal must be upheld, that there may be gradual approximations to it. We need fear no evil consequences from the maintenance of such an ideal. On the average the constitutional conservatism of mankind is always strong enough to prevent a too rapid change. So admirable are the arrangements of things that until men have grown up to the level of a higher belief, they can not receive it: nominally, they may hold it, but not virtually. And even when the truth gets recognized, the obstacles to conformity with it are so persistent as to outlive the patience of philanthropists and even philosophers. We may be quite sure, therefore, that the many difficulties standing in the way of a normal government of children, will always put an adequate check upon the efforts to realize it.

With these preliminary explanations, let us go on to consider the true aims and methods of moral education—moral education, strictly so called; we mean; for we do not propose to enter upon the question of religious education as an aid to the education exclusively moral. This we omit as a topic better dealt with separately. After a few pages devoted to the settlement of general principles, during the perusal of which we bespeak the reader's patience, we shall aim by illustrations to make clear the right methods of parental behavior in the hourly occurring difficulties of family government.

When a child falls, or runs its head against the table, it suffers a pain, the remembrance of which tends to make it more careful for the future; and by an occasional repetition of like experiences, it is eventually disciplined into a proper guidance of its movements. If it lays hold of the fire-bars, thrusts its finger into the candle-flame, or spills boiling water on any parts of its skin, the resulting burn or scald is a lesson not easily forgotten. So deep an impression is produced by one or two such events, that afterwards no persuasion will induce it again to disregard the laws of its constitution in these ways.

Now in these and like cases, Nature illustrates to us in the simplest way, the true theory and practice which, however much they may seem to the superficial like those commonly received, we shall find on examination to differ from them very widely.

Observe, in the first place, that in bodily injuries and their penalties we have misconduct and its consequences reduced to their simplest forms. Though, according to their popular acceptations, *right* and *wrong* are words scarcely applicable to actions that have none but direct bodily effects; yet whoever considers the matter will see that such actions must be as much classifiable under these heads as any other actions. From whatever basis they start, all theories of morality agree in considering that conduct whose total results, immediate and remote, are beneficial, is good conduct; while conduct whose total results, immediate and remote, are injurious, is bad conduct. The happiness or misery caused by it are the *ultimate* standards by which all men judge of behavior. We consider drunkenness wrong because of the physical degeneracy and accompanying moral evils entailed on the transgressor and his dependents. Did theft uniformly give pleasure both to taker and looser, we should not find it in our catalogue of sins. Were it conceivable that benevolent actions multiplied human pains we should condemn them—should not consider them benevolent. It needs but to read the first newspaper leader, or listen to any conversation touching social affairs, to see that acts of parliament, political movements, philanthropic agitations, in common with the doings of individuals, are judged by their anticipated results in multiplying the pleasures or pains of men. And if on looking under all secondary superinduced ideas, we find these to be our ultimate tests of right and wrong, we can not refuse to class purely physical actions as right or wrong according to the beneficial or detrimental results they produce.