

If parents consider it beneath their dignity as parents to answer an eager "why?" when they give a command, they can save the situation absolutely by supplementing their command in this way, with a reason before there is any chance for a question.

Only by learning the reasons of their elders can the juniors form any possible judgment of their own. Yet parents will keep their children in an utter state of unenlightenment as to proper motives for any special line of action, exacting only a blind obedience; and later these same parents will feel themselves hardly done by if their children when thrown upon their own resources, become involved in a serious entanglement. But what else is to be expected from such a system?

The next item of repression which is most pernicious in its results is the repression of expression of thought. Through this baleful influence many men and women have failed utterly to find their proper niche, the position in life which would bring out the best that is in them, until it was almost too late to be of service to themselves or others. While, for instance, the world is not suffering from a dearth of authors, and could, perhaps, readily spare some toiling in the ranks, it is nevertheless a fact that there are many who have "died with all their music in them," by reason of the uncongenial atmosphere by which they were surrounded. Other and happier circumstances, encouragement to form habits of expression, attempts to reach the innermost thought as yet almost unformed and intangible, might have given to the world mightier minds than any we have yet seen. It is contended that if there be anything in a man, it is bound to come out. Yes, as a plant will, perhaps, force its way between the crevice of a rock. But who is so foolish as to say that the pale, delicate, green shoot which has struggled against all kinds of adverse circumstances and has finally triumphed, through sheer force of will and an indomitable sense of latent power, can in any way compare with the plant it would have become, had it been properly trained and nurtured and encouraged from its birth?

To hear the sacred secrets of her child's inner soul is, or should be, a mother's dearest privilege, but it is one, alas, which is not prized as it should be. It is her province to hear the plans and ambitions which stir the heart of growing youth to guide, advise, to mourn with, to rejoice. The ambitions will seem childish, the hopes vain. It is not for her to judge, but to wait. Each woman thinks her children swans, but many of them are but ducklings and some of them "ugly ducklings" at that. Even for the last there is a saving grace in the true, pure, mother love which encourages confidence rather than represses it. The doctrine inculcated by "do" is far better than that put forth by "don't." It has been the fate of many parents to be disappointed in the outcome of their children's career. But for this disappointment who is chiefly to blame? They were self-deceived. The glamour of their own desires shone over all the future, and without striving to find out exactly for what the children were fitted, the older predestined the younger to a certain course in life. The result has been the world's loss without anyone's gain. Many a man has made a poor minister who would have made an excellent blacksmith and who would have gladly followed the latter calling. Many a woman has become a third-rate singer who would have been a first-rate dressmaker. Many a woman has been obliged to stick to her needle when she might have roused the world as an actress. Many a man has followed the plough when he should have been an orator. Suppose it really comes to pass "in time"? What can repay the one successful so late in life for all the sweetness missed? What is to redeem the years spent in cramping, uncongenial occupation? What is there for the parents to do then but to acknowledge sadly that they have made a bitter mistake? And what good will that do—after the mischief is done?

But the bitterest, the most cruel, of all forms of repression is that exercised in a failure to encourage expression of affection,

not only between parents and child, but among the children themselves. There is something in the nature of every infant which appeals for sympathy and affection. One of his first conscious acts is to reach up his tiny hand and pat softly the cheek of the face bending over him, be it that of nurse or of mother. If there be no response in kind, the little one is at first filled with grieved though intangible surprise, but he soon learns not to offer his endearments where they are not appreciated. Hungering for expressions of love from his mother's lips, for caresses from her hand, he shrinks closer and closer within himself. He must find another, a teacher, a grandmother or an older sister on whom he can lavish, unrestrained, his repressed devotion.

It is the sad fate of some to meet no such outlet. Planted in the midst of a family to whom all outward expression of feeling is "nonsense," and not finding the outside congenial spirit that might keep the tender spark alive and his whole nature sweet, he becomes silent and reserved. His waking hours are filled with tender dreams, and slowly he forms around him a choice circle of imaginary companions. He learns little of the values of life, for with its real side he allows himself as limited a connection as possible, dealing only with the beautiful "may be's" and "might be's." He dwells on these to such an extent that they finally seem to him the only real things. The people around him are little other than puppets.

To a girl this system of repression is specially disastrous. The boy goes out into the world finally and diverts his mind by his fight for life. He soon finds for himself an *alter ego* on whom he can lavish the wealth of his pent-up affections. The girl stays at home, day after day, growing more and more dissatisfied with herself and her surroundings. She, too, has her dreams and hopes, but they are naturally of a different nature from the boy's, tending more to domestic felicity and less to worldly ambitions.

Then comes the time when the first advances of love are made to her. Frightened at her new experience, frightened at herself, she needs now more deeply than at any other time in her life her mother's demonstrated affection. But in the circumstances she cannot turn to that mother either for sympathy in her emotions or for help to understand herself. If her first lover be an honorable man, such a girl has found a haven of rest. Otherwise—the deluge! She has no means of discussing the man's character, motives or actions. She must take all for granted as he states it, or she must struggle blindly on by herself, against great odds, to find the truth.

But the fact remains that almost any offer of marriage presents great attractions to a girl who has led a life of repressed affection. If the prospective husband has some traits of which she does not quite approve, she hopes for the best, and forgives all for the sake of the love he offers and that which she thinks she gives. Many times both of these are of the most spurious kind, but of this she has no means of judging before marriage. She has never been led to try to understand herself, much less others.

Let those who feel that this may be a little overdrawn look around among their acquaintance for instances of prematurely early marriages and "runaway matches." Among them all the cases will be found very rare where the families of the young couple have been persons given to affectionate expression of feeling.

Why should I be constantly showing my affection for my children, kissing them and caressing them when they come in or go out or go to bed?" asks some father resentfully. "Do I not provide for them and look after them the very best I know how? What greater proof of love do they want?"

There is something which the soul craves—something beyond bread and butter and shoes. To provide only for material wants is to neglect that which is above all earthly things—the soul—and for which there must come a terrible day of reckoning.

EMMA CHURCHMAN HEWITT.

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