

The Father and His Boy.

The training of girls is peculiarly the mother's work, and not even a father should much interfere, save in the way of suggestion and to give sanction and aid from time to time. But for boys there is need not only of the mother's care and loving watchfulness, but also of the father's wise, patient, persistent solicitude and active interest.

It is not much to be wondered at that fathers, occupied in wearying labor to provide for the physical requirements of the family, should leave to the mother the 'bringing up' of both sons and daughters. Let us not, however, lose sight of the end in the fierce endeavor to obtain what, after all, is only means to the end. Our sons' physical, mental and moral well-being, their characters, are of infinitely more concern to us and to the race than silver or gold. True manhood is the heritage that a wise father will wish to leave to his child. But this he cannot bequeath in his 'last will and testament.' Character, including in one word manhood, courage, honesty, faithfulness to duty, is the result of education and training in the formative period of life. It must be built up day by day and year by year, just as with nourishing food and exercise a vigorous body is built up.

To each child the Creator gave the father who should be companion, guide, protector and friend. A father cannot escape the conclusion that here is found his greatest responsibility. If by reason of sensuality and self-indulgence, or carelessness and negligence, he fails to discharge this duty, the natural law of cause and effect is not more sure than that sooner or later he will come to know bitter though unavailing remorse, and tears which shall burn his soul.

The same infinitely wise and helpful Being whom we are taught by the Master to call 'our Father,' will teach the humblest and the most ignorant, as well as the mighty and the learned, who earnestly desire this knowledge, how each may best bring up his son to be an honest, industrious, self-respecting and respected man. If the earnest desire and persistent purpose be in his heart, the right word to be spoken in admonition, warning and counsel will come to the lips; and the tone and inflection which will reach the heart of the child will not be wanting.

But this can only be through companionship. We must live with our boys, be their comrades and enter into their pleasures and their sorrows. Herein many fathers—'good' fathers, Christian fathers, churchgoing fathers—fail and fall short.

Let the father often recur to his own experience as a boy. No doubt your boy lives in a different environment, yet boys are boys, and you can well remember how you felt when you were of his age. If, looking back, you feel that your father in some cases erred in his treatment of you, learn from this how in wisdom, fairness and justice to treat your son, so that you may avoid your father's error. If the berating given you by your father or a teacher was in your estimation unjust, sometimes harsh and almost invariably a miserable mistake, be constantly on your guard that you do not by harsh and unnecessary censure, awake in your son the demon of hate and rebellion against all authority.

Remember that the faults of character you discover in him are but reproductions of your own traits. Has he a quick temper? How is your own, even now in your maturer years? Have you yet learned that in order to govern others one must first learn to govern himself? Is he obstinate, self-willed, conceited at times? Ask his mother, or better, your mother, if she has ever detected such traits in you? Has he been disobedient? Can you not recall another such boy? Be patient; character growth is slow. Your boy has yet many inches to grow in height ere he becomes a man. When ill, you do not scold or storm at him, nor do you reproach him too much, though his illness is due to eating green apples in utter disregard of your injunctions. You proceed to cure him, and hope he has learned his lessons as you did yours, when you too were a disobedient son. Thus shall he learn, from you and through experience, the lesson of life—that fire burns, that wrongdoing will bring pain, disgrace and trouble to him and to those he loves.

If you will be his companion, be his playmate; if you will enter into his thoughts, be part of his daily life, go with him sometimes to the games he is interested in; share his troubles, be they ever so insignificant; invite his absolute trust by treating his communications with inviolable and sacred confidence—you will soon learn that you have gained an influence over him that shall last as long as your life, and guide him after you are gone. If you do this, and not foolishly drive him and his confidences from you or by reproach and harmful punishments chill and terrorize him, he will cling to you as to the best and truest friend.

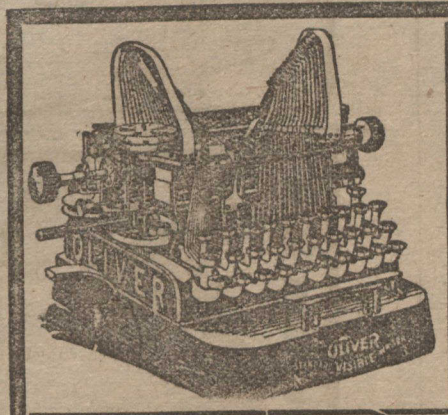
You need recreation and pleasure, it is the law of our nature. For a stronger reason does your son. It is the nature of the young of all animals to sport and play. Thus the mind as well as the body of the child is best developed. Let the boy play, as God intended. Find not too often fault that he mars the furniture or breaks an occasional window.

Cultivate a taste for good reading by reading aloud good books, and guard with never failing watchfulness against bad books and bad associates. Talk to him about the boys

he plays with, and find out whether they use bad words or do things you and his mother and teachers have taught him are wrong. All these things you can find out without letting him feel that he has 'told on' another boy. Then tell him in kind but earnest words that association with boys who use foul or profane words, or who do things which such boys usually do, can only result in injury; and appeal to him on his own account, on his mother's and sisters' account, to abandon such companionship. Persuade rather than punish; appeal to manhood, and his sense of honor and self-respect.

If punishment be needed, as sometimes in moderation it is, let it be wisely and temperately administered, not in anger or unreasoning passion. Deprivation of a pleasure will often produce results which no amount of beating ever could.

Our example will have deep and lasting influence over the character and conduct of our sons. If this example be not clean, straightforward, honest and true, beware lest your son come to pay little heed to words of counsel, be they ever so wise. Take heed that your weak and faulty life does not cause your ad-



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