

years of life. The child's thoughts and feelings being spontaneously drawn into harmony with the thoughts and feelings of those around him whom he loves, leads, of course, to a reproduction of their actions, and the prevalence and universality of the effect shows how constant and how powerful is the cause. So the great secret of success for a mother, in the formation of the character of her children, is to make her children respect and love her, and then simply to *be* herself what she wishes them to be.

And to make them respect and love her, is to control them by a firm government where control is required, and to indulge them almost without limit where indulgence will do no harm.

But besides this general effect of the principle of sympathy in aiding parents in forming the minds and hearts of their children, there are a great many cases in which a father or mother who understands the secret of its wonderful and almost magic power can avail themselves of it to produce special effects. One or two examples will show more clearly what I mean.

William's aunt Maria came to pay his mother a visit in the village where William's mother lived. On the same day she went to take a walk with William—who is about nine years old—to see the village. As they went along together upon the sidewalk they came to two small boys who were trying to fly a kite. One of the boys was standing upon the sidewalk embarrassed a little by some entanglement of the string.

"Here you, fellow!" said William, as he and his aunt approached the spot, "get out of the way with your kite, and let us go by."

The boy hurried out of the way, and, in so doing, got his kite-string more entangled still in the branches of a tree which grew at the margin of the sidewalk.

Now, William's aunt might have taken the occasion, as she and her nephew walked along, to give him some kind and friendly instruction or counsel about the duty of being kind to everybody in any difficulty, trouble, or perplexity, whether they are young or old; showing him how we increase the general sum of happiness in so doing, and how we feel happier ourselves when we have done good to any one, than when we have increased in any way, or even slighted or disregarded, their troubles. How William would receive such a lecture would depend a great deal upon his disposition and state of mind. But in most cases such counsels, given at such a time, involving, as they would, some covert though very gentle censure, would cause the heart of the boy to close itself in a greater or less degree against them, like

the leaves of a sensitive-plant shrinking from the touch. The reply would very probably be, "Well, he had no business to be on the sidewalk, right in our way."

William and his aunt walked on a few steps. His aunt then stopped, hesitatingly, and said,

"How would it do to go back and help that boy disentangle his kite-string? He's a little fellow and does not know so much about kites and kite-strings as you do."

Here the suggestion of giving help to perplexity and distress came associated with a compliment instead of what implied censure, and the leaves of the sensitive-plant expanded at once and widely to the genial influence.

"Yes," said William; "let's go."

So his aunt turned and went back a step or two, and then said, "You can go and do it without me. I'll wait here till you come back. I don't suppose you want any help from me. If you do, I'll come."

"No," said William, "I can do it alone."

So William ran on with great alacrity to help the boys clear the string, and then came back with a beaming face to his aunt and they walked on.

William's aunt made no further allusion to the affair until the end of the walk, and then, on entering the gate, she said, "We have had a very pleasant walk, and you have taken very good care of me. And I am glad we helped those boys out of their trouble with the kite."

"So am I," said William.

Now, it is possible that some one may say that William was wrong in his harsh treatment of the boys, or at least in his want of consideration for their perplexity, and that his aunt, by her mode of treating the case, covered up the wrong, when it ought to have been brought distinctly to view and openly amended. But when we come to analyze the case, we shall find that it is not at all certain that there was anything wrong on William's part in the transaction, so far as the state of his heart, in a moral point of view, is concerned. All such incidents are very complicated in their nature, and in their bearings and relations. They present many aspects which vary according to the point of view from which they are regarded. Even grown people do not always see all the different aspects of an affair in respect to which they are called upon to act or to form an opinion, and children, perhaps never; and in judging their conduct, we must always consider the aspect in which the action is presented to their minds. In this case, William was thinking only of his aunt. He wished to make her walk convenient and agreeable to her. The boy disentangling his string on the sidewalk was to him, at that time, simply an obstacle in his aunt's way, and he dealt with it as such,