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EDUCATION.

The Moral discipline of Children.

Commenting on the chaotic state of opinion and practice relative to family government, Richter writes:

"If the secret variances of a large class of ordinary fathers were brought to light, and laid down as a plan of studies, and reading catalogued for a moral education, they would run somewhat after this fashion: In the first hour 'pure morality must be read to the child, either by myself or the tutor;' in the second, 'mixed morality, or that which may be applied to one's own advantage;' in the third, 'do you not see that your father does so and so?' in the fourth, 'you are little, and this is only fit for grown-up people;' in the fifth, 'the chief matter is that you should succeed in the world, and become something in the state;' in the sixth, 'not the temporary, but the eternal, determines the worth of a man;' in the seventh, 'therefore rather suffer injustice, and be kind;' in the eighth, 'but defend yourself bravely if any one attack you;' in the ninth, 'do not make a noise, dear child;' in the tenth, 'a boy must not sit so quiet;' in the eleventh, 'you must obey your parents better;' in the twelfth, 'and educate yourself.' So by the hourly change of his principles, the father conceals their untenableness and onesidedness. As for his wife, she is neither like him, nor yet like that harlequin who came on to the stage with a bundle of papers under each arm, and answered to the inquiry, what he had under his right arm, 'orders' and to what he had under his left arm, 'counter-orders.' But the mother might be much better compared to a giant Briareus, who had a hundred arms, and a bundle of papers under each."

This state of things is not to be readily changed. Generations must pass before any great amelioration of it can be expected. Like political constitutions, educational systems are not made, but grow; and within brief periods growth is insensible. Slow, however, as must be any improvement, even that improvement implies the use of means; and among the means is discussion.

We are not among those who believe in Lord Palmerston's dogma, that "all children are born good." On the whole, the opposite dogma, untenable as it is, seems to us less whole of the

truth. Nor do we agree with those who think that, by skilful discipline, children may be made altogether what they should be. Contrariwise, we are satisfied that though imperfections of nature may be diminished by wise management, they can not be removed by it. The notion that an ideal humanity might be forthwith produced by a perfect system of education, is near akin to that shadowed forth in the poems of Shelley, that would mankind give up their old institutions, prejudices, and errors, all the evils in the world would at once disappear; neither notion being acceptable to such as have dispassionately studied human affairs.

Not that we are without sympathy with those who entertain these too sanguine hopes. Euthusiasm, pushed even to fanaticism, is a useful motive power—perhaps an indispensable one. It is clear that the ardent politician would never undergo the labors and make the sacrifices he does, did he not believe that the reform he fights for is the one thing needful. But for his conviction that drunkenness is the root of almost all social evils, the teetotaler would agitate far less energetically. In philanthropy as in other things, great advantages result from division of labor; and that there may be division of labor, each class of philanthropists must be more or less subordinated to its function—must have an exaggerated faith in its work. Hence, of those who regard education, intellectual or moral, as the panacea, we may say that their undue expectations are not without use; and that perhaps it is part of the beneficent order of things that their confidence can not be shaken.

Even were it true, however, that by some possible system of moral government children could be moulded into the desired form; and even could every parent be daily indoctrinated with this system; we should still be far from achieving the object in view. It is forgotten that the carrying out of any such system pre-supposes, on the part of adults, a degree of intelligence, of goodness, of self-control, possessed by no one. The great error made by those who discuss questions of juvenile discipline, is in ascribing all the faults and difficulties to the children and none to the parents. The current assumption respecting family government, as respecting national government, is, that the virtues are with the rulers and the vices with the ruled. Judging by educational theories, men and women are entirely transfigured in the domestic relation. The citizens we do business with, the people we meet in the world, we all know to be very imperfect creatures. In the daily scandals, in the quarrels of friends, in bankruptcy disclosures, in lawsuits, in police reports, we have constantly thrust before us the pervading selfishness, dishonesty, brutality. Yet when we criticise nursery management, and canvass the misbehavior of juveniles, we habitually take for granted that these culpable men and women are free from moral delinquency in the treatment of their offspring! So far is this from the truth, that we do not hesitate to say that to parental misconduct is traceable a great part of the domestic disorder commonly ascribed to the perversity of children. We do not assert this of the more sympathetic and self-restrained, among whom we hope most of our readers may be classed, but we assert it of the mass. What kind of moral discipline is to be expected from a mother who, time after time, angrily shakes her infant because it will not suckle her,