

THE MOTHER AND HER CHILDREN.

I am sadly conscious that thousands of mothers are so overburdened that the actual demands of life from day to day consume all their time and strength. But "of two evils choose the less;" and which would you call the less, an unpolished stove or an untaught boy? Dirty windows, or a child whose confidence you have failed to gain? Cobwebs in the corner, or a sin over whose soul a crust has formed so strong that you despair of melting it with your hot tears and your fervent prayers?

I have seen a woman who was absolutely ignorant of children's habits of thought, who never felt that she could spare a half-hour to read or talk with them—I have seen this woman spend ten minutes in ironing a sheet (there were six in the washing) one hour in fluting the ruffles and arranging the puffs of her little girl's "sweet white suit;" thirty minutes in polishing tins that were already bright and clean; forty minutes for frosting and decorating a cake for tea because "company was expected."

When the mother, a good orthodox Christian, shall appear before the great white throne to be judged for "the deeds done in the body," and to give in her report of the Master's treasures placed in her care, there will be questions and answers like these:

"Where are the boys and girls I gave thee?"

Answer—"Lord, I was busy keeping my house clean and in order, and my children wandered away!"

"Where wert thou while thy sons and daughters were learning the lessons of dishonesty, malice and impurity?"

Answer—"Lord, I was polishing furniture, ruffling dresses and making beautiful rugs."

"What hast thou to show for thy life-work?"

Answer—"The tidiest house, Lord, and the best starching and ironing in all our neighborhood!"

O, these children! these children! The restless, eager boys and girls whom we love more than our lives? Shall we devote our time and strength to that which perisheth, while the rich garden of our child's soul lies neglected, with foul weeds choking out all worthy and

beautiful growths? Shall we exalt the incidentals of life to the rank of a purpose, to the shutting out of that work whose results reaches beyond the stars?

Fleeting, O mother, are the days of childhood! Speckless windows, snowy linen, the consciousness that every thing about the house is faultlessly bright and clean, will be poor comfort; in that day wherein we shall discover that our poor boy's feet have chosen the path that shall take him out of the way to all eternity.—*Chris. Observer.*

SHAPING CHILD CHARACTER.

THE most important period of the child's life has ended before it has commenced attendance even as an infant class scholar at the Sabbath school—perhaps before it has acquired the use of speech. It is the age of impressions, and although the child—so immense is its vitality—may outgrow to some extent the influences which mould it while in this entirely plastic condition, the effects of these are more or less apparent all through life. "My solemn conviction," says Horace Bushnell in his "Christian Nurture," "is that more is done or lost by neglect of doing, on a child's immortality, in the first three years of his life, than in all his years of discipline afterwards. Let every Christian father and mother understand, when their child is three years old, that they have done more than half of all they will ever do for his character. If the handling of infancy is unchristian, it will beget unchristian states or impressions. If it is gentle, even patient and loving, it prepares a mood and temper like its own. There is scarcely room to doubt that all most crabbed, hateful, resentful, passionate, ill-natured characters, all most even, lovely, firm and true, are prepared, in a great degree, by the handling of the nursery. To these, and to all such modes of feeling and treatment as make up the element of the infant's life, it is plastic as wax. So that, if we consider how small a speck, falling into the nucleus of a crystal, may disturb its form; or how even a mote of foreign matter present in the quickening egg will suffice to produce a deformity; considering, also, on the other hand, what nice conditions of repose, in one case and what accurately modulated supplies of heat in the other, are necessary to a perfect product; then only do we begin to imagine what work is going on in the soul of the child in this first chapter of life, the age of impressions."