

entails falsity to one's own highest ideal, brings bonds and misery—bonds of iron and steel unrelentingly compressing the waist, railing in the nether limbs, and binding the feet in leathern bonds.

A woman's clothing is part of herself if she permit her real nature to develop itself in it. She *can* be true to herself in dress. She *can* follow out her own ideal, in a greater or lesser degree, according to the materials she can afford to procure—still always in *some* degree. In so doing she will feel that sense of calm dignity, which is one of the greatest charms of woman, suffuse her spirit as she realizes that nothing that appears externally belies or belittles her real nature. It is of course wrong to do right thus from selfish motives, even were it possible; still it is none the less a fact that in doing right there will come a great gain.

### AN ESSAY ON PARENTS.

BY AN OLD BOY.

We on this side of the Atlantic have been often held open to blame in that we too much relax the bonds of filial duty and filial obedience. There may be—there probably is—some foundation for the accusation. If so, the cause is to be found partly in this, that less restrained by custom than the inhabitants of older countries we are more free to try experiments with our children in the hope of elevating the race by developing their best qualities instead of repressing forcibly their worst. Yet there are many exceptions even on this continent. The average action of our people in this direction is not really much, if any, in advance of the motherland.

If it be true that the genuine divine command which is enfolded within the outward expression of the fifth commandment—"Honour thy father and thy mother," &c.,—is a command to honour alone our Heavenly Father, then it is open to doubt if that is the kind of honour which we parents here or elsewhere strive to infuse into our children. Yet the words of our Lord Himself would certainly seem to imply exactly such a meaning as inherent in the fifth commandment, for He says: "Call no man father upon earth, for *One* is your Father Who is in heaven." His words, be it remembered, "are spirit and are life."

Suppose a youth to be cursed with a father who has broken through every law of nature, and debased and lowered alike his physical and mental being by continual excesses—the question arises, Is such a man's son to honour, obey and follow the example and guidance of *that* father, or is he to honour and obey the Heavenly Father? It may be much easier for him, with the taint of the derived hereditary evils of his parentage alive and glowing within him—immensely easier—to honour and obey his earthly father, but is it therefore right?

The tendency of such views is, of course, to upset all traditional obedience to parents as by social or legal laws established, and to substitute for these the law of obedience to God alone—to the highest and best conceptions of goodness and truth with which He fills our will-life and executive faculties. These we must exercise regardless altogether of fathers or brethren of mankind, regardless only of righteousness—of that right-doing which is the product of love to others, seeking their highest good, not our own ease or peace or comfort. It is to be feared it is still true that to act by these laws of God is to bring "not peace on earth, but a sword"—a conflict of truth with falsity even on the lower plane of sensual natural life.

If, however, this be the true law—and what Christian can doubt it?—Christian parents must, in dealing with their children, put their own selfishness and self-hood entirely aside, permit the fullest liberty to their children, not saving them from the natural punishments of sin and transgression, which are inwoven with the operation of natural laws, by substituting their own self-derived code of laws and punishments instead. Warning their children of consequences they must still leave them in freedom to transgress and suffer, or to refrain and enjoy, ever surrounding them so with the love that is in their hearts towards them, that even in the deepest misery, from excess or transgression, they shall turn to them for comfort, help and guidance in their distress.

Is it cruel kindness not personally to punish them for wrong doing, and so save them if possible from Nature's sterner punishments? It seems so, but it is not. It is only an appearance; for this same personal rule and infliction of arbitrary penalties—penalties not inherent in the very nature of the wrong action itself—does partake more or less, consciously or unconsciously, of revenge, and stirs up open or concealed rebellion and hatred, which no punishment can subdue inwardly, however much it may subdue outwardly. It creates, or at least draws forth, the evil nature. It sows the seeds of tyranny and oppression with the first dawns of power. See a child whip its doll or hit out savagely at the chair or table whose hard surface has hurt it, and then say, ye parents, from whom it has learned those feelings of anger or malice—this longing to meet insult with insult, evil with evil, hurt with hurt. To give our children no guidance, no warning, no help, would indeed be cruel; but, to superadd our personal vengeance to the just operation of the laws of God, which are the laws of Nature, is indeed presumptuous, cruel, unjust, and productive of evil.

Now, our knowledge of the name or character of God our Heavenly Father has the closest possible relation to our knowledge of what we ought to be as fathers to our children. And it is simply because men have formed for themselves a conception of the Fatherhood of God but little, if any, above their own practice, so perverting His Divine Love and Wisdom into the self-love of their own affection and knowledge, that their treatment of their children has hitherto been so harsh, unjust, and therefore so unloving as to perpetuate much of their own evil and so hinder the progress of the race. It is fashionable to abuse Calvinism, and to lay to the charge of that system of doctrine with its Divine wrath against sin, its rewards and punishments, and its resistance on the right of the Divine Being to choose the elect as He might will, and to condemn for ever the sinful and the non-elect that they might be to others "monuments of His wrath," and (so-called) justice. It has been usual to condemn Calvinism as a system for producing a similar stern, unyielding, revengeful and cruel justice, a sense of injured dignity asserting its right to reign in the family and the State—but it is unjust to do so. It is more just to blame the people who had so perverted their lives; had so forgotten God's law of love to others—as to turn their affections from love of others to love of self, self-rule and stern dignity and supremacy as to be capable of receiving into their minds and hearts such a conception of their Heavenly Father as Calvin presents to them. It is not to be doubted that Calvinism was an improvement on the laxity of morals previously prevailing, which it somewhat restrained, at least from breaking out into open act. In the state or condition in which men then were they could only discern the outward appearance of the truth about God. By their nature they had unfitted themselves to perceive the reality that "God is Love." Hence men ruled their families and brethren as they conceived God ruled them, and in as far as they did so from honest conviction did good service. Alas! that they should have fallen so low as to serve Him so feebly with such dread results to many a suffering soul whose life was thereby rendered all misery, agony and oppression, till at length on entering the other world he found the Light and Liberty and Love in God for which he had longed.

But Calvinism is past and dead, thank God; and He has revealed Himself by His second coming in the spiritual meaning of Scripture now shining through the clouds of the latter into the minds of men everywhere, of all creeds, of all nations. It is high time to awake out of sleep, to shake off the remaining fetters of a dead past, and recognizing God in His Divine Humanity, let us like Him "suffer little children to come unto Him and forbid them not." Let us try by His help to manifest to them the Fatherhood of God in an imitation, however feeble, of that reasoning, ever present love which He displayed when He walked on earth among us His children. Let us with Him oppose wrath with Love, hardness with gentleness, unable and unwilling as He was to spare our children, by unwise affection, a single pain which they bring on themselves by the transgression of natural or spiritual laws; yet, suffering with and for them and ever ready to help, succour, sustain, and lead them to goodness. We need to add no "corporal punishment"—no terrors of personal revenge—if we leave the laws of Nature, which are the laws of God implanted by Him with infinite wisdom in their very being and constitution, free to act upon them, and do not try to enforce salvation from self-love, which is self-conceit and self-confidence and practical unbelief in the wisdom and beneficence of "Our Father, who is in Heaven." It is simply right, in all humility, for we fathers to place ourselves alongside of our children, as children too of one Father, that we may be mutually helpful to each other in conquering and subduing our evils; but it takes some humility to do it, for grown men do not like to become as little children, especially before their own children. It ought to be so done however. To do otherwise, to appeal to personal authority and fear of vengeance arbitrarily inflicted is to foster in our children the weakness of a character deprived of the lessons of experience, sweet or bitter, which an all-wise God has provided; and, besides, such conduct brings to maturity the evil desires for revenge and cruelty which spring into being in response to cruelty inflicted.

Such pure and high-minded men as Herbert Spencer, who do not yet call themselves Christians, shame we who do by the gentleness and truth of their teaching. Herbert Spencer claims entire immunity from the exercise of brute force for women, and for children, full liberty of action for both, and an absolute spirit of our Lord God and Saviour. In so far at least he has caught the cruelty to children have been formed both in Great Britain and the United States. Here we have societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but none for children. Have animals rights and children none? Ere long the use of the slave-driver's whip to animals even will be discontinued and prohibited, for animals can be trained to usefulness more effectively by love and kindness than by force—can be led, not driven. Yet a recent school case in Toronto has brought to light the fact that the power of corporal punishment is permitted to male teachers in our public schools, and may be exercised by them on girls! What think you, men, of the man who is coward enough to use it? What think you, women, of the women who remain silent and suffer it because it is not their child who is treated thus like a brute by one regardless of those dawns of womanly self-respect which he thus dares to crush in the bud?