

Woman and the Home

Reconciliations

By Calvin Dill Wilson

The mother is wise who sees to it that her children grow up in an atmosphere free from hate and grudges and old feuds. Wherever alienations exist among her relatives or friends, it is well for all concerned and especially for the children to bring together the separated parties, heal the troubles and bring about reconciliations. If the children have known of such quarrels, it is well to let them see also the joy of reconciliations, and feel the waves of kindness and good will where before there was hatred.

Harm is done to young people by the existence and perpetuation of quarrels, by hearing of these, by seeing the signs of ill-feeling and unkindness. They grow up to feel that grudges are natural and general and to expect or take for granted the same disturbances in their own lives. They fail to learn the folly and harm of hate, the misery of permanent feuds.

The mother has a great duty in this respect. She should purify the atmosphere in which her children are growing up. Most of the vexations of this kind come from small origins and are not worthy of being dignified by permanency. Many start and are kept up with gossip, idle and senseless talk of trouble makers. When real wrongs have been committed, it is the nobler and more magnanimous part to ignore, forget, forgive, pour oil on the troubled waters, put coals of fire on the head of the wrongdoer by kindness. Most of these petty quarrels are kept up by pride; resentment of slights, real or fancied, is a form of egotism. Wise people let many things go by default, rather than make a great point of them.

Give the children the benefit of an atmosphere free from hate and filled with good will.

Contact with Evil

By Francis McKinnon Morton

What normal mother sending her little child out into the world does not simply long with all her heart to spread out her mother-wings and protect him from all contact with evil? But—it simply can not be done. The knowledge of good and evil is a part of the heritage we take in common from our primeval human parents. My child must take his with my neighbor's children and I can not save him from it, but I can give him a blessed armour of self protection that no mortal shaft can pierce; and that is a clean mind well furnished with knowledge of the pure and the beautiful and with a clear understanding of the sacred things out of which the low minded make evil thoughts.

When my eldest was between three and four years old he started to a little neighborhood kindergarten. One day a little playmate told him of a certain form of evil of which he had learned through a Japanese serving boy. My little one came and brought the story to me because we are quite intimate friends and this was the natural thing to do. My impulse was to gather my baby in my arms and keep him there, forbidding the kindergarten and further association with the poor little playmate who had brought the story to him. I felt like doing this—but I didn't do it. Neither did I scold or appear shocked or denounce the unfortunate little informant as an indecent child.

There is really nothing that can come to a mother out of the clean mind of a little child that need shock her sensibilities so severely that she can not look it squarely in the face and give it its proper proportion in the eyes of the child. The silly exaggeration of a child's thoughts about himself does more to over-emphasize them in his little mind than any other one cause. The little child who told my boy was interested in what he had seen and heard, merely interested and curious because it was all new and strange to him. At the time it was certainly not evil or immoral to him, it was merely a matter of natural human interest. To my boy, who has somewhat different tastes, it was simply distasteful, not evil at all, so why should I make it so with my foolish fears. We had a little talk about it and I tried to give it to him in its natural proportion and we remained close friends with no break in our understanding of each other. One thing I had

to combat, the incident had given him a thorough distaste for the little friend whom he had loved.

It was now my task to teach him the duty of friendship, which is to help as well as to love. The two children have since been thrown together a good deal and are friends but not close friends, though I have never by any conscious act done anything to prevent that. My own boy has a better sense of proportion in life and its interests, and the two of them could never grow close to each other except by a change of viewpoint in one or the other.

It pays to trust a child after you have given him the very best mental and spiritual furnishings for life that you can offer him. A normal child resents any restrictions placed on the free exercise of his own will and he is right to do so. Character can grow strong only by the free use of the will and a child has a right to grow. If you have a child with abnormal tendencies of any kind you are perfectly justified in forcing him into certain lines of conduct, but a child who is normal and clean needs his freedom of choice as much as he does the free use of his limbs. The mother may watch and guard and guide but she needs to beware of the weapon of force.

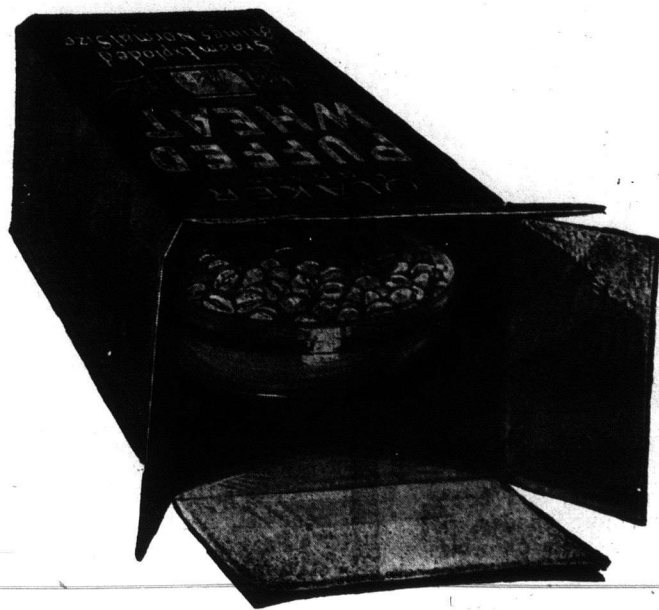
Later on two little girls, little sisters and as sweet and beautiful as children could be in appearance, moved into our street and came to play at our house a great deal. They taught my boy another side of the mystery of sex. We were such close friends though that the knowledge was not complete until he had shared it with mother and so we talked it all over together. I made no mystery of it and gave it no evil significance. I tried simply to give the thing its right place in his eyes and I was so successful that he felt with me the desire to protect the little girls from their own folly. They were both older than he and very intelligent children, and we all played together a great deal more before they finally moved away from the city, but they did not hurt my child, and he had no feeling that I had been unjust in my judgment or harsh toward his friends. He cared for them less after the incident than before because his sense of propriety was offended.

Still later he had a little friend a few years older than he, who continually wished him to deceive his parents about the simplest acts of his play. The little friend would say, "It's no use to tell your mother that, it'll just worry her for nothing," but my boy has learned that his mother doesn't go into hysterics over trifles so he brings them all to me, big things and little things, and I make it my task to try to set them in their proper places for him so that he may have a man's knowledge of good and evil and a just sense of values in the real things of life.

In this stage of his life he is hearing a great deal of bad language, both profane and vulgar, and I have no way to protect him from that except by an inward protection. Little boys who go among other boys will almost always hear things that you wish they wouldn't hear; but when you hear such things yourself you have no desire to adopt that style of speech and that manner of thought, and you can give your child the same means of protection against it that you have yourself. I shall never go into a fit of hysterics over a bit of profanity for I have known kind men who did swear horribly, but I have no desire to swear and I want my boys to realize that it is a foolish weakness they don't have to adopt just because their friends have it.

I try to teach my boy that he may have a friend with a broken leg and may care for the friend but need not break his own leg because of that. It seems to me that only in this way will a child's natural selectiveness become the strong hold of his character. The contact with evil is ever present and there is no protection except the inward protection of moral good taste.

A dear little baby boy lost his beloved playmate and brother and in the loneliness of his baby heart he prayed this beautiful prayer: "Please God, keep mother and me together so that we won't get so lonely." What voice of prayer could have expressed more eloquently the natural hunger of every child's heart for an understanding love? One hour of inti-



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