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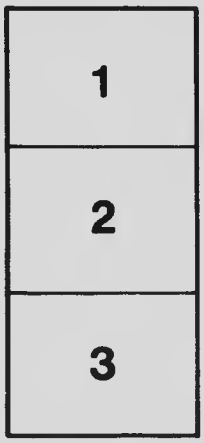

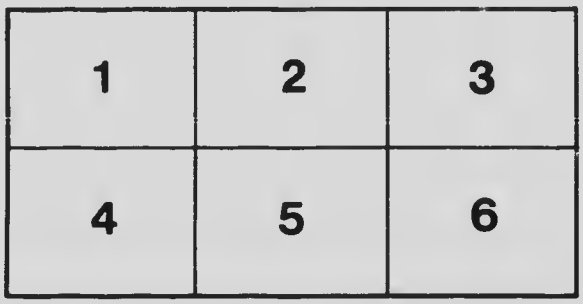

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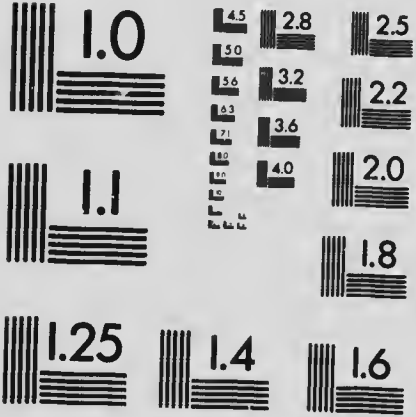

TRAINING OF THE CHILD

NEW LIGHT ON INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS.

"IS IT WELL WITH THE CHILD"

Unity of Human Life Runs Down Through All the Ages, and Former Generations Leav the Impress of Their Characters and Minds Upon Those at Present Functioning In Bodies Upon This Earth.

Los Angeles, Cal., March 25.—In this sermon the preacher deals in homely, familiar fashion with the problem that has confronted every generation since the world began—the training and development of the child—and shows in a new light the individual responsibility of parents. The text is II. Kings iv, 26, "Is it well with the child?"

Some time ago it was my privilege to spend a day with a dear friend, who for many years was a Utah missionary. In one of his tours he became lost. He stopped for the night at a farmer's home away back in the mountains. Next morning this farmer said, "Come, I want to show you a wonderful sight." Then he took my friend and they rode off for many miles until they came to a great lava bed about two miles wide and four or five feet high. This lava must have begun vomiting forth from a volcano hundreds if not thousands of years ago. There upon the top of this lava bed were to be seen the footprints of a woman and just behind them the footprints of a little child. My friend told me he believed that those footprints must have been made when that lava was in process of cooling. They must have been made by a woman of the mound

building period or of one of the other prehistoric ages. And yet those indentations in that lava were just as clear and distinct as though made but yesterday.

We often say to ourselves, "How surprised our grandfathers and grandmothers would be if they could awake and get up out of their graves and see the modern inventions—the automobiles and railroad trains and telegraphs and telephone wires and skyscraping office buildings." But I often think how surprised we might be if our great-grandparents could come back to earth and tell us how many of the customs of our present lives were practiced many centuries ago. Dr. Schliemann, the great German archaeologist and the discoverer of the ancient site of Troy, was such a devotee of the past that he gave his wife a Homeric name and called his servants by the nomenclature of the heroes and heroines of the "Odyssey" and the Iliad." He also called his children Agamemnon and Andromache. But methinks if Hector and Achilles and Ajax and Helen and Paris could come back to the world in the flesh they would have been just as much surprised at the ways of Dr. Schliemann as Dr. Schliemann would have been surprised at their ways. For in many matters their customs were the same. In the ways of salutation, in their loves and their hates and in many of their habits I believe that the year 1506 B. C. can be found to be akin to the year 1906 A. D.

I speak thus because I want you to realize that the human life depicted in the Bible is just the same kind of human life that we have in modern times. When we study the life of Elisha in 895 B. C., we are studying the lives of the men and the women of the present day. Now, this Shunammite woman of my text had a very sick boy, and he died. What did the mother do? What would you and I have done under the same conditions? She said, "I will go and hunt up the prophet of God." When she came to Elisha, what did he do? For years this prophet when he was journeying that way had been accustomed to stop at this woman's house and sup with her, her husband and her boy. Thus, when the Shunammite woman drew near Elisha accosted her in

the language of the twentieth century as well as in that of the millenniums which are gone. Elisha says: "How are you? How is your husband? How is your child?" To speak literally he said: "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?" Now, I am going to accost you with only one of the questions with which Elisha greeted this mother. I am going to inquire from you as to the welfare of your babies, of the boys and the girls. We are both parents, and so in this "Home Greeting" I say: "How is it with the children? Is it well with the child?" Are you ready here and now to answer this important salutation?

How is the child physically? Is it well with his lungs and heart and stomach? Is he growing aright? Is he taking enough exercise? Is he eating the proper kind of food? This is not a superfluous question. This is the salutation which Elisha gave to the Shunammite woman. This is the question which every father and mother should be able to answer intelligently. The picture of every true, loving parent ought to be that which I saw in an advertisement some years ago. There in a crib lay a beautiful child. The cheek was aglow. The eyes were laughing. The lips were parted as though he was cooing with joy. And over him bent the sweet face of a loving mother, while under this picture were the words, "A mother's love goes out for the health of her child." Does your love thus go out? How is your child physically? Is it well with him?

It is not sufficient for us as parents to simply say, "It is not well with the child," as though the child was responsible for all his physical weaknesses. There is many a child a physical weakling to-day merely because the parent does not know the first law of hygiene and is no more competent to take care of the child physically than I am competent to remove a cataract from a blind man's eye with a surgeon's knife. Some years ago when I was traveling through the Holy Land I came to a little village between Lake Galilee and Damascus. No sooner did I arrive there than the news spread. "An American has come?" What was

my surprise a short time after when a poor mother brought to me her sick child. "Tell me what I can do to save my baby?" was the question. I answered: "I am no doctor. Why do you come to me?" "You American man. You know," was the answer. Then I began to ask the symptoms of the disease. I found that this child for weeks had been suffering from a violent and acute form of cholera complaint. The mother, finding that the child could not digest anything, gradually ceased feeding him until at last she gave him nothing but raw fruit, the very worst food she could give under the circumstances. And as I looked at that skeleton of a boy I said to myself, "How many mothers and fathers there are in my own country just as incompetent to raise children as is that eastern mother?"

As intelligent parents you have no right to blind your eyes to the physical necessities of your offspring. Is it well with the child? Is it well with the food he eats and the clothing he wears and the room in which he sleeps? Is it well with him in the exercise he takes and in the games he plays? Are you developing good health in the nursery and in the playground? Remember, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Are you building the right kind of physical cathedrals? If your children are not strong physically, what is the reason? Are you to blame? Are you like Ralph Waldo Emerson's mother, who thought so much of his brain that she forgot that a brain without a stomach is just as useless as a St. Mark's campanile with walls tottering on account of the loosened cement which should hold its stones together. "Is it well with the child?"

What, I say, can it be that you have no interest in your children's mental growth? Can it be that you have more interest in the overseer of your ranch or in the foreman of your factory or in the coachman of your horses than you have in the schoolteachers who are placing the stamp of their intellectuality upon your boy's mind? As you look into the past you fully realize that all you are, in a mental way, is due to the training you received from certain school or college teachers now in glory. And can it be that you have

no interest in and no supervision of those later teachers who are molding your children's future lives? If the colt is once broken in the wrong way it will never amount to much. Thus the owner of a stock farm carefully watches every movement of his trainers. Can it be that a Kentucky horseman is more careful of training his thoroughbred colts than you are of the mental development of your own flesh and blood? Is it well with the child?

In this age of rapid advancement and of the specialization of talent no child has any chance for success in life unless he is developed aright for life's struggle. There is a story told that many years ago a fallen obelisk was about to be raised in Rome. The risk was very great, for if this obelisk was partly raised and should be allowed to fall it might be shattered into a thousand pieces. The greatest architect of his time, Domenico Fontana, prepared special machinery for the work. The momentous day arrived. The great pulleys were put into their places. The heavy ropes were placed around the backbone of the fallen monster. Higher and higher the mass of stone was lifted; higher and higher it rose. Almost it was lifted to the perpendicular, when the cable refused to budge another inch. Then it was that a sailor cried out at the top of his lungs, "Wet the ropes!" Promptly Fontana grasped the mechanical truth. The ropes were soaked. On account of the wetting these ropes contracted. Then slowly, but surely, the obelisk was drawn higher until it stood straight upon its own foundations. Ah, the wetting of the ropes did it! And when the great obelisks of the future, the great pyramids, the great arches of the bridges, are to be built our children must know exactly how to do the work, else they will be pushed aside as useless and others will take their places. They must not only be like Domenico Fontana, but they must be like Domenico Fontana plus the intelligence of the sailor boy who suggested wetting the ropes. How is your boy getting along in school and in his mental development? Is it well with the child?

Are your children growing up without any moral character to be shunned

by mankind as a runaway engine is feared by the railroad men? Up and up this engine climbs the mountain side. Then it reaches the top. Then, when the engineer tries to put on the brakes for the down grade horror paralyzes his nerves because he finds the brakes will not work. Then, like a fiend of death, the engine starts on its terrible journey. On and on it goes, until it dashes by the little station heedless of the signals. Then the telegraph machines begin to work. "Clear the track!" is the message sent ahead. "Clear the track! There is a runaway engine." Like the hurricane wind, it rushes along shrieking out its warnings. Its wheel just escapes the passenger train which has pulled into the side track. On and on it goes, until in its mad race it leaps through the drawbridge or tumbles down the embankment or crashes into the freight train which has not speed enough to outrun it. Then the mangled forms of its engineer and fireman are to be found amid the piled up ruins, where iron bars are bent like reeds and crumpled blades of grass. Is that the way your children are growing up, to be feared by mankind? Are they growing up like so many children we see about us, who are never taught to obey and who neved do right unless they care to do right? How are your boys and girls in reference to the moral law? By the moral law I mean all those laws that teach honesty and purity and uprightness. Do they respect other people's rights as they demand that others should respect their rights?

Then how is it with your children spiritually? We will suppose that you have cared for them physically, mentally and morally, but have you aided them in their spiritual lives? Have you ever interested yourself in their Sunday school lessons? When the evening hours come have you ever taken them upon your lap to show them the Bible pictures? Have you ever told them about the great sacred characters of the old Testament and the New? Have you tried to teach them to love Jesus Christ and lead them to walk hand in hand with their Saviour? You know, by the law of pedagogics there

are two ways of teaching. The first is to bring out or develop what is in the child. The second way is to continually have before you an "Ideal Child" and then try to pattern all your children after the "Ideal Child." In your religious life have you continually tried to hold before your little ones and your boys and girls the "Ideal Child?" Have you tried to pattern your children after that "Ideal Child" called Christ?

By the higher spiritual law could you say what the Shunammite woman of my text said if your child was dead? Supposing one of those terrible quick and fatal diseases should come to your home and take away your baby in a night and that, as your pastor, I come to your home and accost you in the words of Elisha, "Is it well with the child?" Could you answer, like the Shunammite woman: "It is well. Yes, he is well with Jesus. He is well with my dear ones who preceded him. Yes, my child is well because he is forever safe from sin. He is well in heaven?" Could you say that? If you could not say that, you had better beware, for the death angel seems to be partial to our little ones. Oh, how many small graves there are in the family plots! It almost seems that to some of us life may have a reproduction of that of a poor washerwoman who some years ago came to a photograph gallery in a western city. The proprietor looked at her sharply, for she was evidently very poor, as he said, "Well, my good woman, what do you want?" She said: "I want to have my baby's picture taken if I could, please, sir. But I ain't got no money. But if you will let me I will clean and scrub up the floors for you in order to pay for the picture."

Then, when the baby began to utter a plaintive wail, the poor woman said: "You see, sir, he don't cry like a well baby. He ain't never been strong. None of my babies are. I've buried four, and I ain't got no picture of any of them, so I thought I'd try and get a picture of this one in case anything should happen. I'd do any amount of scrubbing if you would only take this picture, for I'm afraid this little one might go like the rest." The proprietor brushed away a tear as he said: "Yes, good woman, I will take a picture of

your baby. Sit right down now." As I read the story I said: "O God, art thou going to take away any of my babies as thou hast taken so many other babies? If they are taken away shall I be able to say, 'They are well with thee,' because I have given them to thee? And if I am myself taken away, shall I still be able to say ere I go that it is well with my babies, because I have taught them already to meet me before the great white throne in heaven?"

But I cannot close this home greeting without giving you still another salutation. I would salute you with the words, "Is it well with thy neighbor's child as with thine own child?" And when I accost you thus I would tell you why I do it. I have had in mind for some time to preach upon our duty to care for the abused and neglected children of the slums. I wanted to do so to-day, but the more I thought upon this subject the more I felt that if a parent did not realize his responsibility to his own children he could not realize his responsibility to his neighbor's children. Now, I do believe we realize our responsibility to our own. Therefore can I not say just a word or two in reference to our duty toward those poor little waifs of the street or those worse than orphans, the children of the outcasts of sin?

You know how hard it is to develop children aright even under the very best conditions. And if there is a bad boy in your neighborhood at once you can see the influence of his life upon the actions of your own little son if they go together. What chance has that little child whose mother is a drunkard and whose father is a libertine? What chance have those little girls who are growing up surrounded by the vitiating and appalling atmosphere of licentiousness unless the Christian society of our large cities come to their rescue? Do you not know that in our large cities some lewd and debauched parents have been willing to sell their children into a life of crime when they have not yet entered their teens? O God, as we are giving our children to thee, can we not reach out the hand of rescue and help this Christly work of taking the little

children out of the slums and putting them into thine arms, as the mothers of old gave their little ones to Christ that he might bless them?

If Christian society in the name of Jesus Christ will not rescue these children, in all probability no power on earth will. Years ago three men were camping in the Indian jungle. Suddenly, with a mighty bound, a tiger leaped upon the back of one of the party. The two untouched men at once climbed a nearby tree. Then the tiger called to her young to come and have an evening meal. The cubs were not very hungry, so the old mother allowed them to play with their prey for a little while. After a few minutes the man came to. He saw the cubs. He saw the old mother. Then he staggered to his feet and started to run. His companions not only saw him, but heard his screams as the tiger brought him back and laid the man again in the midst of her young. Three or four times the mother beast did this. Then after awhile hunger asserted itself. The play stopped and the sound of the crunching bones was heard. Ah, I said to myself when I read that story, how often do we see sin playing with her victims like that? And in no way does sin seem to play with more fiendish glee over her prey than when sporting with the children of the slums or with those dissolute or cruel parents. Oh, my friends, if amid the brightest of conditions we have such hard work to raise our children right shall we not in Christ's name try to rescue these neglected little ones of the slums? If we to-day try to give our own children to Christ shall we not try to offer him our neighbor's children also? "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me, but whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the seas."