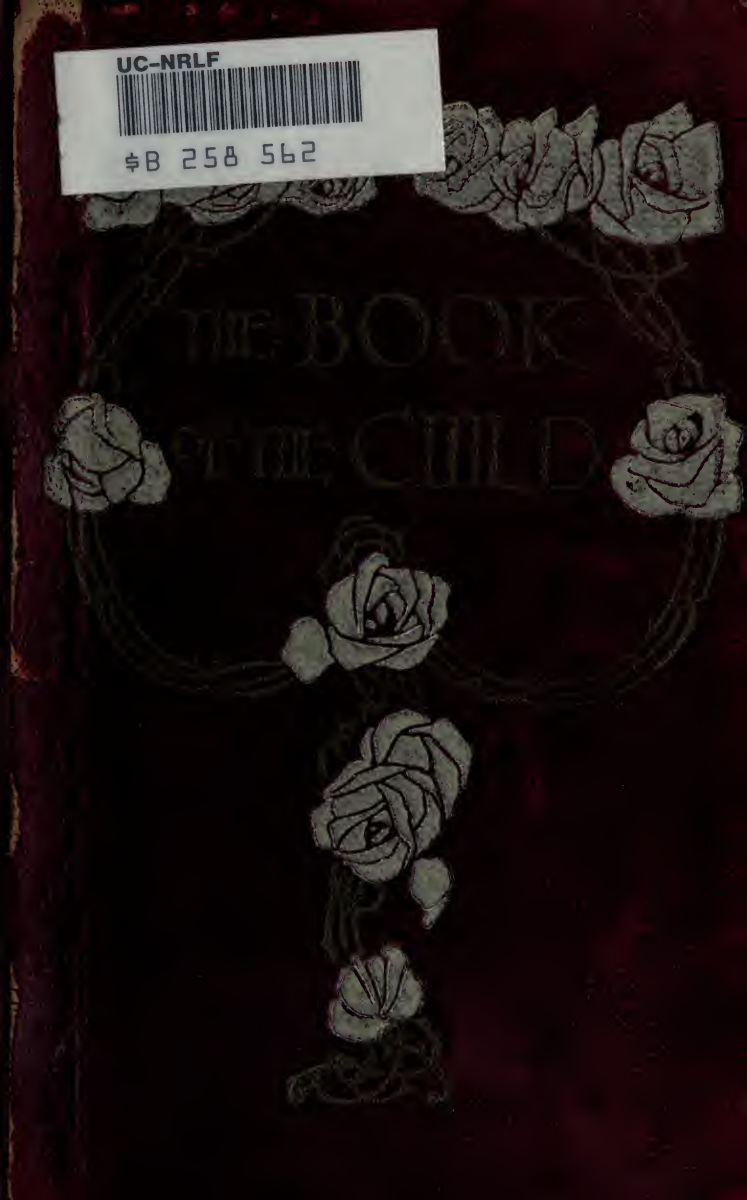

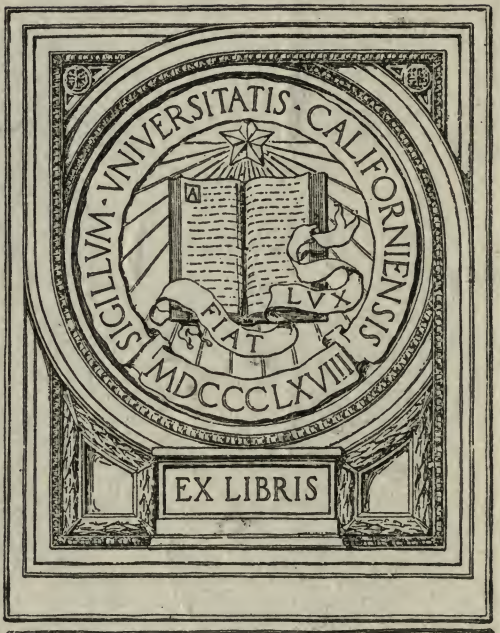
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The Book of the Child

The Book of the Child

An Attempt to set down what is in the mind of Children

By

Frederick Douglas How

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Preface

I AM rather shy about this little book.

If it were not for the kindness of some few friends whose knowledge of children far exceeds my own, it would never have seen the light.

For their encouragement and for the gift of their experiences and advice I am deeply grateful. I know that they would rather I did not mention them by name.

The thoughts which I have tried to put together have been growing in my mind for years. Some, in fact, I have quoted from articles I wrote some time ago for a magazine no longer in existence.

Perhaps my best excuse for letting this book appear is that, though I have no children of my own, other people's children have always been very good to me.

F. D. How.

May, 1907.

Preface

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The Book of the Child

CHAPTER I

THE CHILD—ITS ARRIVAL

CHILDREN have come into greater prominence during the last quarter of a century than ever before in the history of this country. Many things have been written about them, many things have been done for them,—some foolish and some wise, but all suggested by a newly aroused sense of the vital importance attached to their proper upbringing.

The Cause of the Children.

It is, of course, true that the Cause of the Children has been used by both political parties for their own purposes, but, for all that, there has been a large amount of most valuable

legislation on the subject during the last twenty years.* The helpless ness of children and their rights as citizens of this country have been better understood and provided for, while their impressionable nature has been realised, and the rigour of their training and discipline considerably modified.

Legislation for Children.

It may be that there has been too great a change in some directions. There may be a freedom of intercourse between children and their parents or teachers that borders on disrespect. But taking one thing with another the position of children has altered for the better, and it is no bad thing that few subjects have greater interest at the present day than that of Children. It is an interest, too, that has come to stay. Of a distinctly softening and refining nature like the taste for gardening, which has brought into the

The Better Position of Children.

* See Appendix.

world so many books during the last few years, it is only now beginning to reveal its true importance, and it will increase as from year to year more people perceive its fascination and trace its results.

Old-fashioned Discipline.

Sixty or seventy years ago the chief interest in children shown by parents and teachers was of an extremely disciplinary nature. Many children were not allowed to sit down without permission when in their parents' presence, and it was in many families the rule that the father and mother should be addressed as "Sir" and "Ma'am." Teachers of both sexes ruled mainly by fear, and allowed no intimacy between themselves and their pupils. The rigour of such upbringing and education must have withered many a tender-natured child as a cold black wind in spring will shrivel the opening blossoms of the fruit trees.

Among the working classes, until the

Church began to establish its schools, the children grew up anyhow, and could in few cases read or write.

Children of the Poor.

Infant mortality and unhealthy conditions of childhood were prevalent. So much was this the case that in 1847, while little was yet being thought or written about Children, the Metropolitan Working Classes' Association for Improving the Public Health actually put out a pamphlet on their proper rearing and training. This document had some considerable circulation, but its usefulness must have been greatly curtailed by the inability of so many people in those days to read.

Metropolitan Working Classes' Association.

Before this publication the literature on the subject of children was extremely scanty. Not only was this the case but those people who did from time to

Literature Concerning Children.

time write on the subject seem to have been ashamed of doing so, and their works, appearing once or twice in a century, are for the most part anonymous.

There exists a treatise printed by Cantrell Legge, printer to the University of Cambridge, in the year 1616, with the title "The Office of Christian Parents, showing how Children are to be governed throughout all ages and times of their life. With a brief Admonitorie addition unto children to answer in dutie to their Parents' office."

The Office of Christian Parents.

The writer, whoever he may have been, appears to have at that very early date grasped the importance of his subject, for he says, "The Parent is put in trust to governe the chiefest creature under heaven, to train up that which is called the Generation of God." Being thus impressed with the value of children,

Personal Care of the Mother.

it is natural to find the author of the treatise giving advice that is being more and more strongly urged upon parents at the present day. Eminent doctors insist upon the advantage to infants of being personally cared for by the mother, and not handed over wholesale to a nurse. Educational experts are more and more inclined to take the view that children should be kept at home as long as possible.

Possible Extinction of Boarding Schools.

So far, indeed, has this theory advanced that there is a suggestion of the ultimate extinction of our great public boarding schools in favour of a larger number of schools so situated that children may attend them as day scholars while still living at home under parental care and influence.

The old writer of 1616 made a strong point of the child being cared for by its parents from birth onwards. He (possibly from personal experience) did not even

approve of the interference of the grandmother, for he quaintly observes, "In some places there comes in the child-wive's mother. She will not have her daughter troubled with the noursing: and the Father cannot abide the crying of the child: therefore a nurse is sent for in all hast"—a course of action of which he entirely disapproves.

Interference of the Grandmother.

When the child is a little older he still thinks that its committal to the care of a servant should be avoided.

"When a child beginneth to know his mother from another, there groweth two absurdities, either the mother's fondness maketh it a crying child and restless, or els her careless committing it to a servant spills it."

Here comes in also his first advice as to the disciplining of a child. He appears to have held strong views as to the necessity

of firmness, but not to have been in favour of the great severity which often obtained in those days. His observations are too valuable even now to be passed over. What could be better than the following? "Here cometh in the cockling of the parents to give the child the sway of his owne desires to have whatsoever it pointeth to, and so it maketh the parents and all the house slaves, and there is no end of noyse, of crying, and wraling; or els there is such severitie as the heart of the child is utterly broken." Or again, "When parents do either too much cockle their children, or by home example do draw them to worser things, or els neglect the due discipline and good order, what I pray you can come to passe? but as we see in trees which beeing neglected at the first are crooked and unfruitful; contrarily, they which by the hand and art of the husbandman are proined,

The Spoiling of Children.

stayed up, and watered, are made upright, faire, and fruitfull."

It will be observed that this writer implies in all the advice he gives that the parent is the proper person to bring up a child, not a servant at home or a teacher at a distance. "Parents," he says, "should watch and attend upon their children for the avoiding of evil occasions and to see all duties rightly performed."

Parents to Superintend their Children's Upbringing.

How far have we got nowadays from this ideal! How greatly modern habits of life have interfered with any such possibility! What the ancient moralist quoted above would have said to the upbringing of most children at the present day it is difficult to imagine. He sums up his own point of view very pithily in the words, "The egges are badly hatched when the bird is away; and the children are unluckily nurtured whose parents are

made careles, being absent through pleasure."

More than a century later, in 1748, there appeared another anonymous publication on the subject. This had for its title "Dialogues on the Passions, Habits, and Affections peculiar to Children." The writer was imbued with ideas so far in advance of his time that fear of ridicule may have caused him to conceal his name. His sentiments about the proper treatment of children are very much those at which most people have arrived to-day, when the subject has received much prominent attention for a quarter of a century. He combats the prevailing opinion of that date that the right way to deal with children is by a system of formal repression and severity. Thus he makes one of his characters say, "I think it necessary that Children should be kept at some distance.

Old-fashioned Severity Leads to Dissimulation.

They are apt to grow pert, sawcy, and ungovernable if we make too free with them, or permit them the full liberty of speech in our Company." To this the reply is made : " To discover the Diseases of the mind ought to be and must be your principal study. But in this you will never be successful if you set out with a practice which teaches them to conceal every bad symptom."

A Phase of Lying.

The truth contained in these words is very generally recognised nowadays. If a parent wants to make a child untruthful it can be done at once by causing fear, under the guise perhaps of respect, to be the ruling sentiment. Children are only too ready to learn ! " As soon as they are born they go astray and speak lies." It is a tendency of childhood in every class. A gentleman whose work consists in preparing little boys for the great public schools once said that almost every small

boy passes through a phase of lying. The mistress of a little village school declared not long ago that there was only one child there upon whose word she could absolutely rely.

It follows then that those in charge of children, and especially the parents, should note the advice of the writer of the Dialogues. He insists again and again upon the evil effects of fear.

"Fear," he says, "I think is the first Passion which we can distinctly trace in the Mind of a Child. They are susceptible of it almost sooner than they can conceive the Nature of Danger; and it is the Misfortune of Numbers that the Nurses find this so easily improved to their purposes that Children find the effects of this passion as long as they live."

Children Susceptible of Fear.

Again, "As to Dread of Punishment which I have observed to be the lowest and most grovelling kind of Fear, you

must by gentle usage remove it from the apprehension of such as have imbibed it from harsh Parents or tyrannical Nurses."

It is exceedingly remarkable to find a writer in the middle of the eighteenth century who had studied children to such purpose, and who ventured to advance opinions such as those quoted above.

Literature of the last Half Century.

The latter part of the nineteenth century saw a rush of literature concerning children. It is possible that the great public efforts made by the various agencies for bettering the lot of homeless, starving, and ill-treated children began to call special attention to the treatment of all children. It may be that the general tendency of the age to level all distinctions between one and another helped to gain greater consideration for the younger members of the community. It may even be that a more general appreciation of the Gospel teaching helped forward this

result. Or, as some will say, it may be simply that a wave of sentiment swept over the country and brought with it a tenderer regard for little children. It does not much matter what was the cause. The fact remains that a new interest was awakened, the people of England wanted to understand childhood better, and books and magazine articles on the subject appeared in considerable numbers.

This result, even though some people have thought the supply excessive, has been of great service. The future of a country largely depends upon the proper upbringing of its children. This in its turn depends upon a proper knowledge of the nature of childhood. This knowledge has been stimulated and increased to an unprecedented degree by the works of the best of the writers who have recently dealt with the subject of children.

To mention only two or three. Which of us has not been the wiser and the better

for the books of Kenneth Graham, for such an inimitable character study as the Rebecca of Kate Douglas Wiggin, and for the marvellously tender insight into the mystery of the mind of a little child which has been shown by William Canton in the "Invisible Playmate" and "W. V. her Book"?

Books About Children.

It may be hoped that what is practically a new science may be studied with even greater diligence in the future, and may be given its proper position as of paramount importance.

Up to the present date more time and pains have been expended and more literature published on the rearing and training of horses and dogs than of the little children upon whom the future destiny of the world depends.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILD—ITS MEMORY

IT is just this—the memory of a child—that makes it so important to begin the process of training at once.

A Baby's Earliest Impressions.

The waxen tablets of a baby's mind are very soft. It is impossible to say how soon impressions are made upon them, or how deep those impressions may be. It is not impossible that with the very beginning of separate existence some vague markings are made upon these unsullied tablets. It is exceedingly interesting to try to imagine what the very earliest impressions are like. Are they first produced by the sense of sight or the sense of touch? It has been conclusively proved that the senses aid one another to a large extent in the early stages of their use. Bishop Berkeley in an appendix to

one of his treatises gives the reports of two cases of boys born blind with what is called congenital cataract. Both cases were cured, one at the age of nine, the other at thirteen or fourteen. Neither of these boys when first able to see had the least idea what he was looking at. They both thought that all objects touched their eyes, and neither had any conception of the shape or distance of an object. They were perfectly familiar with differences in shape and material by the process of touch, but when they first obtained sight the appearance of things meant nothing to them until they had handled them.

Bishop Berkeley on Blind Boys.

But in these cases the sense of touch had existed for years and been greatly cultivated. It was, therefore, natural that the familiar sense should come to the aid of the unfamiliar.

In newborn babies the circumstances

are altogether different. All senses alike are novel, and it would be of great interest, if such a thing were possible, to determine whether the earlier memory markings are caused by the vision of light, the sound of voices, or the touch of the hands that first come in contact with the infant form.

Memory Markings.

But it seems altogether out of our power to determine this question with any sort of certainty. None of us is able to remember the impressions of early infancy, and insufficient observation of the results of ocular, aural, or other contact with external things on the part of babies has resulted in an absence of data upon which to argue. Mothers, nurses, and maiden aunts are often ridiculed for declaring that "baby" has shown some astoundingly precocious power of observation or recognition, and no doubt these manifestations are in a large number of cases

Precocious Infants.

accounted for by a desire on the part of the narrator to be able to claim a special share of the infantile affection, or a special power of imparting infantile accomplishments.

Case of Very Early Memory.

At the same time there is every probability that infants observe and think more accurately than would be generally allowed by their casual male acquaintances. The present writer can vouch for at least one case where a permanent impression was made upon the mind of a very young child, and memory markings were indented which certainly lasted for several years. The facts are these: A man who shall be called A. B. was invalided and ordered to spend a winter at the seaside. While there a young married couple with their first baby shared his lodgings. The child, a boy, was just six months old, and for some eighteen weeks he was the frequent companion of A. B., especially

when the weather prevented either from going out. During many an hour the baby boy lay on the cushions of a low basket chair kicking and crowing with delight while his man friend talked or sang to him, and so a firm friendship grew up between the two, though its verbal expression was entirely confined to the elder of them.

When the baby was ten months old the inevitable parting came, and for about two years they saw nothing of one another. At last, however, it became possible for the child's mother to bring him to a house where his old friend was staying. During the journey she said to the little chap, " Do you know who you are going to see ? You are going to see A. B. " Without a moment's hesitation the boy said, " A. B. with beard ? " showing that he remembered what was no doubt to him the most striking item in his friend's appearance, though at the

time that the memory mark was made on his mind he was too young to pronounce the word describing the thing that made the impression. But further evidence of the child's memory was forthcoming, for as soon as he was set down on arrival at the front door of the house he ran straight to A. B. with every mark of affectionate joy at seeing him again.

Here is an instance of infant memory that is absolutely true, and, as the boy was in no way precocious or unnatural, it is fair to assume that there must be plenty of cases where the impressions made upon an infant's mind during the period when its age is marked by months and not by years are of a far more permanent nature than is generally assumed.

Memory at a Later Age.

But for most illustrations of children's memory we are compelled to begin at a later age. Few people remember much that happened before they were three years

old, but from about that time it is common to find a remarkably clear recollection of certain scattered events or experiences.

It is a usual thing to hear it said by those who have passed middle age, that their remembrance of their childhood grows clearer as time goes on. This is accounted for by the fact that *fewer* impressions were made upon their minds during their earliest years, whereas in later life the memory tablets get crowded with all sorts and kinds of markings which become confused and partially unintelligible in a very short time.

Besides being fewer in number it is also probable that in early childhood the memory markings that endure are those of such experiences as caused strong emotions of surprise, pleasure, or pain. One of the very earliest recollections of the writer

Emotions of Surprise, Pleasure, or Pain.

is of attending a wedding when he was three years old. But none of the usual incidents impressed him at all. The dresses of the bridesmaids, the appearance of the bride, the bouquets, bells and other accompaniments of a wedding have been completely forgotten. No remembrance of any single person or circumstance remains excepting two things which struck him with astonishment. First of all, he, in common with others attending the service, was taken across a wide river in a boat, and, secondly, he was put to stand close against the back of a harmonium, the noise of which at such close quarters was to him extraordinary and rather disagreeable.

Joys Better Remembered than Griefs.

The complete obliteration of everything connected with this visit —for the ceremony took place a day's journey from his home—seems to point clearly to the fact that the unusual is not

by itself enough to permanently impress a child's mind, but it must be coupled with sensations of peculiar surprise, or special pleasure or pain. With regard to the two latter it is a beneficent provision that the joys of early life are remembered long after its sadnesses have been forgotten.

Summer Days at a Country Rectory.

A man looks back on the summers he spent as a child in a country rectory. It appears to him that the days were ever sunny: he recalls the sharp hiss of the whetstone on the scythe, which told him as he lay in his little bed that the parson's man was mowing the lawn before the dew was off the grass; he can remember the wild strawberries in the less conventional part of the garden; he can in fancy take his way to the cow-house, mug in hand, to get a drink of new and frothy milk; he can climb about the lower branches of a favourite tree; he

can rake and water his little square of garden; he can come home atop of the last load of hay from the glebe fields; but it is always in the dancing sunlight that he moves; it would seem to him that there could never have been any single day in all his childhood when rain came down and skies were grey and cold.

The Old Nursery.

And so, too, of the life indoors. He remembers much of this in comparison with the later years. He remembers exactly where each piece of furniture stood in the old nursery. He can tell you with what colour the ottoman was covered in which his brothers' and sisters' outdoor things were kept, and he vividly remembers standing upon it to look out of the window and watch the gardener at work. He can recall exactly how much of the spout was broken belonging to the old grey teapot in which was brewed the senna tea, but he cannot tell you what

the stuff tasted of—though he is sure that it was nasty. The nursery, the stairs, and the passages are in his memory so many playgrounds; he forgets the many childish tears that he shed, and the childish tragedies that befell him, while the games and the laughter and the pleasantness of his early surroundings are easily recalled.

But if he examines carefully into his early impressions he will find that the events which older persons might be expected to remember are forgotten, while the little matters that brought to his babyhood's experience sensations of pain or pleasure—but especially the latter—are clear. That is to say, the memory markings made in early childhood do not include the greater number of things which came in contact with the various senses of the child, but are really few in number and connected invariably with special sensations.

It is a vast mistake to measure the

importance of a child's interests by those of a grown-up person. It is easy for the latter to forget every detail of a house in which he has passed some months or even years of middle age, but he will remember a shallow step leading down from one of his nurseries to the other.

How small a thing! Yes, but it was productive of great sensations. It was the first step he had ever known—by it was revealed to him the entirely new idea that one room could be on a different level from another. Then he found that it was a splendid place to sit upon—just the right height for him—and a still better place upon which to set up bricks and toys in order to knock them down and hear the crash of their fall. But, best of all, it was the place where his first deed of daring was performed. There came a day when he ventured to jump down! It was the first time that he had really cared for spectators: it was the first time

that he had looked round for applause. For all these reasons—all connected with new sensations of pleasure—that little shallow wooden step made a deeper memory mark upon his mind than many subsequent places or events that have perhaps helped to turn the current of his life. But, after all is said, it is impossible not to feel that the unknown is so largely in excess of the known, in this as in many other subjects, that the only thing to be done is to try to induce those who have to do with little children to remember that much is possible and even probable—to act, that is, as if the youngest child may possibly remember for its good or ill any smallest fact or object with which its senses are brought into contact.

CHAPTER III

THE CHILD—ITS IMAGINATION

THE imagination of the poet, of the novelist, of the advertiser of a patent medicine, is as nothing compared with that of a little child. No one who is unable to realise this will understand children or be really successful in their upbringing.

The Riotous Imagination of Children.

Whence come all the marvellous ideas that people the brain of a mere baby of two or three years? Is it that it has descended but a step or two down the staircase and still has a mind to some extent untrammelled by human limitations and the hard dry facts of earth? Or is it that, possessed of a keenly receptive power, it has not learnt to control or arrange the multitudes of

facts that present themselves daily to its senses? This wonderful imagination is no doubt closely allied with the early powers of memory of which mention has been made, and may also have something at least to do with the early propensity to untruthfulness. Many a child has suffered at the hands of an unimaginative parent for words which have been ruthlessly called lies though they have been so strongly prompted by a vivid imagination that they have seemed as true to the utterer as much that is unintelligible but has to be accepted.

Unimaginative Parents.

A moment's thought will show at what an early age imagination came into play with most people. By far the greater number have by its aid clothed certain abstract ideas in definite concrete forms, and have done this when so young that it is impossible for them to

Arrangement of the Numerals.

remember the time when these things first took shape. For instance, most people have a definite arrangement of the numerals. A common form for this to take is that of the numbers one to twelve appearing to run slightly upwards and towards the right, those from twelve to twenty taking a downward turn in the same direction. At the number twenty a sharp turn is taken to the left, and from that point to one hundred they run uphill with an increasing steepness. Many other directions and shapes are discovered by questioning people on this subject, but it is very rare to find an example of the numerals being nothing but an abstract idea. The same thing occurs with the months. To most people they appear in a circle, winter being in some cases at the top, and summer in others. In one case a person imagines them in a semi-circle, and in another (the strangest yet

The Circle of the Months.

met with) they are in a zig-zag, three months running up, and three down, and so on, the form being like that of a rather straggling M.

Colour also is occasionally imagined, and there is no doubt that children are specially susceptible to its influence at a very early age.

Effects of Colour.

A writer in the eighteenth century to whom allusion has been made in Chapter I makes the following observation: "There are some children so tenderly organised that many kinds of sounds are harsh to their Infant Ears and apt to fright them, and some colours strike them with too great and quick a Glare and have the same Effect till by Custom they are made familiar to their Organs."

It is certain at all events that colour has played an important part in the imagination of many people from their earliest years. A lady declares that all her

Colour of the Days.

life long the days of the week have appeared to her to be of certain definite colours. Thus, Sunday is brick red, Monday the same, Tuesday lilac, Wednesday white, Thursday dark brown, Friday grey, and Saturday mauve and yellow. All this imagining took place so near the start of her life that the colour, form, etc., of the days appear to this lady to be facts dating from the beginning of time itself. It should be noted that in these and all similar instances the imagination is apparently independent of outside influences such as pictures or descriptions which might be supposed to have affected a little child.

The Imaginary Child-Friend.

It is possible to go further than this and to say that the most vivid imaginings are as a rule those which a child produces absolutely and apart from the suggestion of others. Under this head comes the imaginary child-friend called into

existence in most cases by one who has no playmate of similar age. The grown-up people in the house know nothing of this imaginary friend until the real child is overheard talking to it and calling it by name. It is remarkable to notice how nothing seems to disturb the commonplace reality of the whole thing in the mind of the child. When the imaginary friend is in the room his or her presence is never for a moment forgotten, and plans are gravely made to suit the convenience not of one only but of *both* the children.

Next in importance to the unsuggested imaginings are those to which a sensitive child gives way on the slightest hint. This is a very practical matter, and one to which those who have to do with children should take heed.

It is impossible to say at how early an age a suggestion of any kind may bear fruit. A lady once said that her childhood was one long misery owing to a vivid

imagination of the terrors that awaited her for having committed a certain fault when a baby in the nursery. It was not, she said, that much had been made of it at the time, but there was some suggestion of an awful unknown punishment, which her childish brain worked upon and developed until she dared not be left alone and became a thoroughly morbid and wretched little being.

Imaginary Terrors.

It is obvious that too great care cannot possibly be taken by those to whom children are entrusted, inasmuch as a chance word may set a child's imagination working and affect the tendency of its thoughts and actions for years.

It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter that there is probably some relation between this power of imagination and the tendency to untruthfulness which is found in so many children. It is one of the most difficult things

possible to define exactly where the knowledge of untruthfulness comes in. Probably no two children are alike in this, and it requires the utmost tact and a close knowledge of a particular child's character to determine the point where the one thing ends and the other begins.

Untruthfulness and Imagination.

Here is an example. A short time ago a little boy still in the nursery was taken out by his father in the carriage for a drive. When they arrived at the farther end of the town the little chap was sent home in the carriage by himself, his father having been deposited at his place of business. When the carriage arrived back at the door of the house the parlourmaid came out and carried the child indoors, being surprised to find him in tears. Struggling out of her arms he set off upstairs to the nursery, sobbing bitterly all the way. "What is the matter,

dear ? " said the nurse. " I'se had to walk by mine own self all froo the town, and I was dreffly frightened," was the reply. " How ever did you get across the High Street, my poor darling ? " " There was lots of cabs and cawwiages and things, and I knewed I would be runned over ! " All this with many sobs and much burying of his head in nurse's lap. Hearing the wailing in the nursery up came the parlourmaid, to whom the nurse poured out her indignation. " Just fancy ! Making this poor lamb walk home all through the town by himself ! It's a mercy he was not killed again and again ! " " Walk through the town ! Why, whatever do you mean ? Why, I lifted him out of the carriage at this very door not ten minutes ago ! "

Well, the temptation to punish the little fellow must have been great. One hopes it was resisted. There can be small doubt that a vivid imagination had

mastered him as he drove home alone. It was all "what might have been," and it became so real to him that it seemed to be "what was."

Again, a case recurs to the recollection of the writer where a small child was summoned into the presence of an angry parent who listened to no excuses, but insisted so strongly and so often on the guilt of the small boy, that at last he actually seemed convinced by the reiterated accusation and, imagining that his parent must know best, actually confessed to a sin which subsequent events proved the impossibility of his having committed.

Confession of an Imaginary Sin.

Now for an example where it is probable that the imagination of the child is used for ulterior purposes and the borderland between fancy and untruthfulness is likely to be crossed.

There is a little girl who a few years

ago was possessed of many dolls, but the supreme favourite was an old monkey-doll by name "Jinks." He was so much hugged and cuddled from the first that he soon became shabby. He quickly lost all his hair except a tuft on each side of his face, and his clothes were reduced to a pair of dark blue trousers and a sort of shabby white jersey. But the shabbier he became the more she loved him, and in time, being an ingenious little person, she began to make use of him, as is often the case among grown-up people. The first instance on record is of the simplest kind, but showed much insight into human nature. The little girl had been disobedient and was being duly lectured on her fault. She stood there looking very serious with "Jinks" tightly clasped in her arms. All of a sudden the length of the lecture became more than she could bear. Something must be done.

Jinks.

Suddenly she held up the ugly old doll and with a pleasant smile upon her face remarked, "Look at Jinks! 'ow 'e's laughing!" It was an ingenious and effective ruse, but a ruse it was and not mere play of imagination.

On another more recent occasion she made use of "Jinks" in a rather more elaborate fashion. Her everyday gloves were knitted woollen ones and these she disliked intensely. One day she was seen starting out in a pair which were properly kept for Sundays. She was stopped and asked why she had put on her best gloves. "Why," she answered at once, "You see when I was getting ready I thought p'raps I should meet Jinks on the stairs—and he can't *bear* to see me in those woolly gloves!"

Most people who have little children among their friends can remember similar instances, and these are just the cases where firm but sympathetic interference

is necessary to prevent confusion between imagination and want of truth.

Possessed as they are of such great powers of imagination in many directions it is curious to notice how often children seem unable to realise or picture to themselves matters with which they will be familiar enough in after life. Take, for instance, the subject of death. A child will imagine the death of a doll. This is a fancy that occurs rarely, and the imagination goes as a rule no further. A child does not picture to itself the sorrow and loss commonly caused by the death of a real person. A little girl of three years old was sitting on her godfather's knee. There was an immense affection between the two, and either would have missed the other sadly. An old man in the village known by sight to the little girl had lately died, and she had just remarked to her godfather quite as a bit of cheerful gossip,

The Idea of Death.

"Old John is dead." The conversation then turned upon a certain gold watch which the little maiden desired more than anything in the world. Once more she was told, "No, I really can't give it to you; I want it so badly myself." Then followed these apparently callous words.

Desire for a Legacy.

"Your hair is *rather* white like old John's. I s'pect you will be dead soon. Then can I have the watch?"

At first sight this sounds heartless and calculating, but as a matter of fact it was certainly not the former. The subject of death was too big for her imagination, that was all.

In this same connection it is found that pain as affecting others is often very slightly realised by children,

Small Imagination of Suffering.

and they seem to be unable to imagine suffering such as has not come within their own experience. It is for this reason that little

children often inflict tortures on animals, especially on flies and other small creatures which are at their mercy. It is not from a love of cruelty as some people have said, but simply because their imagination falls short in this direction, and they do not realise the effects of their actions.

But, with certain exceptions, a child has invariably an immense capability for imagining. As has been stated, the most vivid fancies seem to spring up unbidden, but it is equally true that it is possible in a large degree to influence the *kind* of imagination. Happiness is an essential atmosphere for the upbringing of a child, and happiness is to a large extent dependent in childhood upon imagination. By supplying this atmosphere the best kind of imaginings can be ensured.

A child whose parents are occupied entirely with themselves and their own affairs and have no sympathy with childish fancies will shrink up into itself

and have a stunted mental and spiritual growth: the terrified child will grow up amid horrible imaginings; it is only the child to whom gentleness and sympathy are as the very air it breathes who will imagine happy and beautiful things, and live to enjoy the fulfilment of them here and hereafter.

Parental Sympathy.

This leads naturally to the poetic imaginings of many children who have outgrown their babyhood, but have not yet had their fancies blurred and obscured by the tasks and troubles of the world. They possess a gift which all may envy—the gift of endowing all manner of things, both those which are beautiful in themselves and those which are not, with a glory not their own. This gift comes from the power of connecting one thought with another, or perhaps of allowing one idea unconsciously to suggest another,

Poetic Imaginings.

which is the root of all imagination. It is a gift that has brought sunshine and happiness to thousands of children, and is preserved by some in after life. All our great poets and painters have kept hold of this power, and many persons share vicariously in its delights as they read the glorious thoughts or gaze on the exquisite pictures that have been thus inspired.

And yet there are some who scoff. They have forgotten their childhood's gift, and are too self-satisfied to regret it. Not so the old poet Wordsworth. He felt the power leaving him. The brightness of his poetic imagination was on the wane, and he thus lamented it :—

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
The earth and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore ;
Turn wheresoe'er I may
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

There are many people who have never troubled to understand children and who are mightily sceptical as to the powers and the charm that is claimed for them. It is hardly possible to do better here than to ask such persons to read the example given below of a child's poetical imaginings.

The story is told in the first person, and is in the main literally true. It is called

"I WONDERS"

"It was a lovely September day. I had any number of duties to fulfil at home. There was a pile of letters waiting to be answered, there was a magazine article hardly begun for which I had received an urgent demand from the publishers only that morning, and there was a meeting of school managers which my conscience told me I ought on no account to miss. But, as I said before, it was a simply lovely day and nature (human

"I Wonders"

and the other) cried shame on staying indoors. Whether I should have had sufficient strength of mind to have resisted the temptation had I been left to fight it out with nature I shall never know, for the enemy received a sudden reinforcement before which I yielded ignominiously and at once. I had gone so far as to clear my blotting-pad of loose letters and to open my ink bottle when there came a tiny tap at the study door. 'Come in!' I called, and there ensued a curious twisting at the handle of the door, productive of no result. 'Come in!' I called again, and this time there was no further delay.

"With a little burst the door flew open and revealed that my visitor was no less and no greater a person than Helen.

"Now Helen needs some description, and no better time for giving it could be found than as she stood there at the top

of the three or four steps which lead up to my sanctum, her face flushed with her struggle with the door handle.

Helen.

"Helen was a town-bred child of five years old, and the colour gave her usually pale face an added charm. Charm is the right word to use, for, though she did not possess any very great beauty (excepting her large dark eyes and lashes), it was impossible not to fall under her charm. She fascinated by her various moods, often serious almost to melancholy, but suddenly bursting out into utter and abandoned joyousness. She fascinated again by her vivid imagination, by the sensitiveness with which she shrank from an unresponsive look or word, and by the gradual unfolding of her nature to anyone who *understood*. She had come to stay with us in our completely country house, and was entranced with the mystery and delight of all she saw.

"On that particular morning she had come to demand that I should fulfil a promise to go out and pick blackberries, for had not I said that I had passed quantities of big ones, all ripe and ready, only the day before? There she stood in her white sun bonnet and her short red flannel jacket, beneath which came the bottom of her white frock and a little pair of legs which country sun and air were already beginning to assimilate to those of our village bairns in colour though not in thickness.

"'Well?' I said, to which her only reply was to hold up and shake at me an empty basket with which she had provided herself. 'What's that for?' said I. 'I wonders!' she answered, using an expression with which we had already become familiar. 'Well,' I said, 'you had better tell me.' 'Can't you guess?'—with some scorn—and then triumphantly, 'Backberwies, o' course!'

"There was very little more to be said. Nature might have been resisted alone, but nature *and* Helen would have proved too much for a stronger and more reluctant man than I. And so it was arranged. Helen was to meet me in the hall in a quarter of an hour, which would give me time to scribble a couple of notes, one (by the way) to the publishers to say that great pressure prevented my finishing he article that day, which was true—in a sense!

"I have been many walks with many people, but none that I can compare with the one upon which Helen and I started that sunny September morning. I have walked as an undergraduate with learned dons who discoursed of matters beyond my ken. I have walked with ladies of sentiment, who vainly appealed to my sympathy and imagination. But never till that morning did I walk with a companion who carried me with her into

another world and who obtained complete sway over my every thought and action. This did not begin all at once.

"There was a little bit of the village through which we must pass, and here there were sundry dangers. Old Sawyer's black and white sow had got loose and certainly looked formidably large and fierce as she shoved her snout with deep grunts into the ditch beside the road. Then a farmer's collie-dog—a particular friend of mine, but a stranger and therefore a possible foe to my companion—came prancing up. These and other sources of terror, such as the village flock of geese, made it essential that we should proceed with caution and with such strength as a union of hands might afford. However, it did not take long to bring us to the end of the cottages and out on to the road beside which I had seen the blackberries hanging all ready to be

Through the Village.

picked. It was a good wide road with a broad strip of grass on either side, along one of which was a row of telegraph posts which brought the single wire by which we were connected with the busy world. The hedges were high and bushy—full of honeysuckle, now out of bloom, wild roses by this time showing only their scarlet fruit, wild hops climbing everywhere with rapid eager growth, clematis giving promise of a hoary show of old man's beard, and in and out and over and through it all the long thorny brambles with their many-coloured leaves and their shiny black and red and green berries.

"With just one look round to assure herself that nobody and nothing was about, Helen let go my hand and rushed off like a mad thing along the grass, just recovering herself with a gasp from a bad stumble over a dried and hidden heap of road scrapings. All of a

The Backberwy People.

sudden she stopped. She had caught sight of the 'backberwies' and of the numberless other brilliant and tempting objects in the hedge. In a moment her imagination had caught fire. 'I wonders!' she said as I came up. Then, when her breath was quite recovered, she added very earnestly, 'Can us get them backberwy people? It's vewy dangewous, isn't it? Look at them nettles and fistles! Is them the backberwies' policemen—I wonders?'

"If they were, they proved very useful as far as warding off attacks on the part of a little bare-legged maiden went. However, by dint of *very* careful steering she managed to get close up to a splendid cluster of fruit and had picked some four or five when one of the sharp hooky thorns tore her finger and brought tears into her eyes. Even so, the play went on. 'Oh! the backberwies' dog has bit me!' she cried, as she held up the poor little

finger for me to see. It was really a nasty prick, and I could see that it hurt her a good deal, so I tied her handkerchief round it, and said we would try to find a place further on where the dogs were not so savage.

"We went on a yard or two and passed close to one of the telegraph posts through which a light breeze was humming. Helen stopped short with eyes dilated and open mouth. 'Oh! I *wonders!*' she cried. 'What is it?' I asked her. She whispered to me to keep quite still while she went to see, and proceeded to put her ear against the post, holding up one finger of the injured hand in warning to me not to stir. 'There's beautiful music,' she said at last very softly, 'there's a ball, and all the little backberwies is dancing!' I said that if the old blackberries let the young ones go to a ball without them it served them

The Backberwy Ball.

right if they got picked themselves. I then suggested that we should go on to the next post and see what was going on there. As we went Helen noticed that near each one there was a heap of stones and a bare gravelly patch of ground. 'Them is the backberwy houses,' she said, 'and all the backberwies are out, and the children are gone to a dancing class, so the old backberwies send them by their-selves.' So the little difficulty which I had mentioned was explained away, though to the vividness of her imagination it had evidently presented a real difficulty and had not been forgotten.

"Presently, after listening to the music in several telegraph posts, saying that there was an organ in one and fiddles in another, while in a third she declared that the blackberries were singing, she returned to the hedge and the more serious duty of filling her little basket. All the time, however, she kept up a

comment upon what she saw. The red hips and haws were 'the backberwies' soldiers,' the elderberries were their clergymen, and the sloes were guards. Every few minutes she stopped in a sort of ecstasy at all that was around her, and gazing in one direction and another would softly say, 'Oh! I wonders!' It was evidently a revelation of beauty to her, and at the same time a scene of mystery, a sort of fairyland where everything thought and lived and breathed.

"At last the basket was getting nearly full, and in stretching up for some specially fine berries a dog-rose thorn tore the back of my hand, leaving a long scratch. Helen's anger knew no bounds.

The Wicked Soldiers.

"'The wicked, wicked soldiers,' she said, and then taking several of the bright red hips she tore them into fragments and threw them away. And now we had wandered backwards and forwards along

that special bit of hedge until all the blackberries within reach were picked, and only the baby green ones were left. 'Will they die if we leaves them all alone?' she said, and then she gathered as many as possible, and carrying them in her two hands placed them in little heaps near each telegraph post that they might be noticed when the balls and concerts were over.

"I said that I wondered what the young blackberries would do when they came out and found all their fathers and mothers gone, and only the little babies left. And Helen said 'I wonders.'"

CHAPTER IV

THE CHILD—ITS RELIGION

PROBABLY one of the earliest perplexities that presents itself to a parent is the question of the child's religion. And yet it is doubtful whether in the generality of cases the matter is considered early enough. There are, evidently, three kinds of parents taking three separate views of the question. There are those who hold distinctly materialistic opinions, and who therefore deliberately decline to enter into the subject at all. They agree with the sentiments expressed in a French work on children published some quarter of a century ago in which the following passages occur: "We may boldly assert that the sense of religion exists no more in the intelligence of a little child than

Three Kinds of Parents.

A French Work on Children.

does the supernatural in nature." And again: "In our opinion parents are very much mistaken in thinking it their duty to instruct their little ones in such things, which have no real interest for them—as who made them, who created the world, what is the soul, what is its present and future destiny, and so forth."

It is a happiness to believe that few English parents endorse these views. The extraordinary stir made by an Education Bill, the chief concern of which was to affect the religious teaching of children, is evidence of a widespread belief in the necessity of such teaching.

Careless Parents.

But, in the second place, there are some parents who are simply careless. They would be rather shocked at being told that they themselves were irreligious, but, when they forget all about their children's religion, it cannot be supposed that their own is of much real concern to them.

Thirdly, there are the parents who desire beyond all things that their children shall lead religious lives, and are anxious to do their utmost to start the little feet on the right path. It is this class of parent who is often perplexed to know what is best. The difficulties are certainly great. Children differ so widely that what is good for one child may be harmful for another. But in almost all cases the tendency is to put off religious teaching too long. The mind of a very young child—one who would be commonly described as a baby—has been proved again and again to be remarkably receptive of evil as well as of good influences and impressions, and the earlier a baby's mind can be filled with the very simplest religious truths the less room there will be for evil, and the greater the likelihood of

Anxious Parents.

Early Impressions of Good and Evil.

a firm belief in truths that have been absorbed almost with the mother's milk.

This leads to the question of how far a very young child has any direct personal religion; any feeling, that is, of a direct communication even of the most elementary kind between itself and its GOD without the intervention of any human being.

It would probably be true to say that *at first* this is impossible, but that at a very early age the sense can be imparted. To quote the words of a mother who has brought up a number of children in the fear and love of GOD, personal religion in children "of course begins by being mixed up with *Mother*, who, if she is a real mother, is to her babies the representative of warmth, comfort, love, and everything that they want." When, in addition to this a child has depended for months upon its

A Child's Direct Personal Religion.

mother for food, and has constantly slept in her arms, the influence of that mother is so great that her religion naturally becomes the religion of the child, who accepts every word she says absolutely. Thus, the "GOD bless you" and the words of loving prayer which come so often and so naturally to a mother's lips are absorbed by the child until its faith in some unconscious way grows into its life and becomes a real thing between itself and its GOD.

Religion through the Mother.

Thus, it will be seen that there is a certain truth underlying a statement made by the French author quoted above when he says: "Children's reverence and love attaches itself to the human beings who are kind to them, but to nothing which is invisible or distinct from their species. Their instinct of finality is wholly objective and utilitarian." It is

true that in the first instance a baby's reverence and love attaches itself to the mother, but to assert that afterwards it rejects anything invisible or apart from its own species is to deny the influence of a religious feeling flowing through the mother to the child, and to limit the power of the Spirit of GOD who can surely dwell in the heart of a very little child.

An example of the way in which children of very tender years can and often do grasp the great truths of the religion which they inherit from their parents has lately been told to the writer by the mother of the child in question.

Where She was Heavened.

She was a little girl of three and a half years old, and was taken one day by her father into the church in which she had been baptized. Pointing to the font, he said, "Do you know what happened to you there?" For a moment the child looked perplexed, and nestling up to her father

said, "*You* tell me, daddy." "No," he replied, "I want you to tell me." There was another moment's hesitation, and then she looked up at him and very solemnly said, "I was *heavened* there!"

Probably no answer that she could have made would have been so comprehensive and so convincing of the real grasp of the truth as this word her baby intelligence had coined.

Examples can easily be found to show at how early an age a child may be influenced for good or evil. "I have seen," says a parent, "a baby trained to habits of cleanliness in six weeks of life," and it is doubtless true that the difference between good and evil first of all means to a child what is allowed or what is forbidden. But together with this it must always be remembered that there is the sense of safety and of love which, originally connected with "Mother," is (in the case of a religious parent) speedily

carried onwards and upwards to the love and care of GOD.

In this connection a passage in Olive Schreiner's "Story of an African Farm" can hardly be omitted. It runs thus: "The souls of little children are marvellously delicate and tender things, and keep for ever the shadow that first falls on them, and that is the mother's, or, at best, a woman's. There never was a great man who had not a great mother: it is hardly an exaggeration. The first six years of our life make us: all that is added later is veneer. And yet some say, if a woman can cook a dinner or dress herself well, she has culture enough."

Olive Schreiner.

All that has been so far written in this chapter on Children's Religion is of necessity vague and rather difficult. To arrive at *facts* is almost impossible. The best that can be done is to speak of probabilities in the light of that faith

which has been handed down. The religion of children of less tender years presents fewer difficulties, and to the consideration of this it is proposed now to turn.

But while the difficulties are fewer, they do not altogether disappear. It is often, for instance, extraordinarily difficult to determine in the case of a child of six or seven years how far his or her religion has even at that age become directly personal, or whether GOD is not often a Being to whom access is only possible through someone else.

The evidence obtainable on this point is most contradictory. A mother writes,

Religion of Rather Older Children.

"Children's faith soon becomes a real thing between them and their GOD. My little boy of five is perfectly delightful in the fulness of his faith. Only to-night when I had gone up, as I always do, to tell him a Bible story or sing

some hymns before he went off to sleep, he suddenly said, 'Mother, don't you wish Jesus was on earth now?' When I said, 'Why do you wish it?' he answered without the least hesitation, 'Because I should go to Him and ask Him to make me good for always.' And then, a little time afterwards, he suddenly started up, when I thought he was asleep, and said, 'Oh! mother, wouldn't it be *dreadful* if we had not got a GOD!'"

A Child's Faith.

Another mother tells of a little daughter who has been "a doubting Thomas from her babyhood." To her the personality of GOD was very real, but she refused to accept anything at first through the medium of another—even of her mother. A good many of her quaint sayings have been preserved—and her mother still remembers how disconcerting these often were in the course of a Bible lesson. She

A Doubting Thomas.

would suddenly break in with "*Why* was GOD so cruel? I hate Him. Can't you explain? I don't think much of Him if He doesn't let fathers and mothers know everything!" At the same time she was seldom willing to accept much on anyone's judgment but her own. A little brother shared her lessons, and often sighed with impatience at her interruptions. "Oh, R——," he would say, "I do wish you could get some trust!" When learning the Catechism this little girl refused to say, "Yes, verily, so I will." "No," she said, "I shan't say that. I haven't made up my mind whether I want to be good or not, and I *certainly* shan't say that." So for about six months that question was never put to her, and at last one day she remarked, "I could say that now if you like!"

In both these instances there can be little doubt that no one came in any way between the child and the Creator, but,

on the other hand, a good many parents consider that there is for some years a difficulty in the minds of children as to the intervention of human beings between them and GOD, arising either from their habit of connecting their prayers and religious experiences mainly with their mother or nurse, or from a curious inability to realise the supremacy of the Almighty. An example of this latter difficulty may be given in the words of a little child in Yorkshire who was overheard to say to a companion, "Don't do that or perhaps GOD will see you, and He'll tell the Vicar."

Relative Importance of Authorities.

Much has been written by others about children's prayers, but it is impossible to ignore what is to them the most real and important part of their religion. A lady living in Cheltenham says: "I think that children get a belief in prayer very early.

Children's Prayers.

My youngest girl the other day looked tired, so I said that she had better not come to the evening service. 'Oh, but I must,' she said, 'I want to pray for Miss Beale.'" This was at the beginning of that well-known lady's fatal illness.

Another example of belief in prayer on the part of a child was brought to the notice of the present writer by a sister of the boy of whom the story is told. When a very little chap his brothers and sisters were all invited to a children's party at a neighbouring house, but he had not been included. Much to his grief it was decided that he had better be put to bed when the others started for the party. When saying his prayers he earnestly asked that even yet he might go to the party. He had hardly been tucked up in bed before a messenger came to say that the omission of his name had been an accident and that it was hoped

Implicit Faith in Prayer.

he might still come. He was hurriedly dressed, and in a few minutes had joined the others in their festivity. The impression made upon the boy's mind was never erased. From that day forward he never failed to pray about every smallest event. If he went to a shop to buy a knife he would pray to be guided in his choice. If he went out to dinner he would silently pray as he took off his coat in the hall that the evening might be enjoyable. Nothing ever again shook him in his belief in the power of prayer.

Children's Quaint Petitions.

Some of the original petitions in children's prayers are often exceedingly quaint, but they go to prove their belief in their words being heard, and it would be cruel to laugh at them or snub the expression of their desires. Some friends of the writer when they were little used to be very fond of interpolating their special wishes into their prayers. One

of them when a tiny girl kneeling at her mother's side after praying for her father and mother and brothers and sisters, said, "And please GOD make mother less strict."

Another child in the same family had been shown a coloured picture of Noah's sacrifice and the rainbow, which impressed her so much that she added to her evening prayers, "And oh! GOD, please show me a rainbow very soon!"

From the same source comes a charming story of a small boy who had taken a dislike to a cousin of his own age called Malcolm. It so happened that each of them had a baby brother, and the little boy in question broke off in the middle of his prayers one evening to ejaculate, "Please GOD make me and my baby brother stronger and stronger, and Malcolm and his little brother weaker and weaker, so that when we fight we may conquer!"

The next point to be noticed in dealing with the religion of children is the vexed question as to the wisdom of enforcing attendance at public worship. There can be no doubt at all that, if overdone, compulsory churchgoing may lead to disastrous results. A man to whom frequent attendance at services has all his life been irksome, looks back to his childhood when he was expected to be present at Sunday services, week-day services, Sunday School, choir practices, missionary and other meetings, until he became weary of the very name of such things. Rather nervous of blame, he never ventured to express a wish to absent himself, and to those early days and their discipline he ascribes his present reluctance.

Children's Churchgoing.

Danger of Too Much.

On the other hand, it is no doubt true that it is dangerous to use no compulsion,

and to allow the formation of a habit of staying away from church on the smallest excuse. The real difficulty is to steer a course between making Sunday the dull, cold, miserable day that it too frequently became in the earlier part of the last century and allowing it to be as secular as it so often is at present.

Danger of Too Little.

A lady who has been specially successful in bringing up her children to love Sunday and its observances, says, "I make a point of extra nice clothes and nice food on Sundays (it sounds horribly material !) but I want to make *everything* connected with goodness and religion attractive, and, however much we may wish they were not so, our souls and bodies affect each other in an extraordinary way. My youngest child of five and a half, having begun Churchgoing regularly six months ago, begs to stay on through the whole service, only saying

at the end, 'What a lot of kneeling! But I like it; can I stay again?' Of course, there were two reasons for his wish: his love of being near me, and the music which he also loves."

Another instance may be quoted here, taken, as was the last, from the family of lay people. Here again everything was done to make Sundays bright and happy and to bring up the children to consider Churchgoing a treat. So fond did they become of the services that the two youngest—a girl of seven and a boy of five—were accustomed to hold a special service of their own when with their mother in the drawing-room after tea on Sundays. Their mother describes these functions as follows, and, though they may seem to some people to have a spice of "play acting," yet the children were extremely in earnest in all they did. Here is her account: "They

A Service Held by Children.

used to put on pinafores, the opening to come in front, and wore sashes for stoles. My duty was to sit at the piano as organist. I had to play a voluntary as they came in. They chose the hymns, and each chose a chapter in the Bible to read. They stood on a chair to read their chapters. One day I remember that the little boy, who could not yet read very fluently, chose the one in St. Luke with seventy-two verses and went straight on with it to the end! They took it in turns to preach, again standing on the chair. The elder child always wrote her sermon, but the little boy's was extempore. After the sermon the missionary box was handed round and we each put something in. The service ended by their kneeling down side by side and singing 'Jesu, tender Shepherd, hear me.' One evening the younger child stood up on his chair to preach, and began to get redder and redder and looked very

much worried, but I did not dare to move from my seat as organist. At last his sister whispered, 'What's the matter, darling?' on which he said, 'Every word of the sermon has gone out of my head.' So she promptly stood on her chair and said, 'The congregation will excuse the sermon this evening. Hymn No. 348.' I have come across one of the little girl's written sermons, and give it here :—

A Child's Sermon.

"'LITTLE CHILDREN LOVE ONE ANOTHER.'

"'You love your brother and sister very much indeed though you do fight with them. Yes, that noutty, noutty Sayten gets inside us, and then we can't fight without Jesus' help. Yes, if we ask Him to help us I know He will. He is so kind. He will do almost anything you ask Him to do for you, if it is not wrong. Yes, we all go wrong sometimes and feel very cross with ourselfs.

Little children sometimes think that all big people are very good indeed, but they all go wrong, too, as well as you or I might, but GOD knows all our ways and what we do and sees and hears what we say. Oh! then, little children, love one another, and so we must love Him.'"

Simplicity in Speaking to Children.

As to the number and kind of services to which children should be taken it is impossible to lay down a general rule. Where "Children's Services" are held by a man who has the gift of attracting and interesting children, the difficulty is partially solved. But these are not much use when they are conducted by persons who cannot sufficiently simplify their language, or by those who are so far out of sympathy with their audience as to appear to be condescending or in the smallest degree pompous—characteristics which are readily observed and resented by all children.

But probably many people will agree that "Children's Services" alone cannot supply all that is required, in so far as they do not accustom children to the ordinary Church services, as to which it is not too much to say that a certain amount of familiarity breeds affection rather than contempt.

Differences in Children's Temperament.

But in considering the advisability of taking little children to Church, due regard must be had to the individual child. As has been said, it is absolutely impossible to lay down a general rule. Even the members of the same family are frequently so different in disposition as to make it unwise to treat them all alike. Some may be so sensitive to the awe-inspiring atmosphere of religious services as to cause a fear lest their mind should become morbid on the subject. Very probably such children would express a strong wish to attend on

every possible occasion, but their pleasure is akin to that which is sometimes felt by people of unhealthy mind who delight in torturing themselves by picturing nameless horrors. Other children, and these are the most frequently found, look upon Churchgoing as an entertainment enjoyed by grown-up people and therefore much to be desired, though they themselves soon grow weary of the whole thing.

Two Children at Church.

An example of what is meant came to the notice of the writer a short time ago when staying in the same house with two little children, a brother and sister, who were taken to an afternoon service for almost the first time in their lives. The boy, a year or two the elder, was a rather nervous, highly-strung little chap, and he spent nearly the whole time in saying in a very low voice, "O GOD, help me! I *will* be good!" He seemed unable to

think of anything but the fact that he was in GOD'S house, and unable to get relief from the overpowering sensation of awe. His little sister, on the other hand—a fat, merry, matter-of-fact child—evidently considered the whole thing to be a kind of social function interfered with by most unnecessary restrictions. She turned herself about from side to side and nodded and smiled at her numerous acquaintances, paying especial attention to the seats occupied by the servants from the house where she was staying. After a time she yawned audibly and gave obvious signs of getting bored, finally nestling against her mother's side and falling sound asleep. It is obvious to everyone that two children such as these would need very different treatment in the matter of Churchgoing and religious education generally.

Such a child as the little girl described above may be said to possess the normal

feelings of her age. Most very young children are entirely unable to grasp the greatness of GOD and the seriousness of religion. If they appear to older people to be irreverent, it must not be counted to them for a sin. It is simply caused by the limitations of their understanding. Thus, a small child was heard to call out during the baptism of a baby, "Why *doesn't* he use a sponge?" No irreverence was meant, but the remark showed that the child's mind was further developed in practical than in spiritual matters. So, again, the absurd questions so often put by little children when told that GOD is everywhere. It is very common for them at once to suggest all kinds of ridiculous places without meaning in any way to be irreverent.

Children's Unintentional Irreverence.

Such things of course add to the difficulties of teaching religion to those who are very young, but it is certain

that great patience and tenderness is necessary for those who attempt the task. Forgetfulness of the point of view of the child often leads to expressions of horror and even of anger at apparently profane remarks, but such expressions are unjust and may not seldom give the child a permanent dislike to what ought to be the happiest of all its lessons.

Great Patience Necessary.

One other caution may be given here. It is a fatal mistake for those who are bringing up little children to speak in their presence of religious matters in a way which they do not desire the children to absorb and do not fancy that they understand. A child may be building a house of bricks in a far corner of the room and yet be listening with all its ears to the talk going on between its elders. A very little boy was once taken

Little Children have Long Ears.

to Church when a sermon was preached about the Will of GOD. No one thought it possible that he understood a word of it, but at tea that afternoon he was, being slightly out of sorts, allowed no jam, on which he promptly said, "Well, if it's GOD's Will that I should have nothing but bread and butter, it's no good fighting against it!"—a practical and excellent comment upon the morning's sermon.

Lest anything that has been written in this chapter should seem to be discouraging as to the religious training of children, two things may be set down here as full of hope.

The first may be disposed of in a few words. There is little doubt that women are naturally more religious than men, or at least that they more easily give expression to their feelings and beliefs. What a great matter it is, then, that the

Influence of Women.

earliest training of children is in the hands of women! It is quite possible that the reason for the greater religious expression on the part of women lies to some extent in the fact that girls remain so much longer under the direct influence of their mother. But that is by the way; what is important is that there are multitudes of truly religious women who may best of all be trusted to impart their own faith to little children.

Children's Delight in the Unseen.

The other matter for hopefulness lies in the fact that the very things that often present difficulties to grown-up people are specially attractive to children. Anything connected with the unseen world, anything quite impossible according to the laws of nature as we know them, interests and takes hold of children at once. This is plain from the often-repeated request, "Do tell us a fairy story."

When to this is added the impression made on a child's mind by the vision of a gorgeous sunset, or of a great wide-spreading view, there seems to be a good deal upon which it is possible to work. A man friend of the writer has told him that his first real impressions of the greatness and goodness of GOD came to him as a child when contemplating beautiful scenery; and an aunt of the late Bishop Walsham How used to say that when he was a very little boy, and was looking from a window at the sunset, he was heard to say, "Oh! GOD!"

Impression made by Beauties of Nature.

How easy it would be to kill these beginnings of faith! How easy for a teacher who had studied the Higher Criticism to wither the growth of a belief in the unseen and incomprehensible! Is it worth while to risk this by scrupulously

The Higher Criticism.

teaching that Elijah's chariot of fire and Jonah's whale had better be taken as allegories? A teacher with great experience of little children has said, and said most truly, "Religion attracts greatly because of the mystery which surrounds the unseen. Besides this, the beauty and the wonderful fitness of all things in nature strengthen more than anything a child's belief in a Divine Creator."

Perhaps, as one last word, it may be said that that mother will succeed best in the religious training of her children who feels that it is the chief and highest work she has to do.

CHAPTER V

THE CHILD—ITS IMITATION

No one who has to do with children can fail to be struck by their almost universal habit of imitation. This begins at a very early age, and, while some imitative expressions and gestures are partly the result of heredity, others are obviously copied from the persons with whom the child is most familiar. This makes it, of course, extremely important that the servants and even the friends who are brought most closely into contact with a child should be selected with the greatest care.

Selection of those about the Path of a Child.

How often a bad accent or "twang" is picked up as soon as a child begins to speak, and with what difficulty it is eradicated afterwards! The habit, too,

which obtains with some parents (who do not want to be bothered with their children) of letting them have their meals with the servants is greatly to be deprecated. It saves the trouble of a special nursery dinner, and it often happens that the servants in a house are fonder of the company of the children than are their parents, but for all that the tendency to imitate is so strong that habits are pretty sure to be learnt which it will be very troublesome to get rid of afterwards. Here is an example :

Meals in the Servants' Hall.

A little girl, whom circumstances had relegated to the entire charge of servants, was taken out to a children's tea-party, when she was scarcely four years old. It was a splendid tea, and she was a fine healthy little girl with an equally fine healthy appetite. Bread and butter, cake, jam sandwiches, and buns all disappeared with equal ease, and there

came a time when the rest had finished and she had just one mouthful left. . . . There was a slight pause in the general chatter, and at that unlucky moment the little girl in question gave an unmistakable hiccough. Many of the children there would have blushed with distress at such an incident, but this little maiden, accustomed to the manners of the servants' hall, looked round with an ingratiating smile and merely remarked —"Copplyments!"

Swear Words.

Everyone has heard of children who have occasionally used "swear words" in imitation of their elders, and some may possibly have heard the true story of a little girl who was given a cup of tea to hand to a visitor. As she crossed the short space with careful footsteps and eyes fixed anxiously on her burden she was heard to mutter to herself "By George, baby, you must be 'teady!"

Examples such as these show the readiness with which children pick up the phraseology of their seniors, and it is a mistake to suppose that, because a child does not exactly understand what is said, therefore no impression is made upon its mind.

Desire to be Like Father.

The greater the admiration of a child for an older person the greater the desire to imitate it. A small boy usually considers his father the most wonderful man he knows, and consequently spends a good deal of time and effort in trying to be like him. A little chap of four or five years old will throw himself into a chair and cross his legs in absurd imitation of his father, and nothing seems too small for children to notice and copy. The manner of carrying a stick, the attitude of standing on the hearthrug, the little trick of clearing the throat, will all be reproduced to the life, and it has sometimes been a

matter of surprise to an onlooker that the mimicry of some small but absurd trick has not been the means of breaking the older person of the habit.

An excellent example of the desire of a little boy to become like his father was brought to the writer's notice a year or two ago. A small girl, the daughter of very "horsey" parents, was trying to entertain a boy cousin a little younger than herself. After taking him into the stables and showing him the horses, she turned to him and said, "I daresay, if you are *very* good, you might be a groom some day." To which came the reply, "No, I shan't! When I grows up I shall be exactly like father—skin showing through my hair and all!"

There will often be a great desire on the part of one parent that a child shall imitate and resemble the other. If this natural wish be carried too far there is a danger lest the individuality of the

child be interfered with. It must never be forgotten that no two people can be or were meant to be exactly alike, and that in every child that is born there are seeds of good qualities and faculties belonging specially to that child. A slavish copy of anyone else, however worthy, will assuredly tend to choke the growth of these. It would be impossible to compute how many artists with the seeds of greatness within them have been condemned to mediocrity by a life-long endeavour to reproduce the master from whom they have learned, instead of making an endeavour to work out their own salvation.

Individuality to be Encouraged.

So it is with children. Nothing is more sad than to see a child, at an age when his or her natural freshness and simplicity should be most clearly in evidence, already cramped and artificial through an

An Affected Child.

effort to copy some older person. A gentleman once took shelter in a house during a heavy storm. The master and mistress were both out, but their little daughter was summoned from her A B C to talk to the unexpected guest. He told her he was sorry to have brought her downstairs, to which came the simpering reply, "Oh! pray don't mention it!" *Imitatio ad nauseam!*

Dressing Up.

One way in which the love of imitation comes out is in the delight all children take in "dressing up," and in any form of charades or dumb crambo. This is probably a very useful way of developing originality and of setting children's wits to work. Where it is not coupled with the putting on of gorgeous raiment, and is not merely an excuse for "showing off," the very variety of character assumed ensures its being a wholesome exercise. Dumb crambo is especially

helpful, for in that pastime there is practically no opportunity for self-glorification, while it tends directly to stimulate the children's ingenuity and to kill their self-consciousness.

Dumb Crambo.

All observers of child life have noticed in some little ones an unhealthy trick of making faces, posturing, or otherwise trying to attract attention. This is unnatural and should be carefully watched and eradicated. But it should be remembered that in most cases of that kind the *cause* is physical—generally a weakness in the nervous system—and the child must be dealt with most tenderly though firmly.

Tricks of Posturing.

On the other hand, many people can recall instances where what may be described as a true theatrical tendency has shown itself in a perfectly healthy and charming manner in very young children. No better example of this can

be found than is contained in a little paper lying under the writer's hand. To transpose it would be to spoil the vividness of the story, so it is given here just in its original form.

Tea at the Vicarage.

"I was more or less of a newcomer in our village when I one day received a pressing invitation to tea at the Vicarage. When I arrived I found my hostess, a charming white-haired and white-shawled old lady, in her usual arm-chair by the drawing-room fire, and, seeing the chair on the other side of the hearth empty, I dropped into it with a delicious feeling of comfort after my walk through the chill and gloom of a foggy evening. I had not been many minutes installed when tea was brought in, and the hot cakes which my soul loved were deposited on the little brass stand inside the fender at my feet.

"Following fast on the arrival of the tea came the two daughters of the house,

who had been busy in various parts of the parish, and were eager to compare notes and exchange the gossip they had gleaned between the gulps of hot tea with which they refreshed the inner woman.

"Meantime, I confess to wondering why I had been honoured with an invitation which was almost as pressing as a three-line whip. My curiosity was quickened by the fact that no sooner had we finished our meal than the tea-table was carried off to a distant part of the room, and a smile and look of enquiry went round, followed by a nod on the part of my hostess, the signal for one of the daughters to run away for a minute or two from the room. There was just that little silence which precedes an 'event,' and then she returned to be greeted by 'Well?' 'All right,' she replied, and silence fell on us again, to be broken almost immediately by a tap at the door,

a tap that would never have been heard had it not been for our stillness of expectation. The elder and more impetuous of the daughters made a rush from her chair but was called back, and then in a moment I knew why I had been asked. From behind the high screen just inside the door there peeped a baby face! And such a baby face! Roguishness, bashfulness, mirth, and indecision were mingled in the little dimpling face and twinkling blue eyes.

The Entry of Baby.

"There was a shake of golden curls—no, not quite curls, and yet nothing else expresses the tangle of light that formed a background to that beauty of two summers—and then the vision disappeared. Shyness had won a momentary victory, but was routed on a friendly hand being held out round the screen to encourage the merry mischief that was never far to seek in her to assert itself.

"A little shriek of pleasure, and she had run into the middle of the room towards granny's chair, but stopped short just where the circle of light from a reading lamp fell upon her. I shall not soon forget the picture. I had never seen her before, and, coming upon me in this unexpected way with her brightness and her beauty and her marvellous expression, she made an impression out of all proportion to her years.

"It was, I fear, the sight of me that caused her to stop so suddenly in her run to the loving arms that were stretched out for her.

"Neither she nor I had been prepared for the sight of the other, and a strange and bearded man may well alarm a little lady of two.

"There *was*, no doubt, at first a distinct look of alarm, but she rose to the occasion. It might no doubt be possible to overawe this new and ferocious-looking being:

at all events it would be well to try, or he might perhaps be open to a joke and be propitiated in that way! Some such thoughts were evidently in her mind, for first of all she stared at me with a frown, then made a deliciously dignified bow towards me, and then, almost before the bow was finished, stooped down, and drew her frock round her feet, saying, 'Baby dot no legs!' going off into a fit of decidedly forced laughter by way of carrying off her joke, should I prove too dense to see it.

A Baby Actress.

"Well, it served her purpose: it was a kind of introduction, and it enabled her to get over the awkward moments of her first shyness and to reach the haven of granny's chair. We were soon firm friends after that. I happened to have a watch 'like daddy's,' which was an assurance of my respectability, and I openly and fervently admired a certain pair of

little red shoes, and what lady can resist a well-timed compliment on her turn-out ?

" After a short time spent in such polite conversation, it suddenly occurred to the little fairy that she was not doing her proper share towards entertaining the company. A little wriggle freed her from any restraining hands or inconvenient people, and she ran to the far end of the room. From this vantage ground she ran forward from time to time into the better-lit part at our end with all the anxiety to be well received of a born actress. The first ' act ' consisted in her picking up her tiny skirts and walking on her toes, saying ' Muddy, muddy ! Baby's feet wet ! ' Then with a shriek of delight she rushed off, to come back the next minute waving her hands over her head and gazing solemnly upwards, saying, ' Wind b'owing ! Clouds and wind ! Baby's f'ightened ! ' But this only lasted

for a minute before she dashed off and returned declaring that she was another child, a little girl she had not seen more than once or twice, but whom she evidently desired to imitate.

"It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon me by this extraordinary performance by so young a child. Her rapid change of mood bewildered me: the mischievous laughter of one moment was so quickly followed by a look of wonder or terror or sadness, to be succeeded in its turn by a sudden scream of delight, that I felt as if I were watching something not altogether canny. It was really almost a relief when at last she buried her face in a friendly lap and cried for bed and 'nanna.'

"Even then the rapid change of mood was not all over, for in the midst of her tears she was gathered into nurse's comfortable arms, and as she left the room a decidedly

Baby's Exit.

pert little voice was heard to say, 'Baby *did* c'y!'

"So I found out why my friends at the Vicarage, who knew my weakness for children, had asked me to tea, but I have never been able to analyse the exact impression left on my mind beyond that of a lovely and excited baby."

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILD—ITS PLEASURES

WHAT a happiness it is that in the memories of most people the joys of childhood so far exceed its griefs. Two of the most powerful agents for good in the life of a child are love and happiness, and it may be confidently assumed that where there is an abundance of the former the existence of the latter is assured.

Love and Happiness.

It may happily be asserted that it has been the sad lot of few of those who read these lines to have known an unloved childhood. To this may be ascribed the happy recollections of most who look back upon their earliest years.

But in this chapter some attempt will be made to examine certain special

pleasures rather than to generalise as to the atmosphere of happiness in which alone a child will really thrive.

No Stereotyped Rule.

While happiness is necessary for all children, those who have most closely studied child life will agree that the old saying "*Quot homines tot sententiæ*" may well be applied to the great variety of ways in which this happiness is sought. It is impossible to treat all children alike, or to lay down any general rule. A little girl will find her chief delight in dogs and horses, while her brother steals away to play with dolls. Two small boys will go out into the garden, and, while one is keen to learn any sort of manly game, the other stands about cold and listless, bored to death by the mere sight of bat or ball.

Nothing is less likely to produce happiness than to attempt to *force* little children to amuse themselves in any set way.

How many people have been disappointed by their efforts in this direction! A "recreation" ground has perhaps been provided by some charitable person at great expense. Ten to one it will be deserted by the little ones for whom it was primarily intended and given over to the tender mercies of lads and lasses in their "teens." The *small* children find nothing left to their imagination, and infinitely prefer some dirty, and, to adult eyes, disadvantageous corner.

Failure of Compulsory Pleasures.

There was just such a case in a large northern town. The recreation ground was opened with pomp, and was elaborately fitted with swings, parallel bars, etc. For a week or two a few children made efforts to amuse themselves there, but it was quickly deserted. In the immediate neighbourhood were sundry patches of ground where no houses had as yet been built, and on which lay fascinating

heaps of brick bats and refuse. Needless to say these offered far greater attractions than the new and orderly playground. Small children do not care to play "to order." They have enough of that during school hours. When they get a bit older they will be willing enough to join in games on specified grounds and governed by codes of rules, but while they are little they like to find their own playgrounds and invent their own games.

A Game in a Stackyard.

Memory brings a vision of two children, one a little girl with soft dark hair and big black eyes, who is dressed in a blue and white cotton frock, and a big white straw hat; the other a sturdy, but commonplace boy, in grey knickerbockers, a holland blouse, with a broad black leather belt, and a flannel cap. They are about the same age, neither of them being yet seven, and they are playing in a stackyard. It is not the stacks that are the

attraction, for just now there are none there, but for all that it is a glorious playground. In the first place, it is well out of the way of the grown-up people, and in the next place, though there are no stacks, there are the stone supports on which they once stood. What excellent tables they make, these old grey upright blocks, of which the flat round tops project like real tables, and are practically useful in preventing rats and mice from climbing up. But there is something else which has drawn the children to that spot, for all about in the yard there is to be found a tall plant with a quantity of red seed, which must, I fancy, be some kind of sorrel. It is delicious to draw your hand up the stalk and bring it away full of this seed, and that is what these children are busy doing.

Next they put it in a heap on a slate which they have discovered, and then search for pieces of brick and flat stone,

which are piled on the top. In this way a certain quantity of the seed is compressed, and called a cheese, which is deposited with ceremony upon one of the stone tables.

The little girl has been the leader throughout; she has decided which plants were ripe enough to be stripped, how much seed was necessary to form a cheese, and upon which of the stones the feast should be spread. The boy has been her obedient servant, a position of things which reaches its climax when the little lady suddenly states that she doesn't like cheese, and orders him to eat it all up!

This is a vision that has come from time to time for more than forty years, and few playgrounds have seemed so attractive.

The Old Tree in the Garden.

Then there is the old tree of the garden. Who does not love the memory of the games played beneath it, and the seats it afforded among its boughs? Maybe it was a mulberry, or merely an ancient laurel.

Playgrounds may be found in and under both. In another case it was a mighty yew, noted in the annals of the county. A few feet up upon its massive stem, the children had special seats, and woe betide intruders caught trespassing! Beneath it was a long bench, of which the supports were obviously at one time a part of one of the great boughs, while the seat had in the distant ages been green.

What feasts were spread upon this seat —what shops were kept with this for the counter! There is a dust that forms beneath old yews, and consists of the dead and crumbled petals. What splendid stuff it is to play with! It can be sold as snuff, or almost anything, and it pours out of a teapot as easily as water. But there is no need to say more; everyone can remember the invented games, and the best-loved haunts of their childhood.

Playing at Shop.

One more playground of a thoroughly

unconventional character may well be mentioned here. It is just where the base of one of the Whitby piers starts from the end of a narrow street or passage. The huge stones worn and rounded at their edge make a couple of steps down to the water's edge, but steps so big that, if you are still a small boy, they compel you to sit down and slide and scramble, holding on as best you may, till you have reached the bottom. It is great fun to watch the children descending by their various methods. Big boys (and girls too) manage it easily, laughing and shouting as they bump their way down. But with the little ones it is different. A girl arrives, with a baby wrapped up in a shawl; this requires management: baby is set down on the top step, and told to stay quite still, then away slides the small nurse on to the intermediate resting-place some three or four feet below; then a pair of

A Whitby Playground.

arms are stretched up, and baby struggles into them with a chuckle of satisfaction, and is once more deposited, while the elder sister springs down on to the soft wet sand, and next minute baby, too, is safe in the desired corner. This is what it practically is, this desirable playground, just a corner in the harbour laid bare at low tide, and having the pier on its one side, and the walls of the old town on the other. How lovely those old walls were! Looking right up one sees the ends projecting above the gables of red-tiled roofs, while below are the grey walls—no, not grey, though many seem so at first sight, but yellow, blue, red, green—every colour, in fact, that stones will take, when long exposed to sea and weather. Then at the bottom just above the sand runs a long wide course of stones that are covered by every tide, and have in consequence become clothed with a fringe of brown and green and golden seaweed.

There are small windows here and there, high up in the walls, and now and again a sheet or a towel is hung out to dry, a picturesque object enough against a mass of building; and from above the wall of a yard a number of poles, leaning in the corner, project and break the monotony of the surface.

It lies right inside the harbour, and every time the tide goes down it leaves a certain quantity of semi-decomposed objects to scent the atmosphere of this special spot.

Then again, what is far worse, there are small square openings here and there in the wall and from these there trickle continuously the contents of many wash-tubs and slop-pails. Yet here it is that a group of children come whenever the tide allows, to play their quiet games—quiet, for they never run about or make much noise, but seem happiest crawling on hands and knees, or squatting in a

circle and playing with the garbage and refuse which has stranded there.

This is doubtless the attraction; the beauties of the scene evidently never occur to them at all, the evil smells affect them not. But there are new playthings there continually. As the water recedes fresh treasures day by day are left upon the shiny floor—half sand, half mud—of their playground. What opportunities for their invention and imagination! Yesterday there were two small dead crabs, a broken saucer, and an empty sardine box; to-day's chief items are the wicker end of a worn-out lobster-pot, a bit of rope, and a whole quantity of mussel shells which have been thrown away after the baiting of a long line. What endless games are played with these materials! First of all the shells are pushed into the sand squares, making little gardens, which are duly furnished

Treasure Trove.

with bits of green seaweed. To them comes a small market woman carrying the fragment of wicker-work in which she places the green stuff she purchases and pays for with pebbles, the bit of rope being used to sling the laden basket on her bent back, as she walks off to market under the heavy load.

Then the shells are hurriedly gathered up, and baby is established with her back against the wall, and in front of her the total accumulation of odds and ends is arranged in lots, each one marked off by a line drawn in the sand, and then the children come to buy at baby's shop—a matter of huge delight to the shopkeeper, who distributes her goods rashly and impulsively, and is evidently bored at being made to receive payment!

Another Game of Shop.

But an end comes at last: a voice is heard shouting, baby is lifted up on to the first step again, and all the little bare

legs and ruddy feet go scampering off to tea!

It would be easy enough to give many more examples than these two or three, but they will be sufficient to illustrate the preference of little children of all and every class for unconventional playgrounds and games proceeding from their own vivid imaginations. Imagination supplies the keynote to so many of the pleasures of children. How greatly, for instance, they delight in playing at being grown up! Nothing gives them keener pleasure than being treated like their elders. It is partly the importance of it, but largely also the exercise of imagination and an appreciation (duly suppressed) of the fun of the situation.

Playing at Being Grown Up.

A few years ago it fell to the lot of the writer to witness the joys of two very small people who came by themselves (oh!

the importance of it) upon a regular visit.

They were some six and seven years old, and a most reserved and old-fashioned little couple in their ways. The elder, Reggie, was singularly quiet and thoughtful. His face, of considerable beauty of feature, with large grey eyes, wore ordinarily an expression of solemnity, if not of melancholy, and it required an intimacy of some considerable standing to obtain more than monosyllabic replies in his high but very gentle voice.

A Visit from Two Children.

His companion was a little sister properly called Marjorie, but who had hardly yet outgrown "Baby." Such an upright, delicate dimpled, flower of a child, with the same big eyes and curling lashes as her brother, but with a reserve far more easily overcome, and a much greater readiness to break into smiles or even indulge in romps. She completely

"mothered" Reggie, and her anxiety that he should do the right thing, and her little quick orders to him, were most amusing.

Their hostess met them a few days before their visit, and their excitement about it all was intense.

"What luggage shall you bring?"

"Oh! just a hat-box or two!"

"It's all arranged about our visit to you I do so love arranging things. Couldn't we have some more arrangements?"

This, of course, Baby. So every conceivable thing was "arranged," and every minute of the two days planned out. Their hostess told them she should expect them to bring lots of things in their luggage.

"Oh!" said Baby, "I shall bring my tea-gown. And what shall *you* wear?"

The day arrived, and they were met at the station.

"Well, what luggage have you brought?"

"Twelve hat-boxes," promptly replied Reggie with a flicker of humour just lighting up his face. One turned up, and was found to contain the entire clothing, etc., of the pair. This vast piece of luggage was put in Baby's room, and then came the request that they might be allowed to unpack for themselves. Reggie was quickly hurried into his own room with his tiny pile of belongings, and then Baby began to unpack hers. She was shown a large wardrobe, as well as a good-sized chest of drawers, and evidently felt that it would be *infra dig.* not to use them both, so, after putting one wee garment in one drawer and one in another till each held something, she gravely took the little bag which held her shoes and hung it up in solitary grandeur in the wardrobe!

The extreme politeness and consideration of these little visitors were continually

coming out. Baby was asked whether she would like a room to herself or a sofa in her hostess's room.

"You see, Aunt E., I don't know what to say," was the reply. On being pressed further, she said, "Well, I was thinking about the beds! It seems a good deal of trouble just for us. You see, they are big beds."

Reggie, too, was just as anxious to consider others. "If it isn't too much trouble," he said, on being asked whether something should be brought him. "I'm afraid when we are gone you will say 'bother those troublesome children'!"

He was just as attentive, too, to his sister, buttoning her little petticoat for her and anything she couldn't manage for herself.

The whole of the proceedings described so far were practically part of a charade or play. The children were for these two days grown-up people, and being

endowed with an extra allowance of imagination, played their part in every detail.

Not that they could keep it up quite all the time! There were games at hide-and-seek that entirely dispelled illusion for a while. Then there were visits to the poultry yard and animals, when it was impossible to put such restraint upon one's feelings of surprise and delight as to appear properly blasé and grown up. For instance, when Baby suddenly discovered a large field-spider, there was a scream of astonishment as she exclaimed, "Oh, Aunt E., here's a thing with a lot of legs and a dot in the miggle!" And again, in the poultry yard, it was scarcely in keeping with the part of a lady who had arrived at years of discretion to say, "How I should like to lay in those nice lickle nests!"

But on the whole these two little people carried out their intention of paying a

real grown-up visit with perfect success up to the very moment when they were once more in the train by themselves on their return journey of some six miles, each one grasping firmly their half-ticket, and the last glimpse we had was of Reggie gravely lifting his little straw hat, as the train steamed out of the station. There is all the difference in the world between this sort of playing at being grown up, and the assumption of airs and graces which some children display. The one is real pleasure, the other the merest mockery. Children who are no sooner out of the nursery than they ape their elders in an insatiable desire for a succession of smart clothes and evening parties are seldom happy children. Those who care for their little ones and want to fill their early years with real pleasures will take care to avoid the causes which produce children such as these.

The Children Leave.

It may perhaps be said that the main factors are two.

If children be allowed to absorb the spirit that is pervading the world at the present day—the spirit of revolt against all authority, the notion, that is, that everyone is to do exactly as he or she chooses—that will of itself bring about a state of mind which is destructive of real happiness. Notions such as these are quickly picked up, and parents who themselves set all rules and authority at defiance cannot expect their children to submit to control.

Modern Defiance of Authority.

Then there is a second cause which is too often at work, and which does a great deal towards turning some children into disagreeable and discontented young folk. When people are continually trying to emulate if not excel their neighbours in appearance and in the

Self-Conscious Jealous Children.

entertainments they provide, children are quick enough to take their cue from what they see and overhear, with the result that they are miserable if they think their frocks are less fashionable than their neighbours', and are rude and discontented if at one party they do not get as handsome presents as at some other.

This is all wrong, and distinctly diminishes the pleasure that these children might otherwise enjoy.

It would without doubt add enormously to the real happiness of children if a league could be formed of all parents who should be bound to limit children's parties within certain specified bounds of simplicity and within certain reasonably early hours.

Desirability of Simpler Children's Parties.

But this is by the way. It is pleasanter to turn for another minute or two to speak of the pleasures childlike children find in the simple joys that lie around their path.

There can be no doubt that the more natural the employment or amusement the greater the pleasure. A little girl is given a tiny dustpan and allowed to sweep the carpet, or she has a drawer full of odds and ends and is asked to sort and arrange them. She will spend an entire morning in such an occupation with the keenest pleasure, and if anyone who has watched her should also see her when dressed up at some "smart" party that same evening there would be no doubt in the mind of the onlooker as to which brought most real happiness to the child.

Natural Pleasures the Most Enjoyed.

One of the greatest delights that can be afforded to children must come in for a word of mention. Who does not remember the story-teller of his or her childhood? Perhaps it was "father," who when he came in at tea time would let the whole

Story-telling.

family swarm on and about his arm-chair, and would tell another bit of the thrilling tale which he always broke off each evening at the very most exciting point. Or sometimes it would be one of the bigger children, gifted with an extraordinary power of calling up robbers and demons, who enthralled an audience by the narration of horrors which stimulated their imagination and made them feel deliciously "creepy." No such things as "chestnuts" exist for children. The oftener the story has been told the better they like it, and never hesitate to choose an old favourite before a brand new tale.

But this chapter is already becoming too long. It would be easy to enumerate numberless simple amusements which bring real pleasure to children. But the same moral can be drawn in every case. The simpler and more natural the occupation the greater the pleasure. Do not all children revel in playing with the earth

and water that lie about their feet? Whether they are the lucky ones who can build sand castles and let the sea-water fill the moats, or whether they can only play in the gutter by their door, they are ten times happier in such pleasures as these than in any grander or more elaborate amusements. To the recognition of this fact those who plan children's pleasures will owe their chief success.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHILD—ITS PATHOS

JUST as there is no summer without its cool grey days, so among the sunny crowd of children about our path there is here and there a child who seems to live beneath a shadow.

Just, too, as the tender colouring of the grey landscape has a special charm which only needs the seeking, so these quiet little ones amply repay the observation of those who do not let them steal away and escape notice as they always wish to do.

Quiet Children.

No one who cares for children can have failed to have come in contact with some who are silent when their comrades shout, grave when the rest are laughing, and look wistfully on when games are in progress.

They are, possibly, well enough liked by the rest, but somehow they are *different*, and because of this difference go their own way to which the others have become accustomed.

There are, of course, sometimes obvious reasons. In the greater number of cases the child's health—or want of health—accounts for the separateness of its life and pursuits. Sometimes, it may be feared that harsh surroundings in its home have crushed the spirit out of it and made it timid and suspicious. But sometimes it is a mere question of temperament. The child has, perhaps, inherited some queer strain of sentimental self-consciousness, or some nervous dread of publicity, which causes it to be like the famous parrot which said little but thought a lot—a condition of things exactly the reverse of what may usually be found in a thoroughly healthy-minded child. But,

Reasons for the Difference.

whatever the cause, it is for the most part true that it is well worth while to lay siege to the affections of such a child, and try to establish confidential relations. The result of a habit of thoughtfulness and of a life a little lonelier than that of others will generally tend to the laying up a store of quaint fancies and imaginings about the objects of everyday life, as well as often developing a sympathy which the lonely child has no wish and few chances to exhibit. These things are well worth bringing to the light by anyone who is sufficiently persevering to win the affection and confidence of the little one.

Lonely Children.

Such children are not averse to *all* companionship, but are terribly afraid of anyone who does not understand. They have often enough been laughed at, and they keep their thoughts and interests carefully hidden from all who cannot be absolutely trusted, and it is so very few

indeed whom they discover to belong to this category. Once, however, they are perfectly sure of anyone, they will lead them to their secret haunts in field or garden, will confide to them their dread of certain places and people, and finally will allow their most cherished wishes to escape them. In almost all cases the great desire of such children is for something to love, or for somebody in whose affections they may be first.

Early Natural Bents.

In this connection it is curious to notice how early the natural bent of a child will show itself. This is especially the case with girls whose mothering propensity comes out at a very tender age. A wistful little maiden who always seemed to want something more than satisfied her more boisterous companions had slid her hand into that of a grown-up friend in whom she had learnt to confide, and who was trying to amuse her by telling

her about a litter of puppies which had been born to a retriever called Topsy. Looking down, the lady saw that the child's face had grown serious even to sadness, which was accounted for by the conversation that followed.

Not a Mother Yet!

"How old is Topsy?" said the little girl. "I think she is four," was the answer. At once the child's eyes filled with tears as she sighed, "And I am six and I'm not a mother yet!"

With boys it will generally be found that, if they have taken to solitary ways, and belong to the class of children who are pathetically different to the rest, they have some bent, some special interest, which they keep carefully to themselves until a really sympathetic friend wins their secret from them. Not infrequently it is a hiding-place inside a bush or in some corner of the garden where rubbish has been thrown and where the small boy

A Boy's Secrets.

has made himself a "house" with pieces of an old packing case and any other oddments that have come to hand. Sometimes it is an animal of which he has found the home and with which he spends most of his spare time. A toad in a hole in a wall was for a long time the secret joy of a very small boy until his little sister confided to him that she had got a toad in a hole close by, which on examination proved to be the same animal which had two outlets to its abode! The boy's secret being thus discovered all his pleasure was gone, and he at once deserted his pet.

The Toad.

The present writer happened once to pay a visit to some friends who had a little son of about three or four years old. This little fellow used often to disappear in the garden, and was evidently in enjoyment of some secret which he was

The Very Dead Frogs!

too shy to impart to anyone. After a few days his confidence was gained, and he led off his new friend to a spot where there was a muddy little pool about two feet in diameter. On the edge of this were two frogs which he had found dead, and had brought here hoping that they would revive. They had been dead for some time and were anything but sweet, but he stroked them and looked up in the most wistful way to see whether his pets were properly appreciated. It was really pathetic to see his eyes fill with tears when he was told that they were quite, *quite* dead, and must be buried without further delay.

Sometimes, of course, the pathos in a child is accounted for by some physical infirmity which separates him or her from the rest. Here is an instance.

A painter had one day set up his umbrella and easel close to a little hamlet, and when school was over there was

the usual rush of the children to look at "the man" and see what he was doing. Hating solitude and delighting in children, he faced quickly round upon his stool and gave them a nod of welcome. "Come to see what sort of a picture I'm making, eh?" was his greeting. "Yezzur," was the reply in the broad dialect of the district. "Well, now, what do you think of it?" he asked, as he held it up for them to see. At first there is only much drawing in of breath and many an "Oh!" as they look at what seems to them at first sight a meaningless kaleidoscope of colours. At last one makes out one thing and one another in the unfinished drawing. "There's the tree, look!" "See the blue sky!" "I can see William Timms's house, *I* can!" And so on for some minutes until almost every part of the picture had been properly

Children and the Painter Man.

identified. Just then a shout from one or two women proclaimed the fact that those who wanted any dinner had better make haste and get it while they had a chance. This gave "the man" a few quiet minutes during which he ate his own sandwiches, but before he had swallowed the last mouthful the troop of children was back again to see all that might be seen before the school bell rang.

It was during these last few minutes that the painter noticed a boy whom he had not seen among the others before. He was a little chap—not more than six or seven years old—with soft fair hair and a pink and white complexion. Two things attracted his attention to the boy. One was the extreme neatness and cleanness of his dress. His clothes were not of better material than those of the other boys, but they were so very *tidy*. His collar, too, was spotlessly white, and his

Jacob.

hair glossy and unruffled. The other thing about him which seemed peculiar was the amount of deference and consideration that was shown him by the rest. He was given a good place close behind "the man's" elbow, and once or twice, when there was some pushing, one of the children called out, "Now, then, keep quiet, can't you? Don't you see you're shovin' against Jacob Joyce?"

Now and then, too, there would be a curious sort of appeal to the little fellow: someone would say, "Isn't it lovely, Jacob? There's red and blue and all manner of colours?" And Jacob would solemnly answer "I likes yed!" Then a whisper would go round, "Hearken to him; he likes red, Jacob does."

And all the while to the painter as he worked away there seemed something odd about the boy, and something unusual if not uncanny in the way in which the others treated him.

At last the school bell rang, and all but three of the children rushed off helter skelter to their lessons. The three who stayed behind were a big girl of twelve who was looking after a baby sister, and Jacob Joyce.

The picture was nearing completion. That most absorbing half-hour had arrived when just a little deepening of a shadow here, and the wiping out of a curl of smoke there, made all the difference, and the painter was wrapped up in his work, and scarcely noticed the three children.

The elder girl was busy plaiting grasses, and the baby had crawled nearer and nearer to the easel until a paint brush suddenly shaken out sprinkled her little face and she set up a dismal cry. In vain the sister hushed and rocked her. Nothing seemed of any use until the girl said, "Shall Jacob sing to baby?" Then the

Jacob Sings.

sobs were instantly quieted, and from close behind him the painter heard a strangely sweet voice begin clear and true "Once in 'oyal David's City." Right through the dear old children's hymn the singer went, and long before the end each of the three listeners were enthralled by the melody.

Leaning a little backwards the big grown man, whose thoughts had gone back to the days when he, too, sang carols, stretched out a hand to caress the little singer who edged himself along the grass till he was able to rest his head against the painter's knee. So they stayed quietly for a time, a detail being now and then added to the picture, while a little hand crept up every few minutes to touch the coat or stroke the knee of the boy's new-found friend.

So the other children found them when they came back from school. Now the picture was more easily understood

and far more to their liking, but in all their anxiety to see, no one pushed in front of little Jacob. "Bootiful picture," he said, and all of them echoed his words. "I can't do a picture," he added, and the other children said not a word. "No," said the painter, "but Jacob can make beautiful music," and stooping down he lifted the little fellow on to his knee. Then for the first time he understood. Jacob Joyce was blind.

Jacob was Blind.

Although children frequently fail to realise the great shadows which from time to time darken the lives of their elders, yet sometimes a perception of a great sorrow will force its way to the mind of a child, and nothing more pathetic can be witnessed than the dumb perplexity with which a child faces such trouble. There is something in it that reminds one of the wistful expression in

A Child's Perception of Sorrow.

the face of a favourite dog when it is restlessly wandering about a house watching the preparations for its master's departure, or has incurred a measure of chastisement for an offence that it does not understand.

Two Little Boys Blue.

Two little boys lived at a small farmhouse on the outskirts of a Cotswold village. One evening the grey homestead with its deep stone-slatted roof was all aglow in the sunset, the latticed windows blazing like so many separate suns, while beneath them chrysanthemums—yellow, red, and white—added their brilliance to the picture. Close by an immense elm tree shone in the golden glory of its autumn robe. Beneath it on an old dry wall the two little boys were perched just where some of the stones had been knocked away. One was sitting astride, the other faced the road with his two little brown legs dangling side by side.

The boys seemed much the same age, and to the eyes of a lady who was passing by very much alike, but this was no doubt owing to the fact that they were each dressed in a blue blouse and each had a little blue flannel cap on the top of a cluster of fair curls.

It was not long before the lady had made friends with the little chaps, and she always kept an eye on the watch for the blue blouses when she was walking in the fields or lanes near the farm. It was soon obvious that one was not only decidedly the elder of the two, but leader, protector, champion, and hero of his little brother. The devotion of the younger child was touching. If he were asked a question he mutely referred it to the other. If he were given anything he never failed to see whether it would be acceptable in the eyes of the superior being whom he worshipped. The two little boys blue were inseparable, and

were bound by the best of all ties in which each needs something that the other has to give.

There came a day when the lady, who had taken the pair of them into her affections, went away from home. She did not return for several weeks, and when she did so she determined to walk the mile and a half from the station to the village to enjoy the freshness of the country air after that of a stuffy railway carriage. Her shortest way was by a footpath which led through the fields at the back of the farmhouse. Near the stack-yard was a bit of grass ground, once an orchard, where a few old apple trees were still standing. Here the clothes lines were accustomed to be stretched between two or three sloping posts. Here she had often noticed the bit of colour against the greys of the house and the old tree stems when the two blue blouses had

Where is Willie?

undergone the necessary wash, and were hanging out to dry. . . . On this particular afternoon the lady was hurrying home, delighting in every well-known sight and sound. She heard the geese in the yard, and saw the smoke curling up against the great elm-tree. Then she reached the orchard wall and looked across. The patch of blue caught her eye at once: but there was something wrong: never before had she seen only *one* blouse on the line, just as she had never seen one of the boys alone. What did it mean? In another moment she caught sight of the younger child. "Why, where is Willie?" was the quick question. But there was no answer. For a moment the boy looked at her with big wondering eyes, then turned and was gone in an instant. She lost sight of him behind the laurel bush near the farmhouse door.

So long as she lived that lady will never forget the dumb pathos of the child's

expression. Its explanation was one more little grave in the children's corner of the churchyard.

These examples that have been given are of cases where the cause of the pathos discerned in children can be easily traced. It is not infrequently the case that something unhappy—something appealing—is noticed in a child, but that nothing can be discovered to account for it. The observer feels sure that there is something wrong, but all efforts to bring it to light or to be of any help are baffled.

The Deserted Cottage.

It was not so long ago that a man for whom children had a special interest found himself compelled to pass along the same country lane for many days in succession. At one point there stood a cottage which presented a blank end to the road, its windows and door facing a small garden and being in full view of

passers-by for some distance. It had at first a most melancholy appearance owing to its having been for a long time unoccupied. The windows looked gloomy and black, the scrap of garden was overgrown and bedraggled, the old pear tree on the front had been blown loose and one branch hung in a dissipated manner over the porch, while on the path lay a couple of broken stone tiles which had fallen from the roof.

The Yellow Curtains.

One day, however, the passer-by noticed a great change. Evident signs of habitation made their appearance, and signs of a most unusual kind in a primitive country-place, for in every window in the house there appeared bright fresh yellow muslin curtains.

Needless to say, conjecture was rife as to the newcomers but no one seemed to know who they were or whence they came.

At last one day the above-mentioned

pedestrian passed a child whom he had not seen before, and by that time he knew the face of every child who lived within a mile or two.

She was about nine years old, and better dressed than most of the cottage children. Her white pinafore was spotlessly clean, and of fine material, and there was something dainty about the white linen hat which shaded her from the June sunshine. But the most striking things about her were her hair and her complexion. The former was of a particularly beautiful shade of red, and fell thick and curling beneath the white brim of her hat. The latter was pink and white, and, though perfectly healthy, a strong contrast to the browns and reds of the villagers' bairns. She was pushing a perambulator containing a thoroughly well-appointed baby, and seemed so absorbed in the task that she gave no sort of response to the man's greeting as he passed by.

After this they met on most days, and more than once he saw her entering or leaving the house with the yellow curtains. She never seemed to speak to anybody, and never had anything to do with other children who were playing in the lane.

The Mysterious Child.

Do what he would the man could never get so much as an answering smile from the child's full and sensitive-looking lips. There was a curious air of mystery about her, and a reserve and habitual melancholy of expression that went to his heart. Added to this there was an appearance of loneliness about her life, for no other member of the family ever seemed to come to the door when she went or came, and for all that could be seen she and the baby might have been living all alone.

To a child-lover this daily vision of an unnaturally solitary and probably unhappy life was insupportable. He was

continually on the look out for a chance of breaking through the girl's reserve, and trying to brighten her life.

At last one day it seemed as if the opportunity had come.

A mile or so beyond the cottage the lane crossed a stream by a low stone bridge. It was a cheerless spot in the dusk of evening, for the water ran dark and stealthily between old grey willow-trees, but here it was that he found her, by herself and leaning over the low stone parapet. He went straight up to her and said "Good evening," before he noticed that she was crying quietly, as those people do whose tears are frequent. Putting his hand over hers as it lay on the wall he asked her what was amiss. For one second she looked up in his face, and he made sure that he would learn her secret. The next instant a look of terror passed over her, and she snatched her hand away. Before

On the Low Stone Bridge.

he could say a word or recover from his surprise she was gone. He saw the white flutter of her pinafore as she ran homewards down the murky lane, and he never saw her again. By the next evening the house was unoccupied once more, and he had nothing but the memory of a child's pathos which could never be explained.

A Slighted Child.

There is just one other bit of pathos which crops up now and again in children's lives. It happens sometimes that their devotion to someone who has shown them kindness or taken notice of them is accidentally overlooked, and the consequent feeling of desertion is most pathetic. Girls are more liable to this experience than boys, and when it is borne in upon a small child for the first time that she is less attractive than her fellows and must in consequence expect to receive less notice even from those upon

whom she has poured out her chief store of affection, the suffering entailed is frequently acute.

In selecting a teacher or companion for children it would be no bad plan to observe those who on an occasion when many little ones are gathered together take notice of the ugly children. They are the true child-lovers.

An example of the kind of pathos referred to came to the notice of the writer some years ago at a children's party, and he set down the sensations of the little girl in question in some lines which she is supposed to speak.

"My Bissop."

I went to the Bissop's party
In my vi'let velveteen:
The others went last year, you know,
But I hadn't never been.

I was only four; and mother said
It was really *much* too late!
But now I'm five—though all a year
Was a *'mendous* time to wait!

I knew the Bissop very well,
For didn't I sit on his knee
When he came for Confummation,
And stopped at our house for tea ?

He's a dear old man—our Bissop—
And he'll hardly ever miss
Stroking the hair of a little girl
And giving her a kiss.

So I *did* look forward to going,
(And I whispered it all to my doll)—
Though Tom said he didn't see the good
Of taking a mealy-faced Moll.

But I didn't know I was ugly,
And nothing about being shy,
So I couldn't sit still with 'citement
All the whole way in the fly !

We got there at last : there was numbers
Of boys and girls at their teas,
And oh ! —in the corner—the Bissop !—
With two little girls on his knees.

I knew they was much more pretty
Than me ; but I thought perhaps
Their turn would be over bye and bye
And he'ld take *me* up on his laps !

So I went quite close, till Susie
Told me I mustn't stare—
But I don't b'lieve it mattered,
He didn't know I was there !

Then the rest of the children got dancing,
And I was knocked down on the floor,
So I w'iggled my way to a corner,
And sat just close to the door.

For I thought *he*'ld pass and see me,
And once he did really stand
Quite close to me—*my* Bissop !—
And I touched his coat with my hand.

But oh ! he never noticed ;
He didn't seem to see :
And when he was kissing anyone
They was other children than me.

I fink I *must* be ugly.
It wasn't the velveteen,
'Cause when she had it on last year
Susie looked like a queen !

Yes ; I had some toys and a bootiful tea,
And my cracker had got a ring !
And I *fink* I enjoyed the party
'Cept p'raps for only one fing !

And when I got home to dolly,
And she was in bed by my side,
I *twied* to tell her about it—
But she was asleep—and *I cwied.*

CHAPTER VIII

WAYSIDE CHILDREN

THE study of some particular child is of great interest. If the child be one with whom one is brought into daily contact the study may become most exhaustive and may prove the means of imparting a new and helpful knowledge of childhood generally.

The Study of Flowers and Children.

A noted botanist has devoted years to the study of the chickweed. He has added to his own and to the general knowledge of botany a vast store of information by his temporarily exclusive attention to this one plant. But he would be the last to deny the charm of a stroll through lanes or fields where multitudes of flowers claim passing attention and admiration. To pause every few minutes to observe a cluster of primroses, a bank

of mercury, or even a pink-tipped daisy—to halt suddenly as a whiff of sweet perfume tells us of a hidden nest of violets—to gather two or three of the cowslips that spangle the meadows—all this may belong to the lightest side of the study of botany. But it has a charm that few can resist, and thus far at least the veriest beginner can follow.

So it is with the study of childhood. Almost everywhere we go on our daily road of life there are children to be found, children differing one from another as widely as the primrose from the violet, but each one worth our notice and possessed of a special charm.

The Loss to those who Fail to Notice Children.

It is extraordinary to find on talking to one and another how few people realise the pleasure that they lose by failing to observe the little wayside children. There are many persons capable of passing by without

seeing the loveliest of wayside flowers, but there are more who take no heed at all of our wayside children. And yet, if the loss to the former is great, the loss to the latter is greater far. A flower can charm the eye or delight the sense of smell: it can interest the scientific observer who notes its construction and mode of growth; but that is all. There is no reflected light, no joy felt by the flower and flashed back in happy answering glance, be its eye never so bright. For most people there is no increase of knowledge from day to day, and certainly there is none of that increase of understanding between observer and observed which lends such charm to the chance meetings with the children who are about our path.

Some people are too busy and rush along in too great a hurry. Some people are too self-important. They are grown up, and fancy that the fact that they are older has so greatly increased their

value that it would be lowering themselves to take notice of children. They will assert that they cannot be bored with them. They will brush them impatiently aside if they are too closely approached by children when other people are present. There is a certain amount of insincerity in all this, for when such people fancy that they are unobserved they not infrequently yield to the natural temptation of noticing and even playing with little children.

Self-important People.

Some people, again, fancy that to let children know that they are observed is bad for their character, and, of course, it is possible to make them self-conscious and conceited by taking too much notice of them. On the other hand, there is a danger of children becoming morbid, nervous, and secret if they find themselves ignored and unappreciated.

Keeping the Proper Balance.

A child's nature is essentially responsive. It opens out and expands to a show of affection just as a flower to the sunshine, and, as a bud will become withered and diseased when continuously exposed to grey skies and rain, so the character of a child will suffer irretrievable damage from a prolonged course of neglect and cold looks.

Taking it, then, for granted that nothing but good is likely to follow from a habit of noticing the children whom we meet, it is interesting to remember how greatly our days have been brightened and our own enjoyment increased by this very thing.

The Children Under the Wall.

There is a long grey wall leading towards the centre of the village. It is what is called a "dry" wall, that is to say, it is built without mortar. There is, therefore, no great interest in it nor any special beauty except where the

tints of the little lichens catch the eye of the close observer. The monotony is broken here and there by a bulge in the stonework where an elm-tree in the field has gradually pushed its roots against the foundations.

Two Nests of Children.

But the path beside the wall is seldom lacking in attractions. It is the daily playground of the children from the cottages which lie back from the road between where the wall ends and the big barn juts out endways on to the footpath. These cottages are but two in number and have all the picturesqueness of old gables and steep stone-slab roofs. Hoary and bent and lined with the passage of years they seem to speak of old age in every feature. But they echo to-day with the sound of children's voices, and their old stone flags speak from morning to night with the patter of little footsteps. From these two houses come the troop of

children who play beneath the long grey wall. As a matter of fact there are ten of them altogether—six from one cottage, four from the other. Of these the two eldest boys of the six are just getting too old to play, and are generally doing jobs for mother, or even sometimes for the farmer for whom their father works, on the days when they are free from school. Then there is in each house a baby too small to be trusted anywhere except in its cot or in its mother's arms. This leaves six children for the wayside, when the two little girls who are old enough to go to school have returned to superintend the amusements of the rest, or four who may be found there at any hour of the day when the weather is at all propitious.

What bits of sunshine they make! Let the day be as dull and the road as monotonous as possible it cannot be altogether cheerless when a couple of little chaps with sunny tousled hair and

ruddy cheeks stop pulling their soap box full of mud and stones to laugh up in your face and say "Good marnin', Sir," though it be four o'clock in the afternoon. Whereby hangs a tale. These two urchins are somewhere between two and four years old, and it had been their habit to greet a friend with a friendly pat and a shout of "Hey!" Thereupon one day the friend, thinking that their manners might now be taken in hand and it being then shortly after breakfast, said "You must say 'Good morning, Sir,'" which after one or two tries they very creditably did, and have continued at all hours from that day forward.

Good Marnin'.

But further down the wall is a little group of three. One, a still smaller boy, evidently the next in order of the fair-haired family. He cannot yet keep up with his brothers, and so is taken in hand by

Friendly Children.

the two dark-haired little girls who look up shyly and smilingly from beneath long-fringed lashes. The younger, "Nellie," has been ill and is a queer little figure pinned up in a shawl which reaches to the ground; the elder is a fat roundabout lady of nearly four, with dark beady eyes, and a trick of sliding a grubby little hand into that of her special friends when they stop for a minute's chat. She is full of character and thoroughly appreciates the importance of being in charge of the other two, looking up with an absurd apologetic smile when the little invalid thrusts forward a few bits of dusty grass and a much-mauled daisy as an offering to the powers that be.

But, meantime, school has come out, and the number of wayside children is rapidly increasing. A girl of ten or so is quietly knitting as she strolls homewards, her busy fingers hardly stopping as she smiles and curtseys, turning as an

afterthought to ask whether she may bring some water-cresses to the house.

Leaning over a garden wall is a delightful little person. She has a very short way to go home and knows that tea will not be ready yet. So she stops as soon as she is inside the wicket to indulge in a further look at the "busy world," of the lane in which she lives, and to seize any chance there may be of a gossip. The garden ground inside the wall is considerably above the level of the road—a most convenient thing for this sturdy little lady of five, for it enables her to lean her arms upon the wall and her face upon her arms, and so to survey the world in much comfort.

Over the Garden Wall.

Should any one approach whom she wishes to avoid, nothing is simpler than to crouch down and hide until the undesirable passer-by is out of sight. Should, however, a friend appear who is welcome,

but whose presence causes a sudden fit of shyness, the rosy cheeks are quickly hidden in the dimpled arms and a cloud of dark curls tossed over all until a finger judiciously inserted somewhere where the crease of the fat little neck may be supposed to be causes a chuckle of delight, and a crimson face and two great blue eyes are momentarily lifted to be buried again in an instant beneath the mass of soft dark hair. But this is a regulation bit of by-play which never lasts long. Confidences are soon exchanged and news imparted about the sort of day it has been in school and the health of a doll which fell to her lot at the last treat. Then sometimes—when she is in her tenderest humour—a pair of bright red lips are put up for a kiss, and she trots off down the path to where mother is waiting under the porch of clematis.

And so it would be possible to go on for long enough.

By the roadside, in the field ways, by the pathway near the brook, at many a cottage doorway, by many a wicket-gate, our country children, in the beauty of healthfulness and youth, add a hundredfold to the happiness of those who passing by have eyes to see and hearts to understand.

In the Country.

But there are others. It is impossible to pass along the side streets of our many towns without finding the little wayside children. They are mostly those who are of that specially attractive age which makes them just too young to go to school and just too old to be kept in the house, so they get somewhere between the two places, and are generally playing in the gutter.

And in the Town.

They have not often the same beauty as the country children, and they have not the same readiness to accept the approaches of "grown-ups." Their

surroundings almost from their birth make them suspicious and on their guard against possible dangers. But they are children for all that. They will notice and respond to a friendly smile. It is wonderful how a sharp and anxious little face is beautified by the smile that after a moment of doubt will come in answer.

Go down a long street of mean houses, each one the counterpart of every other, and see if there be anything to brighten the way that can compare with the laughter and the play of the wayside children. It is more difficult perhaps to appreciate these little ones, but it should be remembered that a friendly greeting is worth more to them than to a country child who gets a dozen such on its way from school. The reflected light, the responsive happiness is not so evident at first sight as in the case of country children, but it is even more real when once confidence has been established.

A man whose daily walk led him down a certain dingy street saw a tiny boy with grimy face and badly developed limbs playing with a banana skin in the gutter. The man nodded to him—the boy shrank away in terror. Next day the man nodded again. The boy had decided there was nothing to be afraid of, and spat at the man. Next day the boy only stared. The day after he shouted "Hi!" as the man went on. In time the little fellow smiled back at the greeting which he now began to expect. Finally the triumph was complete when the boy—a tiny chap—was waiting at the corner and seized the man's fingers in his dirty little fist. It was a dismal street, but it became one of the very brightest spots in all that man's walk through life.

How a Child's Friendship was Won.

CHAPTER IX

CHILDREN'S MEETINGS

In these days, when the teaching of any virtue necessitates a special Society, and when no Society is complete without its Children's Branch, children's meetings are matters of almost everyday occurrence.

To say that these meetings are for the most part successful would be scarcely accurate. They are too numerous, and speakers to whom children will listen are too few.

To whom, then, *will* they give a hearing? That is a difficult question, almost as difficult to answer as if it were asked "Who can whistle a tune?" At all events it is quite as difficult to tell people how to gain the attention of children as it is to tell them how to whistle a tune. If they can, they can; and if

To Whom will Children Listen?

they can't, it isn't much use telling them. However, it is just possible that anyone who has looked through the pages of this little book may have been stirred to think about children, and to try to understand them. In that case a step has been taken on the road to being one of those lucky people to whom children will listen.

Children Know their Friends.

Small boys and girls, like dogs, know by intuition the people who are fond of them, and unless the would-be speaker belongs to this class he need not hope to get their attention. Grown-up people listen to someone whom they do not like on the chance of finding something to criticize or ridicule. Children simply do not listen at all.

But a love for children is not enough. There must be the effort to understand them. Unless there be at least some comprehension of their characters, there is bound to be a lack of that sympathy which is the essential requisite.

Somehow or other, children seem to feel at once whether or not there exists that subtle link between themselves and the speaker, and if they cannot discover it they will not—perhaps even cannot—listen.

Children must be Understood.

The mistake so often made is to imagine that it is easy to understand children. The exact opposite is the fact. It is far easier for anyone to understand grown-up people whose minds work much in the same way as his own than to comprehend and sympathise with the curiously complex thoughts and reasonings of children.

A Difficult Art.

It has been seen how strangely imaginative all children are, but at the same time they are often most literal. There is a well-known story of a little girl selling artificial flowers at a bazaar who was so anxious that there should be no mistake on the part of the purchasers that she said to each, "They are not *real*, you

know; they are *stuffed!*" No doubt this same child would have treated these same flowers as absolutely real if she had had them to play with, and would have let her imagination run riot with them.

An Honest Saleswoman.

Again, children are often so tender-hearted that they cannot bear to hear of the sufferings of other children, but will inflict intense pain on some insect with complete callousness, the reason being that the one comes within their comprehension while the other does not.

These simple matters are mentioned here merely to show the complicity of children's characters, and to try to induce those who wish to teach them to abandon the idea that it is perfectly easy to understand children.

The next necessity for anyone who wants to gain the attention of a group of little ones is to remember that they are extraordinarily liable to infection.

Infection Spreads Rapidly.

Just as chicken-pox introduced into a children's party by one child will spread to most of the others, so if one person at a meeting be thoroughly interested and keen, the rest will be sure to catch the infection. That person must, of course, be the speaker.

Platitudes Useless.

It is no sort of use talking to children because the speaker has got to say something. It is essential that he should have something to say. Further, it is no use his having something to say unless he is himself enthusiastically interested. Anyone who has tried to speak to children will know how their attention is gone in a moment so soon as he says half-a-dozen words of mere platitude. All this points to the need of careful preparation and thorough knowledge of what he has to say.

Simplicity Essential.

Then he must say it simply. Children do not understand long words, and cannot follow involved sentences. It is not unusual

to hear the chairman of a children's meeting begin by saying, "My dear young friends,—if I may be allowed so to designate some whose acquaintance I have hitherto not been so fortunate as to cultivate—the admirable society to which, as I understand, you have given your adherence inculcates those principles of self-abnegation which have long been designated as the true foundations of all existence at once joyous and altruistic." Can anything be more hopeless? The succeeding speakers must be uncommonly vivacious and interesting if the children are to recover from such a fatal beginning.

A Sermon in Monosyllables.

It is no bad thing to try to speak in words of one syllable. If that is thought hopeless it may be mentioned that the Bishop of Bristol not long ago published a whole sermon in monosyllables, just to show what can be done.

But, on the other hand, it is a serious mistake to talk down to children. That

is to say, the stuff must be good though the language be simple. Children resent having washy sentiments served up to them in baby language. They can understand great thoughts if properly presented.

Children Resent Feeble Talk.

It has been suggested that when very young indeed they dislike the nonsensical manner in which they are addressed by many adoring women. This has been given as one reason why a baby on being first introduced to a strange man and a strange woman will generally prefer to go to the man. The supposition is that the baby thinks he will stand more chance of hearing rational language. It is certain that most people have heard ladies speak to little children in a babble which they would not use to a self-respecting dog for fear he should bite them!

But to speak more seriously: yet another matter to bear in mind is that

monotony must at all costs be avoided.

The Ingredients of a Speech to Children.

A speech which, however good in other ways, is entirely pathetic, will fail to keep children's attention, while a speech that is entirely funny will fail to rouse their interest in the object of the meeting. There may be tears—a few—there must be laughter—now and then. There must be stories and there must be morals : the art is to make the one almost as interesting as the other.

It may perhaps be allowed to insert here one or two practical hints. For instance, it is absolutely essential that the children should be able to see the face of the speaker clearly. It is well that he, too, should be able to see the faces of his audience. But the former is the more important. If a room, then, has windows so placed that either the speaker or the children must face them, it is better that the speaker should do so.

Position of Speaker Important.

Children find it almost impossible to listen to anyone whom they cannot see, a fact which points to the value of a sustained effort on the part of the speaker to catch the eye of first one and then another of his audience.

Meetings as Informal as Possible.

That leads on to the desirability of getting rid so far as possible of *formality*. There should be no barriers between the speaker and the children. A high platform is fatal. It is even more fatal when there is also a table and a water bottle. The speaker should be as close to the children as he can, consistently with being able to see and be seen.

A Successful Meeting.

Here is a description of a thoroughly successful children's meeting. A large low room with old oak beams and a dark polished floor. The only light a blazing fire of logs. In the darker corners a few groups of mothers and other "grown

ups." Near the centre of the floor, two or three large Indian mats, and in front of them a big low easy chair facing the fire light. In this chair is the speaker, and on his knees and on the arms of the chair cluster three or four of the smallest children. The rest are sitting just anyhow upon the coloured mats. They are all perfectly quiet and well inclined for a rest, for they have just had a succession of games—blind man's buff and "Jacob, where art thou?" the favourites. For half-an-hour or so they sit and listen to the story of other children less happy than themselves, and learn how best to help them. Then comes "Good-night," and they go away with impressions still vivid, and with new and brave resolutions.

Some such happy informal talks as this may often be held in summer on the grass beneath the trees, but the many distractions of the open air—a butterfly may turn away all thoughts—make such

Garden Meetings.

meetings more difficult than those held indoors.

The hints given in these few pages seem utterly inadequate, and to include only such matters as must occur to all. They have been set down here as some reply to the frequent question "How can children's meetings be made successful?"

There is but one more word to be said. Grown-up people are so greatly distracted by the cares and occupations of their daily life that it needs special preparation before they can understand little children. To anyone who wishes to influence their simple yet imaginative minds the task is almost hopeless unless he will try to fulfil that most difficult command and himself "become as a little child."

Appendix

It is of considerable interest, and may be in some cases of practical value to those interested in the well-being of children to notice in order some of the principal Acts of Parliament which have been passed during the last twenty-five years on behalf of children :—

1883. 46 & 47 Vic., c. 53. Employment of Children in Factories and Workshops.

1885. 48 & 49 Vic., c. 69. Criminal Law Amendment Act, relating to criminal assaults on children and to the finding of children in disorderly houses.

1887. 50 & 51 Vic., c. 58. Employment in Coal Mines.

1889. 52 & 53 Vic., c. 44. The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act. This was the first of the three Acts, the others being passed in 1894 and 1904 respectively. Sometimes called "The Children's Charter." It is very wide in application, making it an offence to assault, illtreat, neglect, abandon, or expose a child under sixteen years of age in a manner likely to cause such child unnecessary suffering or injury to its health.

1891. 54 & 55 Vic., c. 3. The Custody of Children Act, dealing with the power of the Court to decline to issue a writ for the production of a child to an unfit parent, and with the power of the Court to order repayment of costs of bringing up a child.

1891. 54 & 55 Vic., c. 75 & 76. Further enactments concerning employment in Factories and Workshops.

1892. 55 & 56 Vic., c. 4. Betting Act, whereby it became a misdemeanour for anyone for the purpose of earning commission to send circulars, etc., to invite an infant to make any bet or wager.

1893. 56 & 57 Vic., c. 48. Reformatory Schools Act, giving power to a Court to remand a youthful offender to a prison or to any other place, which has in practice always been assumed to be a workhouse.

1894. 57 & 58 Vic., c. 33. Industrial Schools Act. Education.

1897. 60 & 61 Vic., c. 57. Infant Life Protection Act, concerning persons receiving infants for hire for the purpose of maintenance. An Act for the abolition of illicit baby-farming.

1899. 62 & 63 Vic., c. 37. Poor Law Act, concerning the control of guardians over orphans and children of persons unfit to have control of them.

1901. 1 Ed. VII, c. 20. Youthful Offenders Act, providing for (1) the removal of disqualifications attaching to felony, (2) the liability of parent or guardian in the case of youthful offenders, (3) the remand of youthful offenders to other places than prisons, (4) the recovery of expenses of maintenance from parent or person legally liable, etc., etc.

1901. 1 Ed. VII, c. 27. Intoxicating Liquors (Sale to Children) Act, forbidding the sale or delivery save at the residence or working place of the purchaser of any description of intoxicating

liquor to any person under the age of fourteen years, except in corked and sealed vessels, in quantities not less than one reputed pint. It should be noticed that the Licensing Act of 1872 prohibited the sale of any description of spirits to any person apparently under the age of sixteen years.

1903. 3 Ed. VII, c. 45. The Employment of Children Act, containing restrictions on the hours of employment, age of employees, nature of employment, etc., etc.

There have also been several Education Acts either passed or proposed, but it is doubtful whether these have not usually had their origin in the exigencies of party politics rather than in a *bonâ fide* desire for the welfare of children. An honourable exception is the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899.

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