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THE ROOT . . .

OF THE TEMPERANCE
QUESTION

ELIZABETH HARRISON:

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TEMPERANCE QUESTION

FROM A KINDERGARTEN STANDPOINT.

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TEMPERANCE QUESTION.

There is perhaps no instinct of the child more important and yet less guarded than the exercise of the senses. The baby begins this life-work as soon as his eyes can fix themselves on any point in space — as soon as his tiny hand can grasp any object of the material world.

The training of the inner being begins at the same time, by means of the impressions conveyed through these avenues of the senses to the young brain.

In a vague way, the world

at large has acknowledged a distinction between the higher and lower senses, by training the eye, and to some extent the ear, and it is now struggling to place a systematized training of the sense of touch in the school curriculums. And yet, the misdirection of the lower senses of taste and smell is far more dangerous—not only because they do not aid directly in the upbuilding of the intellect, but they have an immediate effect upon the will. Any child turns more quickly from a bad odor than from a bad picture, comes with more alacrity to get a sweet-meat than to hear some pleasing sound. With most adults it is the same. Our sympathies are aroused more readily by

a tale of physical suffering than by one of demoralizing surroundings.

Notwithstanding these facts, these two lower senses of taste and smell have been left almost entirely to the hap-hazard education of circumstances. And sad indeed have been the results. As we look abroad over the world what do we perceive as the chief cause of the wrecks and ruins we see around us, of the wretchedness and misery which lie about us? Why have we on every hand such dwarfed and stunted characters? For what reason do crimes, too hideous to be mentioned in polite society, poison our moral atmosphere until our great cities become fatal to half the young men and women who come

to them? Why do our clergy and other reformers labor so hard to attract the hearts of men to what is in itself glorious and beautiful?

Is it not, in a majority of cases, *because men and women have not learned to subordinate the gratification of physical appetite to rational ends?* You see it in every phase of society; from the rich and favored dame, whom soft chairs and tempered lights and luxurious surroundings have so enervated that she is blind to the sight of misery and deaf to the cry of despair, down through the grades where we find the luxuries of the table the only luxuries indulged in, and "plain living and high thinking" the exception, still farther down from these

respectable places of self-indulgence to the poor drunkard who sacrifices all comforts of the home, all peace of the family life for the gratification of his insatiable thirst, still farther down to the pitiable wretch who sells her soul that her body may live.

Do not their lives, all of them, contradict that significant question of the son of God? "Is not the body more than the raiment?" "Is not the life more than the meat?"

Let us turn from such distressing pictures to the scientific investigation of the senses. We find that the sense of taste has two offices. 1st. *That of relish*, or the producing of certain pleasant sensations in the mouth or stomach, for the two are one for all practical pur-

poses, and 2d, *that of discriminating between the good and bad*, wholesome and unwholesome food, which is taste proper. The former is the gratification of the sense for the sake of the sensation, and leads through over-indulgence directly into gluttony, which in its turn leads directly into sensuality. In history not until a nation begins to send far and wide for delicacies and condiments for its markets and tables does it become a voluptuous and sensual nation. When we speak of "The degenerate days of Rome" do not pictures of their over-loaded tables rise before the mind's eye? We do not need to turn to other times and other places for illustrations of this truth; who are the "high livers?"

As a rule are they not sensualists also?

Whereas the latter use of this organ of sensation leads to discrimination, which discrimination produces wholesome restraint upon undue eating, this restraint engendering self-control, making the *moral will power supreme over the bodily appetite*—man's greatest safeguard in the hour of temptation.

In the world of nature we see that the rank vegetation needs to be pruned and checked if it is to give to man its best fruits.

The prophets and seers of the world have always seen the close connection between the feeding of the body and its control or non-control of the sensual appetites. Plato

long ago, in his ideal Republic, would have banished all books which contained descriptions of the mere pleasures of food, drink, and love, classing the three under one head. What an enormous amount of so-called literature would have to be swept out of the libraries of to-day were that mandate sent forth!

Dante, with that marvelous vision of his, which seemed to see through all disguises and all forms of sin back to the causes of them, places gluttony and sensuality in the same circle of the Inferno. At least two great branches of the Christian church, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Episcopal, have realized the moral value of placing the appetites under the control of the

will in their establishment and maintenance of the season of Lent. Let him who would scoff at the observance of this season of restraint try for six weeks to go without his favorite article of food, and realize for himself the amount of will power it requires.

To me the story of Daniel derives its significance not so much from the fearless courage with which that Great Heart dared death in the lion's den, as from the fact that as a child he had moral control enough to turn from the King's sumptuous table and eat the simple pulse and drink pure water. Such self-control *must* produce the courage and the manhood which will die for a principle. So in telling this story, ever loved by child-

hood, we always emphasize the earlier struggle and victory rather than the later. *The perfect character is the character with the perfectly controlled will*, therefore, the heroes of the kindergarten stories are mightier than they who have taken a city, for they have conquered themselves. The greatest battles of the world are the battles which are fought within the human breast. And, alas, the greatest defeats are there also!

“That a child inherits certain likes and dislikes in the matter of food can not be questioned, but this does not in the least forbid the training of the child’s taste toward that which is healthful and upbuilding,

it merely adds an element to be considered in the training."

Hear what a gifted writer of our own nation has said. Horace Bushnell, in his book called "Christian Nurture," utters these impressive words: "The child is taken when his training begins in a state of naturalness as respects all the bodily tastes and tempers, and the endeavor should be to keep him in that key, to let no stimulation of excess or delicacy disturb the simplicity of nature, and no sensual pleasure in the name of food become a want or expectation of his appetite. Any artificial appetite begun is the beginning of distemper, disease, and a general disturbance of natural proportion. Intemperance! The woes of intem-

perate drink! how dismal the story, when it is told; how dreadful the picture when we look upon it. From what do the father and mother recoil with a greater and more total horror of feeling, than the possibility that their child is to be a drunkard? Little do they remember that he can be, even before he has as much as tasted the cup; and that they themselves can make him so, virtually without meaning it, even before he has gotten his language. Nine-tenths of the intemperate drinking begins, not in grief and destitution, as we so often hear, but in vicious feeding. Here the scale and order of simplicity is first broken, and then what shall a distempered or distemperate life run

to, more certainly than what is intemperate? False feeding genders false appetite, and when the soul is burning all through in the fires of false appetite, what is that but a universal uneasiness? And what will this uneasiness more naturally do than partake itself to the pleasure and excitement of drink?" Much more which is helpful to the mother is given in the chapter entitled, "Physical Nurture to be a Means of Grace."

Froebel, from whose eagle eye nothing which related to the child seemed to escape, saw this danger, and in his "Education of Man" says: "In these years of childhood, the child's food is a matter of very great importance, not only

at the time, for the child may by its food be made indolent or active, sluggish or mobile, dull or bright, inert or vigorous, but indeed, for his entire future life. For impressions, inclinations, appetites, which the child may have derived from his food, the turn it may have given to his senses, and even to his life as a whole, can only with difficulty be set aside, even when the age of self-dependence has been reached. They are one with his whole physical life, and therefore intimately connected with his spiritual life, and again parents and nurses should ever remember, as underlying every precept in this direction, the following general principle, that simplicity and frugality in food and in other

physical needs during the years of childhood enhance man's power of attaining happiness and vigor—true creativeness in every respect. Who has not noticed in children, overstimulated by spices and excesses of food, appetites of a very low order, from which they can never again be freed—appetites which, even when they seem to have been suppressed, only slumber, and in times of opportunity return with greater power, threatening to rob man of all his dignity and to force him away from his duty.”

Then comes with an almost audible sigh these words—“It is by far easier than we think to promote and establish the welfare of mankind. All the means are simple

and at hand, yet we see them not. You see them, perhaps, but do not notice them. In their simplicity, availability, and nearness, they seem too insignificant, and we despise them. We seek help from afar, although help is only in and through ourselves. Hence, *at a later period half or all our accumulated wealth can not procure for our children what greater insight and keener vision discern as their greatest good.* This they must miss, or enjoy but partially or scantily. It might have been theirs without effort, as it were, had we in their childhood attended to it but a little more; indeed it would have been theirs in full measure, had we expended very much less for their physical comfort."

Then he exclaims in ringing tones, as the enormous significance of the subject grows upon him, "Would that to each young, newly married couple, there could be shown in all its vividness, only one of the sad experiences and observations in its small and seemingly insignificant beginnings, and in its incalculable consequences that tend utterly to destroy all the good of after education."

Next he points out the way to avoid the sad consequences which he so laments, "And here it is easy to avoid the wrong and to find the right. Always let the food be simply for nourishment—never more, never less. Never should food be taken for its own sake, but for the sake of

promoting bodily and mental activity. Still less should the peculiarities of food, its taste or delicacy, ever become an object in themselves, but only a means to make it good, pure, wholesome nourishment; else in both cases the food destroys health. Let the food of the child be as simple as the circumstances in which the child lives can afford, and let it be given in proportion to his bodily and mental activity."

There is no one among us who can not recall a picture of a young mother putting a spoonful of sweet to her baby's mouth, and persuading that unwilling little one to take the unaccustomed food, saying with coaxing tone such words of encouragement as "So good, *so good*,"

in this way teaching the child to dwell upon and value the relish side of his food.

Not long ago I had occasion to take a long ride on a street car. My attention was soon attracted to a placid mother with her year-old child in her arms. The little one was in quiet wonder looking out on the great, new world about him, with its myriads of moving objects. Here was a picture of serene contentment in both mother and child. Soon the mother slipped her hand into her pocket and drew forth a small paper bag, out of which she took a piece of candy and put it into her mouth; then, fearing, I suppose, that this might be selfish, she took out another piece and put it into the infant's

mouth. The child resented the intrusion upon its meditations by ejecting the proffered sweet. The mother was not to be defeated in her generosity. She put it back into the child's mouth and held it there until the little one began to suck it of his own accord. This operation was repeated a number of times, about every third piece of candy being put into the child's mouth. Once or twice the small recipient turned his head away, but was coaxed back by the cooing voice of the mother saying: "Take it, darling; see, mamma likes candy," illustrating the remark by eating a piece and giving every sign of relish during the operation. The child was soon won over, and began to reach out his hands for more. After

the unwholesome relish had accumulated to a sufficient extent in the delicate little stomach to make the child physically uncomfortable, he began to show a restless spirit, or desire to move about unnecessarily. The mother grew impatient, which only increased the child's uneasiness. Finally she shook him, saying: "I don't see what in the world is the matter with you. You are a bad, troublesome little thing!" At this, the unjustly accused little victim set up a lusty yell, and the mother in a few moments left the car in great confusion and with a very red face, wondering, no doubt, from which one of his father's relatives the child had inherited such a disagreeable disposition.

“But,” exclaimed one mother to me, “do you mean to say that you would not give any confectionery to a child? *I* think candy is the prerogative of every child. Why, I think it is a crime to take it away from them!” “I think,” was my reply, “that a healthy body and a strong moral will power are the prerogatives of every child, and it is a crime to take them away from him.” “But,” she added, in an annoyed tone, “I do love candy so myself, and I can’t eat it before my child and not give her a part of it”—! I need not multiply my illustrations; they are too numerous to need preserving.

I do not mean that all sweets must be banished from the nursery

or the table—the child would thus be deprived of the lesson in voluntary self-control; but they should be given as relishes only, after a wholesome meal, letting the child understand that it adds little or nothing to his up-building, and must, therefore, be taken sparingly.

Froebel suggests to the mother that she playfully lead her child's thoughts to the discrimination of different kinds of food and the value of the same, by some such little song and play as "The Tasting Song," in that wonderful book of his for mothers. "Who does not know," said he, "and rejoice that you, dear mother, can carry on everything as a game with your child, and can dress up for him the

most important things of life in charming play."

It is not supposed that any mother will feel herself compelled to use the rather crude rhyme given in the "mother book; still, it contains the needed hint of *playfully guiding the child's attention to the after effects of different kinds of food*. Froebel has said; "This is the way in which you, mother, try to foster, develop and improve each sense, playfully and gaily, but especially the sense of taste. What is more important, mother, than the improvement of the senses, especially the improvement of the sense of Taste, in its transferred moral meaning, as well." Farther on in the same earnest talk with the mother (see

page 136, "Mother Songs"), he tells her that by such exercises of her child's senses does she teach him gradually to judge of the inner essence of things by their appearance. It is not necessary for him to actually indulge in them, claiming that moral as well as physical things show their real nature to the observing eye. Thus, if a child is trained to know the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of food by its results, or after effects, he will the more readily judge of the nature of a pleasure, of a companion, of a book, of a line of conduct, by its after effects; and it is not, therefore, necessary that he "sow his wild oats," or "see the world," in the pitiable sense in which that term is

used, in order that he may know life.
 His rational judgment can teach him what, oftentimes, sad, bitter, deforming experiences tell him, alas! too late, to avoid. He need not be a Faust to solve the Faust problem. In the motto to the mother, Froebel says:

“Ever through the senses Nature woos the child,
 Thou canst help him comprehend her lessons
 mild.”

In other words, that *Nature, God's design, is striving to educate your child spiritually, and that you can help do this through his careful physical training.*

“By the senses is the inner door unsealed,
 Where the spirit grows in light revealed.”

You can see how definite Froebel's convictions are on this subject. That the soul, the divine element in

each child, is, as it were, sealed up when he first comes into the world, and is gradually awakened and strengthened by the impressions which come to it through the senses from the outside world; that the physical and spiritual growth of the child go forward simultaneously, the one by means of the other. He especially charges the mother to teach her child *to observe and avoid things which are unripe*. "Make your child notice not only the fixed steps of development from the unripe to the ripe, but above all that to use *what is unripe is contrary to Nature in all relations and conditions of life*, and often works in its turn injuriously on life, on physical, but no less on intellectual and social life,"

and as a closing word he exclaims: "If you do so you will be really, as a mother, one of the greatest benefactors of the human race."

That the opinions, and consequently the actions, of children are easily influenced through play, soon becomes evident to any one who has ever played much with them. One morning, while giving a lesson with the building blocks, we made an oblong form, which I asked one of the children to name. "It is a table—a breakfast table." "Let us play they are all breakfast tables," said I; "I will come around and visit each one, and see what the little children have to eat. What is on your table, Helen?" "Oh!" exclaimed she, in eager delight, "my children have

ice-cream, and cake, and soda-water, and—” “Oh, dear! oh, dear!” cried I, holding up my hands; “poor little things; just think of their having such a thoughtless mamma, who didn’t know how to give them good, wholesome food for their breakfast! How can they ever grow strong and big on such stuff as that? What is on your table, Frank?” “My children have bread and butter, oat-meal and cream, and baked potatoes,” said the discreet young father. “Ah!” said I, in a tone of intense satisfaction, “now, here is a sensible mamma, who knows how to care for her children!” “Oh!” broke in little Helen, “my children’s mamma came into the room, and when she saw what they were eating she

jerked the ice - cream off the table.” The significant gesture which accompanied the emphatic tone told of the sudden revolution which had taken place in the child’s mind as to the right kinds of food for carefully reared children.

In a thousand such ways can children be influenced in play to form judgments concerning lines of conduct which will help them to decide aright when the real deed is to be enacted. I know of a Kindergarten - trained five - year - old son of a millionaire who refused spiced pickles when they were passed to him at the table. “Why, my son,” said his father, “do you not want some pickle? It is very nice.” “No,” replied the boy, “I don’t see any

use in eating spiced pickle. It don't help to make me stronger; my teacher says it don't." If this kind of training can be carried out, such a boy will grow into the young man who, when tempted, can easily say: "No; I see no use in that. It will not help to make me a stronger nor better man."

That children are easily trained to prefer wholesome to unwholesome food, even when all the home influences are against the training, almost any Kindergartner can tell you. I had charge one year of a class of children who were indulged in almost every respect in their home life. On one occasion an injudicious mother sent to the Kindergarten a very large birthday cake, richly ornamented

with candied fruits and other sweets. In cutting the cake, I quite incidentally said: "We do not want to upset any of our stomachs with these sweets, so we will just lay them aside," suiting the action to the word. After each child had eaten a good-sized slice of the cake (a privilege always allowed on birthday) there was at least one-third of it left. Not a child out of the twenty asked for a second piece nor for a bit of the confectionery. This was not because they were in any way suppressed or afraid to make their wishes known, as they had almost absolute freedom, and were accustomed to ask for anything they desired. It was simply that, through previous plays and talks and stories,

they had learned that I did not approve of such things for children; so, when with me, they did not, either. Thus, easily and almost imperceptibly, is a little child molded. The mother who holds herself responsible for what her child shall wear—and what mother does not?—and yet does not feel that she is answerable for what he shall eat, simply shows that she regards his outer appearance as a more important matter than his health of body or moral strength.

The danger of wrong training lies not alone in the indulgence of the sense of taste. Testimony is not wanting of the evil effects of the cultivation of the relish side of the other senses also. After giving a

lesson on the training of the senses to a class in Chicago, a stranger walked up to me and introduced herself as having formerly been a missionary to the Sandwich Islands. "This lesson has explained to me," said she, "a custom among the Sandwich Islanders which I never before understood. When the natives begin their religious rites and ceremonies—which, you know, are very licentious—the women are in the habit of decking themselves with wreaths of orange blossoms and other flowers, which have a strongly agreeable scent, until the air is heavy with the odor."

"Do you not know who are the over-perfumed women of our land?" asked I. "And yet I know scores of

mothers who deliberately train their children to revel in excessive indulgence in perfumery."

Mr. William Tomlins, a man who has almost regenerated the musical world for children, once said, in a talk on musical education: "If music ends only in fitting us to enjoy it ourselves, it becomes selfishly enervating, *and this reacts on the musical tone.*" Therefore, he has long made a habit of teaching the hundreds of children who come under his instruction to sing sweetly and to enunciate clearly, that they may be worthy of singing at this or that concert for the benefit of some grand charity. The dissipation which is seen in the lives of so many of this ennobling profession is thus easily explained.

Nor does this far-reaching thought stop with the right and wrong training of the senses. The mother who praises her child's curls or rosy cheeks, rather than the child's actions or inner motives, is developing the relish side of character—placing beauty of appearance over and above beauty of conduct. The father who takes his boy to the circus, and, passing by the menagerie and acrobat's skill, teaches the child to enjoy the clown and like parts of the exhibition, is leading to the development of the relish side of amusement, and is training the boy to regard excitement and recreation as necessarily one and the same thing.

Fashionable parties for children,

those abominations upon the face of the earth, are but seasoned condiments of that most wholesome food for the young soul, social contact with its peers. That so simple, so sweet, so holy, and so necessary a thing as the commingling of little children in play and work with those of their own age and ability, should be twisted and turned into an artificial fashionable party, seems to the real lover of childhood as incredible, save for the sad fact that it is.

Even our Sunday Schools, with their prizes and exhibitions and sensational programs, are not exempt from the crime. I have seen the holy Easter festival so celebrated by Sunday Schools that, as far as its effects upon the younger children

were concerned, they might each one as well have been given a glass of intoxicating liquor, so upset was their digestion, so excited their brains, so demoralized the unused emotions.

Need I speak of the relish side of the dress of children? John Ruskin, the great apostle of the beautiful, claims that no ornament is beautiful which has not a use.

The relish, perhaps, whose demoralizing influence is beginning to be suspected, is that of highly seasoned literature, if we may call such writing by the name of that which stands for all that is best of the thoughts and experiences of the human race. Mothers and teachers cannot too earnestly sift the reading

matter of the children over whom they have charge. There are, aside from the text books needed in their school work, some few great books which have stood the test of time and critic. Teach your children to understand and to love these. Above all, as a means of culture as well as a means of inspiration, and a guide to conduct, would I recommend that book of books, the Bible, to be the constant companion of mother and child.

Some may fall into the minor danger of teaching the child too great discrimination, until he becomes an epicure. The child who pushes away his oat meal because it has milk on it instead of cream, is in a fair way to grow into the man who will push away the mass of

humanity because they are so unwashed. God pity him if he does.

I once knew of a call which came from a large and needy district to a young woman who longed with all her heart to be of use in the world. "But," said she to me, "I cannot possibly go; the salary is only seven hundred dollars, and that would not even pay for the necessities of life with me." So she continued to live a barren, unsatisfied life.

I knew another fine-brained, beautiful woman, whose insight was far beyond her times, to whom there came a grand opportunity to advance a great cause. "I cannot," she said despairingly, "do without my china and cut glass; the *disease of luxury* has fast hold upon me."

“So train your child,” says Emerson, “that at the age of thirty or forty, he shall not have to say, ‘This great thing could I do but for the lack of tools.’” So train him, I would add, that he shall not have to say, “All my time and strength is spent in obtaining superfluities, which have become necessities to me.” Goethe teaches us this great lesson in his drama of Faust. With master strokes is drawn the picture, which shows that no gratification of human appetite, passion or ambition, brings in itself satisfaction and rest, but he alone who lives for others as well as for himself can truly say unto his life, “Ah, still delay — thou art so fair.”

