

The Culture of Infancy.

It is saying too little when we affirm that the greatest care should be exercised in the education of children. The Great Teacher has said in language so strong that it could not be stronger, "Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Are these words mere rhetoric? Who will deny that there is a depth of meaning here, equal to the importance of the subject? Some sage older than Socrates engraved on the temple of Delphi the sentiment, "Know thyself." What this knowing self is, the great Nazarine declared, when he called a little child to him and said, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." If, then, children are of such great importance, how necessary it is that the teacher should be armed with the most perfect preparations, and the best and most appropriate instruction, to offer to the little ones. Children are constantly preparing for coming life. Sometimes the boy is a farmer, his chair a plow, another chair, his house; he utters his commands with all the authority of manhood. Perhaps Mamie's doll is sick, Johnie is sent for, and with papa's hat and cane he comes along with the gravity of Esculapius himself, and administers his powders of sand and flour, while Mamie's countenance assumes almost maternal anxiety and distress. A few blocks and a box constitute a railroad train—and so in all the plays of childhood the creative faculty is extremely active. This disposition of mind should be especially noticed in the education of children.

Josh Billings says, "Would you train up a child in the way he should go, go that way once in a while yourself;" good advice, especially to those who are continually trying to teach children as they would grown-up people. Education is the harmonious development of all the powers of the mind. Suppose a gardener should prune a tree, with the exception of one limb; or a farmer persist in raising but one thing, year after year, it is evident that they would not succeed. Is it not equally absurd to persist in cultivating only one of the powers of the mind in childhood, excluding all the rest? It is certain some faculties may be perfectly developed in childhood and among them is atten-

tion. Things, high, low; soft, hard; hot, cold; near and far are noticed. It soon learns the use of things, as chair, cradle, broom, hat, door, and a multitude of others. The imagination is soon revived; the real world opens an ideal one. It soon learns to step from what it can see to what it cannot see; from what it sees with the eye to what it sees with the mind. Healthy childhood is active, restless, impulsive, devoid of reason, full of passion, eager for something new, loving stories, confiding, and even detecting humbugs with the quickness of thought. There are two theories relating to education of children. One is they should do nothing improper for older persons to do. They should be quiet, walk slowly, never ask questions, always go to church, keep awake while listening to a long sermon as incomprehensible to them as Latin. They must be made to do just what they don't want to do. The boy must go to college, his taste must not be consulted, he must study a profession even though he has no love or fitness for it. This is one theory. The other declares that a child's habits must be studied, that God has made him just as he ought to be made. If he wants to play, let him play, if he wants to laugh, let him; let him jump, kick up his heels, yell like a wild Indian, stand up for his rights, and knowing, dare maintain what he knows. It directs the impulses of his nature, curbing here, pruning there, but in all things letting his God-given nature, exactly fitted for God's intended work, have its full play. In training childhood, nature must be followed. We must make our schools centres of mind culture just as our gardens are centers of plant culture.—E.C.

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