

THE MORAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

BY THE EDITOR.

IMAGINATION AND LOVE OF TRUTH.

LOVE of knowledge is a good thing, but love of truth is more important than anything else, and should be impressed upon a child's mind as early as possible ; but we must not be blind to the fact that the conception of truth can scarcely develop before the fourth or fifth year. Although the idea is very simple to an adult, it is, in its full significance, quite complex,—indeed, too complex to be appreciated in all its importance by children.

The first condition for developing the love of truth is never to let the punishment of a small criminal follow his confession of a trespass. For fear is the main, and in serious cases, the only, incentive to telling lies,—lies in the sense of wilful misstatements of facts, of deceptions, made for the purpose of gaining advantages or escaping unpleasant results.

We ought to know that sometimes a child tells untruths which are not lies. Children have a vivid imagination, and they are apt to invent facts. A certain small boy who was suspected of having broken a dish denied the fact, while his little brother, who could not have done the deed, positively assured his parents that he had broken the dish. He told an untruth simply because he imagined how he might have broken it. The case was interesting to him, and in his vivid imagination he depicted all the details, and told with great complacency a long story describing how the accident had happened.

To many children the dreams of their imagination at once become as real as the reminiscences of actual events, and in our fervor of impressing upon children a love of truth, we must not be too quick to condemn a little sinner before we positively know that he tells not a mere untruth but an actual lie invented for the purpose of shirking his responsibility.

Love of truth ought to be closely connected with self-esteem, and what is commonly called the sense of honor. There ought to be no worse opprobrium than the defamation of being a liar.

When years ago I was a scientific instructor at the Royal Corps of Cadets at Dresden, I adopted the principle, whenever any disturbance of a recitation occurred, of simply asking the question, "Who did it?" On the first occasion, of course, there was no response, whereupon I spoke contemptuously of the spirit of the whole class, in which there was some one too cowardly to stand up frankly and acknowledge the mischief which he had committed. I argued that all the members of the class were responsible for the *corps d'esprit*; and that so long as such cowardice was condoned and encouraged, I could have no respect for the class. When this happened for the first time, the charge of cowardice stung the evil doer, but he did not rise to confess, although the whole class grew more and more indignant and urged him to do so. The duty of the class, I continued, is so to influence its members that none of them shall shirk the responsibility and fail to acknowledge whatever he has done. In a society that tolerates suspicious characters one must be on one's guard; and so a teacher cannot treat a class in which some refuse to confess the truth frankly and openly, as young friends, but as inferiors, comparable to inmates of a penitentiary who are always under the suspicion of wrong-doing. The result was that somebody rose to expose the delinquent; but I refused to listen to the denunciations, and stigmatised, at the same time, in strong terms, the practice of playing the informer, saying that I did not care to know who did it, but hoped that the guilty one would have honor enough to tell the truth, if it were for no other motive than to avert suspicion from an innocent comrade. The malefactor appeared after the recitation and denounced himself privately, but here again I refused to listen to the confession, and told him the proper thing would be to stand up before the whole class and publicly acknowledge his guilt. What he had done before the whole class, he must confess to before the whole class. Without any further suggestion, at the next recitation the malefactor jumped up, and in a few clear words made the confession required.

An occurrence of this kind took place once only in every new class and never again. The class understood the principle, and whenever anything out of the way happened, whenever there was a noise which was difficult to trace, or whenever a disturbance of any kind took place, the cause of which could not be discovered,

the question, "Who did it?" was always followed by a prompt surrender of the delinquent. He knew, of course, that he would not be punished, nor was it ever necessary, because the confession ended the joke, if there was any joke in it, for its repetition had become impossible.

When I was a child attending school, the investigation of criminal cases was a favorite pastime for several of my teachers. I remember that many of our lessons were idled away by cross-examinations. The professor played the judge in court, and every one of the boys deemed it his duty to mislead him. It was almost impossible to learn the truth, for the *corps d'esprit* of our classes preserved the conviction that belying the teacher was the proper thing to do, and any one who had told the truth plainly, either in self-confession or in denunciation of others would have been regarded as an abject fellow who, without self-respect, bowed his neck under the yoke of our common oppressors. During my experience as a teacher at the Royal Corps of Cadets, I was never obliged to undertake any investigation, and I may add, I never had reason to doubt the word of the boys. Many of them are now officers in the German army, or may do duty in the very institution at which they were educated, and I hope they have learned to treat soldiers and cadets in the same spirit.

WORLDLY PRUDENCE.

While love of truth must become part of the foundation of a child's mind, we should not one-sidedly press the importance of truth to the utter neglect of discretion. Common prudence teaches that we have to tell the truth at the right moment and in the right way. Love of truth should not be identified with bluntness. We are by no means requested to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to everybody. We should tell the truth above all considerations where it is our duty to do so, and that depends upon circumstances.

The physician who shocks a sick man by bluntly telling him, "Your disease is fatal," may be guilty of a criminal offence in so far as he hastens the dissolution of his patient. He must be on his guard and break the truth in an appropriate way, as the occasion requires. Due reserve is not lying, and bluntness is not love of truth. We must consider the consequences of our words, and choose such expressions as will bring about the result at which we truthfully aim. We must tell the truth with discretion.

The main thing is to tell the truth to ourselves. The old evening prayer has a very good feature in its review of the day's work, and its self-criticism should, at any rate, be kept up. Whenever a child has done anything wrong, let him consider it in a quiet mood when he retires for the night, and drive home to him the lesson that, the severer he is with himself, the more apt he will be to make a success in life. Most failures in life are direct results of vanity, which prevents us from seeing our own faults. Truthfulness to ourselves must be the basis of our truthfulness to others; as Shakespeare says:

" This above all : to thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

As to cleverness and discretion, I know no better way to cultivate them than by reading with the children *Æsop's Fables* and even *Reynard the Fox*. The former have the advantage of being short, and most of them need no explanation as to the lesson involved. The moral of the latter, however, is almost dangerous, as it seems to teach that cunning is the most valuable equipment in life, and that the clever liar will win in the end. But I am not willing to reject the story on such easy terms, for many of the situations and many of the delineations of characters are too realistic and intrinsically true not to teach a useful lesson. A few words of explanation will prevent children from drawing the wrong moral from the story. First we must call their attention to the fact that all the creatures so ingeniously duped by the fox are caught by their own faults—Bruin, the bear, by his love of honey; Tibert, the cat, by his proclivity for mousing; Bellin, the ram, by his ambition to appear as a clever councillor; Kyward, the hare, by his stupidity, which in a certain sense is a vice too, and which our children must be taught to overcome as a matter of duty. It is true that Reynard is the personification of cunning, but Isegrim the wolf, his enemy, has all the faults of the fox with the sole exception that he is physically his superior, and is, in addition, voracious, improvident, slovenly, and villainous. And with what a humor are all the other characters described! Grimbart, the badger, the uncritical admirer of Reynard; Baldwin, the Ass, the learned clerk; the she-ape, Ruckinaw, an intriguing chambermaid. Noble, the lion, is a very short-sighted sovereign who becomes a mere puppet, a plaything, and, without knowing it himself, is used by Reynard as a tool. For all that, the fox remains a rascal who constantly runs the risk of ending on the gallows.

With some such hints, a reading of this ancient animal epic will be very instructive, especially if after its perusal the children are told that the tale reflects the age in which it was written—an age in which true goodness was rare and the importance of a genuine love of truth was not yet appreciated. Civilisation was then so low that cleverness, even in the low form of cunning, was uncommon, and whenever found it was appreciated as a rare gift from heaven. It takes quite a clever man to tell a lie with approximate consistency, and the *Odyssey*, written in an analogous period of culture in the Greek nation, expatiates with great satisfaction upon the virtue of lying and the mendacious genius of its versatile and inventive hero, whose usual epithet, *πολύμητις*, sounds like a translation of *Regin-hard*.¹

There can be no doubt that the animal fables, including the story of Reynard the Fox, are among the best methods, if not the very best, to teach in a playful way the first elements of worldly wisdom. The fact that *Æsop's Fables* can be traced back to India, that fables are mentioned in the Old Testament and in the history of Rome as early as the sixth century B. C.; further, that similar poetical productions of an independent growth have been discovered in the tales of Uncle Remus among the negroes of the United States, and in the animal stories of the natives of America, Africa, and Oceanica, is sufficient evidence not only of the fact that they must be a very ancient and venerable heirloom of ancestral wisdom, but also of their popularity and usefulness as a means of instruction.

Carlyle speaks of the animal fable as "a true world's book which through centuries was everywhere at home, the spirit of which diffused itself into all languages and all minds, . . . the universal household possession and secular Bible."

SQUARE DEALING.

There is an innate desire among people to get something for nothing, or to gain by a reduction of prices. On this principle those merchants base their business who announce that they are enabled by bankruptcy or otherwise to sell under the manufacturing price. While I do not deny that this is sometimes possible, there is no question that some of the goods bought in this way possess much less value than the reduced price represents. The man

¹ Reynard means "strong in council" (*regin* = wisdom, advice, council; and *hard* = strong, firm). The second part of Greek *πολύμητις* is derived from the same root as *μητιάειν*, "to deliberate," "to consider," "to devise"; and thus the entire word means "he of many devises."

who buys goods at an exorbitant price loses money, but he owns the goods. He got what he wanted. But he who buys poor goods at a reduced price loses both, money and goods, for he gave away the former, and the latter are without value and will either be useless or will not serve the purpose for which they were bought.

The fact that cheap goods are "made to sell" is admirably set forth in Dr. John Wolcott's humorous poem *The Razor Seller*, which I quote :

A fellow in a market-town,
Most musical, cried razors up and down,
And offered twelve for eighteen pence ;
Which certainly seemed wondrous cheap,
And, for the money, quite a heap,
As every man would buy, with cash and sense.

A country bumpkin the great offer heard,—
Poor Hodge, who suffered by a broad black beard,
That seemed a shoe-brush stuck beneath his nose :
With cheerfulness the eighteen pence he paid,
And proudly to himself in whispers said,
" This rascal stole the razors, I suppose.

" No matter if the fellow *be* a knave,
Provided that the razors *shave*;
It certainly will be a monstrous prize."
So home the clown, with his good fortune, went,
Smiling, in heart and soul content,
And quickly soaped himself to ears and eyes.

Being well lathered from a dish or tub,
Hodge now began with grinning pain to grub,
Just like a hedger cutting furze ;
'Twas a vile razor !—then the rest he tried,—
All were impostors. " Ah ! " Hodge sighed,
" I wish my eighteen pence within my purse,"

In vain to chase his beard, and bring the graces,
He cut, and dug, and winced, and stamped, and swore ;
Brought blood, and danced, blasphemed, and made wry faces,
And cursed each razor's body o'er and o'er :

His muzzle formed of *opposition* stuff,
Firm as a Foxite, would not lose its ruff ;
So kept it,—laughing at the steel and suds.
Hodge, in a passion, stretched his angry jaws,
Vowing the direst vengeance with clenched claws,
On the vile cheat that sold the goods.
" Razors ! a mean, confounded dog,
Not fit to scrape a hog ! "

Hodge sought the fellow,—found him,—and begun :

“ P'rhaps, Master Razor-rogue, to you 't is fun,

That people flay themselves out of their lives.

You rascal ! for an hour have I been grubbing,

Giving my crying whiskers here a scrubbing,

With razors just like oyster knives.

Sirrah ! I tell you you 're a knave,

To cry up razors that can't shave ! ”

“ Friend,” quoth the razor man, “ I'm not a knave,

As for the razors you have bought,

Upon my soul, I never thought

That they would *shave*.”

“ Not think they'd *shave* ! ” quoth Hodge, with wondering eyes,

And voice not much unlike an Indian yell ;

“ What were they made for, then, you dog ? ” he cries.

“ *Made*,” quoth the fellow with a smile,—“ *to sell*.”

It is sad, but nevertheless true, that most people who are cheated in life are deceived by their own desire to deceive. There is, for instance, a trick among gamblers, which among the uninitiated rarely fails. The gambler who plays puts down three cards and requests those present to bet on one of them. While putting down the cards, there is a disturbance somewhere behind the gambler, and he indignantly turns round, requesting the people to be quiet, and this moment of his apparent inattention is utilised by a bystander who lifts up one of the cards, shows it to some others, and puts it down again. It is done quickly enough not to be noticeable to the gambler. But woe to him who imagines that on the strength of this deception he can risk his money on the exposed card. For, when the card is turned up it proves to be different from the one he has seen. The man who lifts up and shows the card belongs to the gang, and before he puts it down again he replaces it by another one. There are, however, plenty of people who, if they but have a chance to deceive their fellow-men, venture to do so, and thus they are gulled by their own evil desires and have no reason to complain about it.

The bait which will catch the unwary with the greatest ease is flattery. Vain people are most easily inveigled and defrauded by praise, or by propositions that appeal to a sense of their own importance, or fame, or ability. The fable of the fox and the crow repeats itself more frequently than any other allegorical story, and it is worth while to have our children learn it by heart so that they will remember the lesson.

Let us teach children at an early age and as soon as they can

comprehend it, not by moralising, but by practical instances such as they observe in their surroundings, that the employment of tricks never pays; and that they should look with suspicion on every one who invites them to gain by the loss of others or by deception. To gain by cheating others is difficult; and therefore, as a mere matter of prudence, it should not be practised. In fact, one must become a professional trickster, or gambler, in order to succeed in the profession of cheating. A bird that is caught tightens the noose by its own movements. So a country clown, when victimised by a gang of tricksters, himself closes as a rule the snare into which he falls.

SYMPATHY WITH ANIMALS.

It is well to impress children at an early age with the truth that animals are as much sentient creatures as we are. It is not necessary to make children sentimental or to avoid telling them that animals are used for meat; but they should not witness such scenes as the slaughter of chickens, or pigs, or other creatures. Our Western civilisation is in many respects, and, indeed, in its most important features, superior to all other civilisations, but it is inferior to Hindu habits, in so far as it has no proper sympathy with animal life. I read, for instance, in an otherwise good book, the title of which is *The American Boy's Handy-Book*, on page 386, the following passage:

"Mr. Fred Holder, the celebrated naturalist and writer of boys' books on natural history, is responsible for 'the goose fisherman,' which is nothing more nor less than a live goose, with a line and spoon-hook attached to one leg. Mr. or Mrs. Goose is driven into the water and forced to swim, which, owing to the nature of the bird, is not a difficult or disagreeable task.

"As the bird swims, using its feet as paddles to propel itself, the spoon at the head of the line is jerked along in a most interesting manner to the fish, and if there are any pickerel, with their voracious appetites to spur them on, they cannot often restrain themselves, but needs must seize what, to them, appears to be a fat, shiny, young fish, but which they learn to their sorrow to be a hard metal snare.

"Then the fun begins. The goose feels something tugging at its leg, and becomes excited. The unfortunate fish plunges about, only to drive the cruel barbs deeper into its cartilaginous mouth, and make escape impossible.

"Finding, as it supposes, a hidden enemy in the water, the bird seeks refuge on the shore, where its master gleefully unhooks the fish, and starts the bird on another trip."

What a barbarous game! Can there be any better mode of teaching boys cruelty? And what will be the result of an education in which the distress of a goose is thought to be exciting fun? The game is not so cruel as many other sports, but it is certainly

calculated to harden a boy's heart to the sufferings of helpless animals. Hunting and fishing are good out-door exercises, but they can be tolerated only on the condition that the mind shall not dwell on the havoc which is caused in animal life. The sole inducement to hunting and fishing ought to consist in the exercise it affords, and perhaps also in the difficulties which the pursuit of the game offers.

I, for one, cannot understand how a man can shoot at a deer that does not run away but confidently and boldly faces the hunter. That hunting and fishing are sports is a mark of barbarism. They ought to be simply a business, engaged in on account of the necessity of killing a certain number of animals either for food, or because of the danger of their becoming a plague to the country, as is the case with the rabbits in California, which have to be killed, not for food, but because they destroy the harvest, and on account of their rapid increase making it a question whether they or man shall inhabit the country.

A disinclination to regard hunting as a noble sport may appear sentimental ; but I am happy to say that a man who, if he lacked any virtue, lacked in sentimentality, cherished the same opinion. Frederick the Great, who as a warrior and general is unexcelled in the history of mankind, had a great contempt for hunting, and declared that there was as little enjoyment in killing deer as there was in a butcher's killing calves. But Frederick was an exception on the throne, for hunting has always been, and is still, a royal sport, and the slaughter of game is by many sovereigns looked upon as a most important event in their lives.

The only hunting worthy of man is the lion or tiger hunt, which is heroic and means salvation of life by the destruction of those creatures that are destructive to it. But most of the hunting that is actually done is little better than mere slaughter, the worst sport being coursing, for which the animals are first caught and are then let loose for the purpose of being hunted to death.