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THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN OF FROM TWO TO FIVE YEARS OF AGE.

Synopsis of a Lecture given at Woolwich under the auspices of the City Parochial Charities by MISS KATE C. ATHERTON, M.R.B.N.A., Medallist of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

In commencing a very interesting lecture on "The Training of Children," Miss Atherton drew attention to the fact that, although one cannot change the nature of a child, much can be done by careful training and by environment so to direct his tendencies that his character will be such as to help, and not to hinder him, in the battle of life, and to make him in every sense a useful member of the community. Undue repression in the training of children is just as harmful as over-indulgence; to this, as well as to a shock or perhaps some nervous condition in childhood, mental trouble in after life is not infrequently traceable. Children have the same emotions as older people—love, jealousy, hope, and fear—and it is to be remembered that a child who has a great capacity for love has often a similar capacity for jealousy, so that his very love for others may indirectly be made the cause for stimulating a tendency to jealousy, and may give rise to a great deal of unhappiness, and even to ill-health. A child, being immature, is very crude and simple, and one of the first lessons to teach him is that of obedience. This can often be practised as a game, and, where there are two children, they can compete as to who will perform the command most quickly. In this exercise care must be taken not to carry it to the point of fatigue. Drill answers much the same purpose for older children. Organised exercises, as soon as the child is able to perform these, are very beneficial; they improve physical development, lead to unfolding of the mind, cause the child to realise that there is a right way and a wrong

way of doing the simplest thing, and unconsciously they develop in the child the habit of doing promptly what he is told.

Observation is of the greatest importance in those to whom there is entrusted the care of child life; in fact, to deal successfully with children one must, so to speak, become a child, must observe and understand to the utmost possible extent the psychology of the child mind. By observations and comparisons we arrive at conclusions which help us to understand each individual child. Take, for instance, the immoral child. Very often he will be found to be in some respect, perhaps only in a very minor degree, physically defective. It is wrong to train such a child, or one whose health is not good, on the same lines as a normal child. In such cases suggestion often plays a very important part in the training. Then there is the rheumatic child, constantly quarrelling and "grizzling"; in all probability he is nervous, delicate, timid, and difficult to please, but rarely actually ill. Such children should be treated with the greatest consideration, but should be encouraged to mix much with other children, or they are apt to develop into the "mother's darling" type, and to become an affliction alike to themselves and their elders. In studying children always observe the signs of nutrition, expression, movement, and posture. Fatigue, for instance, is often indicated by posture. Ask a tired child to extend the arms on a level with the shoulders, and it will invariably happen that the arms will droop and the thumbs hang down.

Self-control and independence should be cultivated in children. A well-managed child in this respect is usually a well-balanced adult in later life. Regularity is really the keynote to successful training, and indeed applies to a period previous to the actual birth of the child; we, who have much to do with welfare work, are constantly impressing upon the mother the importance of regular habits during pregnancy.

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