

## FAMILY REPETITIONS.\*

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All those who have anything to do with children are familiar with their oft-repeated cry, "Do it again." The more often a well-loved game is repeated or a favourite tale retold, the firmer hold it takes upon the heart of the little participant. Monotony is no bugbear to the small child, no source of ennui or boredom, the adult wearies of the constant repetition long before the little playfellow. It is difficult to say why this should be so. It seems to be generally accepted that the child prefers the familiar to the strange, the old rather than the new, and that the very rhythm produced by repetition frequently becomes a pleasure in itself. We find rhythm, which is after all nothing but repetition, forming one of the basic factors of life, as well as one of the fundamental roots of pleasure. Without rhythm or repetition, we should have but a very limited amount of music or art, because rhythm enters so largely into the structure of both. Repetition again is the basis of what we call Habit. Our Behaviour, in the sense of the American psychologists, is constructed from the sum total of our Habits, and this nearly approximates to Character.

It is interesting to note the various ways in which children and adults react towards repetition. As we have already mentioned, most children crave for it, but a few show the ennui and boredom of adults faced with monotony. We may watch the development of these two types in the reactions of adults. Some find in repetition, routine, support and assistance, while to others it proves the greatest stumbling-block. We usually find the bulk of nurses of the first type: the extreme form of which shows the patient plodder, the person who will never say die, never give in, and some day becomes either perfect through practice or at least a useful and efficient worker. It is not often that they fail absolutely. Others on the other hand cannot work upon the basis of repetition. They can succeed with one supreme effort, shine upon a particular occasion, but cannot make any sustained effort; the repetition of any class of activity produces a negative result, and they break down under the strain of monotony; a type not particularly suitable for the nursing profession.

Repetition is as great an educational factor as the mechanism of identification or imitation which was discussed in the last paper; indeed, they are essentially similar, since imitation is in fact a form of repetition, because the child is repeating the behaviour of the beloved adult. This leads us back to the early years of the child and the influence exerted upon him or her by the family. The Family is not merely a haphazard conglomeration of persons living together, but a group of individuals connected by the important tie of blood relationship. Should we consider the early history of the Family, we find two great systems at different periods of cultural development: these are, Matriarchy and Patriarchy, the mother or the father respectively being paramount. Various attempts were made at different times to change these forms of government and to institute in their place self-government, of a state of equality, but it has been always found that the ideal of equality broke down in practice and before long a leader arose, who once more represented the Head of the Family. The present day striving after self-government and equality which is to be found in schools for even quite young children, is a vigorous reaction against the rule of the Head of the

Family seen in the Victorian Era and one that comes into conflict with the Matriarchy of the Hospitals, where the Matron, representing the Mother, holds absolute sway, and to whom those under her tender their allegiance or the reverse after the pattern of their reactions towards the original mother-image.

Throughout the history of the world typical behaviour is to be observed between the old and the young generations, the children struggle to be free and their elders attempt to keep them in submission. Both are quite certain of being superior to the other, and often do not hesitate to show their belief in the inferiority of the other, an attitude which is not favourable to the mutual understanding of the two generations.

When we talk of the adult life repeating the family conditions, what else do we mean besides this faculty for finding the Mother reflected in any older woman in authority over us? The family we have already found to be a group of persons connected by a blood tie, so that it comprises other members besides the mother and child. At the commencement of life the Mother is the principal parent to both boy and girl, but later we usually find that whereas the boy retains his early preference for his mother, the girl transfers her chief affections to her father, feelings that are reciprocated by the parents in both cases. This giving and transferring of affection is a most important step in the girl's development, and in families where this normal division of affection does not exist, we may frequently discover a large proportion of nervousness, for it is essential to the healthy unfolding of the child's emotional life. Love is as necessary as food, air or sunlight, and may be equally as dangerous in super-abundance. These children who at an early age are deprived of one parent suffer from this loss very considerably, and in some ways they are only just being appreciated through psycho-analytical research.

The relation of the child to other members of the family and his or her position in the family circle exerts a great influence upon the character. The only child, for instance, finds this isolation, pleasant as it may be in some ways, somewhat lonely, and it is certainly a great detriment in later life when the child must emerge from this splendid solitude to mix with contemporaries and learn to share, to give and take, which are lessons it never learnt in the nursery. The spirit of comradeship that was omitted from childhood, is difficult to acquire during school-days or early professional life. Eldest children have much the same problem before them. At the start they were only children, but they have had the hard task of having to surrender a large part of their rights when a new baby comes into the family. They retain their birthright as eldest, however. This privilege is worth a great deal to the child-mind, even though it be balanced by the necessity of acting as a model to the others, which many children find exceedingly irksome.

The middle child occupies an awkward position, neither eldest nor youngest, having neither the rights of the first-born nor the privileges of the "Baby." Sometimes when convenient, it will be classed with the elder members of the family, with whom it tries to compete but is always out-paced to its hopeless chagrin; sometimes, when not wanted by the elder ones, sent to the nursery to play with the babies. The childish problems of these children reappear in such persons in adult life as a difficulty in finding their proper level, or in associating with contemporaries, seeking either the companionship of those much older or much younger and having no just estimation of their own capabilities, either putting them extravagantly above or below their true worth.

Frequently the youngest child remains the spoilt darling—the pet. Its easy confidence of affection from all around gives it an assurance and self-appreciation which is of value in the development of talents, unless hindered by an

\* The Third of a Course of Six Lectures delivered at 6, Guilford Place, Russell Square, W.C.1.

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