Column for Mothers.

Mrs Child, an American authoress, who, like the excellent Miss Edgeworth, has done a great deal to instil rules of conduct into the minds of young people, by means of a series of useful little works, gives the following valuable advices to mothers on the subject of teaching children politeness:—

"In politeness, as in many other things connected with the formation of character, people in general begin outside, when they should begin inside; instead of beginning with the heart, and trusting that to form the manners, they begin with the manners, and trust the heart to chance influences. The *golden rule* contains the very life and soul of politeness. Children may be taught to make a graceful courtesy, or a gentlemanly bow; but unless they have likewise been taught to abhor what is selfish, and always prefer another's comfort and pleasure to their own, their politeness will be entirely artificial, and used only when it is their interest to use it. On the other hand, a truly benevolent kind-hearted person will always be distinguished for what is called native politeness, though entirely ignorant of the conventional forms of society.

I by no means think graceful manners of small importance. They are the outward form of refinement in the mind, and good affections in the heart, and as such must be lovely. But when the form exists without the vital principle within, it is as cold and lifeless as flowers carved in marble.

Politeness, either of feeling or of manner, can never be taught by set maxims. Every-day influence, so unconsciously exerted, is all-important in forming the characters of children, and in nothing more important than in their manners. If you be habitually polite, your children will become so, by the mere force of imitation, without any specific directions on the subject. Your manners at home should always be such as you wish your family to have in company. Politeness will then be natural to them; they will possess it, without thinking about it. But when certain outward observances are urged in words, as important only because they make us pleasing, they assume an undue importance, and the unworthiness of the motive fosters selfishness. Besides, if our own manners are not habitually consistent with the rules we give, they will be of little avail; they will in all probability be misunderstood, and will certainly be forgotten.

Foreigners charge the Americans with a want of courtesy to each other in their usual intercourse; and I believe there is some truth in the accusation. On all great occasions, however, they are ready, heart and hand, to assist each other; but how much more gracefully and happily the French manage in the ten thousand petty occurrences of life! And, after all, life is made up of small events. The golden chain of existence is composed of innumerable little links; and if we rudely break them, we injure its strength, as well as mar its beauty.

It is a graceful habit for children to say to each other, 'Will you have the goodness?'—and 'I thank you.' I do not like to see prim, artificial children; there are few things I dislike so much as a miniature beau or belle. But the habit of good manners by no means implies affectation or restraint. It is quite as easy to say, 'Please to give me a piece of pie,' as to say, 'I want a piece of pie.'

The idea that constant politeness would render social life too stiff and restrained, springs from a false estimate of politeness. True politeness is perfect ease and freedom. It simply consists in treating others just as you love to be treated yourself. A person who acts from this principle will always be said to have 'sweet pretty ways with her.' It is of some consequence that your daughter should know how to enter and leave a room gracefully; but it is of prodigiously more consequence that she should be in the habit of avoiding whatever is disgusting or offensive to others, and of always preferring their little pleasure to her own. If she have the last, a very little intercourse with the world will teach her the first.

I believe nothing tends to make people so awkward as too much anxiety to please others. Nature is graceful; and affectation, with all her art, can never produce any thing half so pleasing. The very perfection of elegance is to imitate nature as closely as possible; and how much better it is to have the reality than the imitation! I shall probably be reminded that the best and most unaffected people are often constrained and awkward in company to which they are unaccustomed. I answer, the reason is, they do not act themselves—they are afraid they shall not do right, and that very fear makes them do wrong. Anxiety about the opinion of others fetters the freedom of nature. At home, where they act from within themselves, they would appear a thousand times better. All would appear well, if they never tried to assume what they did not possess. Every body is respectable and pleasing so long as he is perfectly natural. I will make no exception—Nature is *always* graceful. The most secluded and the most ignorant have some charm about them, so long as they affect nothing—so long as they speak and act from the impulses of their own honest hearts, without any anxiety as to what others think of it.

Coarseness and vulgarity are the effects of education and habit; they cannot be charged upon nature. True politeness may be cherished in the hovel as well as in the palace; and the most tattered drapery cannot conceal its winning charms.

As far as is consistent with your situation and duties, early accustom your children to an intercourse with strangers. I have seen young persons who were respectful and polite at home, seized with a most painful and unbecoming bashfulness as soon as a guest entered. To avoid this evil, allow children to accompany you as often as possible, when you make calls and social visits. Occasional interviews with intelligent and cultivated individuals have a great influence on early character and manners, particularly if parents evidently place a high value upon acquaintances of that description. I have known the destiny of a whole family changed for the better, by the friendship of one of its members with a person of superior advantages and correct principles.

But it must be remembered that a call, or a social visit, may be made almost as injurious as a party, if children be encouraged in showing off, or constantly habituated to hearing themselves talked about. Much as the failing has been observed and laughed at, it is still too common for mothers to talk a great deal about their children. The weariness with which strangers listen to such domestic accounts is a slight evil compared with the mischief done to children, by inducing them to think themselves of so much importance: they should never be taught to consider themselves of any consequence, except at home in the bosom of their own families.

Nothing tends to foster the genuine politeness which springs from good feeling, so much as scrupulous attention to the aged. There is something extremely delightful and salutary in the free and happy intercourse of the old and young. The freshness and enthusiasm of youth cheers the dreariness of age; and age can return the benefit a hundred-fold, by its mild maxims of experience and wisdom. In this country, youth and age are too much separated; the young flock together, and leave the old to themselves. We seem to act upon the principle that there cannot be sympathy between these two extremes of life; whereas there may be in fact a most charming sympathy—a sympathy more productive of mutual benefit than any other in the world.

The aged, from the loneliness of their situation, the want of active employment, and an enfeebled state of health, are apt to look upon the world with a gloomy eye, and sometimes their gloom is not unmixed with bitterness; hence arises the complaint of their harshness and asperity towards the follies of youth. These evils, so naturally growing out of their isolated situation, would seldom gain power over the old, if they were accustomed to gentleness, attention, and deference from the young; they would be softened by juvenile love, and cheered by juvenile gaiety. Such intercourse sheds a quiet brightness on the decline of life, like sunshine on a weather-beaten tree, or a moss-covered dwelling. What is there on earth more beautiful than an aged person full of content and benevolence!

One very prevalent fault among children is a want of politeness to domestics. Young people should not, from mere whim and caprice, be allowed to make demands upon the time and patience of those who are hired to attend upon the family. They should make no unnecessary trouble in the kitchen; and when they ask for any thing, they should speak politely, saying, 'Will you have the goodness?' 'I thank you,' &c. Such conduct greatly tends to make domestics more respectful, kind, and obliging.

Mrs Madison was esteemed the most thoroughly polite woman in America. Others might perhaps enter a room as gracefully, or superintend at table with as much dignity; the secret of her power lay in her wonderful adaptation to all sorts of characters. She was emphatically an *observing woman*. As Jefferson had no wife, she presided sixteen years at Washington, during all which time she is said never to have forgotten the most trifling peculiarities of character, that had once come under her observation: she always remembered them, and fashioned her conversation accordingly. Some may object to the exercise of this power, lest it should lead to insincerity; and the charge may well be brought against that kind of false politeness, which springs merely from a love of popularity. Politeness is not the only good thing corrupted by an unworthy motive; all precious coins have a counterfeit. When we are polite to others entirely for *our own sakes*, we are deceitful; nothing selfish has truth and goodness in it. But there is such a thing as true politeness, always kind, but never deceitful. It is right to cherish good-will towards all our fellow-creatures, and to endeavour to make them as happy as we conscientiously can. The outward forms of politeness are but the expressions of such feelings as should be in every human heart. It would be wrong to tell people we love them dearly, when in fact we know nothing about them; or to urge them to visit our houses, when we do not want to see them. But we are bound to be kind and attentive to all our fellow-creatures when they come in our way, and to avoid giving them any unnecessary pain, by our manners and conversation.

In order to teach children the right sort of politeness, it must be taught through the agency of a pure motive. They should not be taught to observe and respect the feelings of others for the sake of making themselves pleasing, but merely because it is kind and benevolent to do so.

Outward politeness can be learned in set forms at school; but at the best, it will be hollow and deceptive. Genuine politeness, like every thing else that is genuine, must come from the heart."

JANET AND HER WEB.

Many years ago, in the parish of Carsphairn, in Galloway—a rude and sequestered district—there were only three freemasons, the minister, and a tailor, and a mason. The mason, being desirous to introduce his son to the same mystery, caused a lodge to be called for the purpose at a lonely cottage, where the ceremonies were proceeding when a knock was heard at the door. The mason, whose name was Dun, went to see who it was, and found an old woman, who addressed him as follows:—

"The masons are met the nicht?"

"Yes."

"Weel, ye ken my web was stolen last week."

"Yes, Janet; but what business has that wi' the mason meeting?"

"Ou, ye ken, ye'll be raising the de'il, and I wad just like if you wad ask him, *since he's there at ony rate*, wha stole the web."

"Oh, ay, Janet; just you gang away, then, and we'll see what we can do."

Mr Dun then returned to the interior of the cottage, and mentioned to the minister what had passed between him and the old woman. The clergyman rebuked him severely for conceding to the superstitious notions of the aged crone, and said he feared that it would "affront them a'." "Nae fear o' that," answered the mason; "just leave it all to me."

Next day, when Janet called upon Mr Dun, he told her that "the de'il" had not exactly communicated the name of the thief, but he had mentioned that if the goods were not returned before Thursday next, the house of the guilty person would fall upon him in the night-time, and the whole family would be killed. This, he said, was a great secret, and he strictly forbade her communicating it to more than one person.

Away went Janet, quite satisfied; although it might have been expected to occur to her, that the prediction of punishment to a thief was not exactly a characteristic piece of conduct on the part of Old Nick. The secret was speedily imparted to her next-door neighbour, with many injunctions as to the propriety of letting it go no farther; notwithstanding which, it was known to the whole parish before night.

On the third morning thereafter, Janet's web was found lying at her door, with a part which had been cut off attached to the main body of it with pins. The story is here (for the first time) put into print, as in two respects illustrative of the superstitions which at no distant period prevailed among the rustic people of this country. If a web were now stolen in a country place, neither would the loser think of consulting the devil for the name of the culprit, nor would the culprit be in any fear of immediate vengeance from that spirit.

LACE MADE BY CATERPILLARS.

A most extraordinary species of manufacture (says Mr Babbage, in his work on Manufactures) has been contrived by an officer of engineers residing at Munich. It consists of lace and veils, with open patterns in them, made entirely by caterpillars. The following is the mode of proceeding adopted:—Having made a paste of the leaves of the plant on which the species of caterpillar he employs feeds, he spreads it thinly over a stone, or other flat substance, of the required size. He then, with a camel-hair pencil dipped in olive oil, draws the pattern he wishes the insects to leave open. This stone is then placed in an inclined position, and a considerable number of the caterpillars are placed at the bottom. A peculiar species is chosen which spins a strong web, and the animals commence at the bottom, eating and spinning their way up to the top, carefully avoiding every part touched by the oil, but devouring every other part of the paste. The extreme lightness of these veils, combined with some strength, is truly surprising. One of them, measuring twenty-six and a half inches by seventeen inches, weighed only 1.51 grains, a degree of lightness which will appear more strongly by contrast with other fabrics. One square yard of the substance of which these veils are made weighs four grains and one-third, whilst one square yard of silk gauze weighs one hundred and thirty-seven grains, and one square yard of the finest patent net weighs two hundred and sixty-two grains and a half. The ladies' coloured muslin dresses cost ten shillings per dress, and each weighs six ounces, the cotton from which they are made weighing nearly six and two-ninth ounces avoirdupois weight.

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