HINTS FROM A MOTHER'S LIFE

BY MRS. WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE

IN THREE PAPERS—SECOND PAPER

[*Continued from the April* JOURNAL]

ONE of the first points to be considered with the view of promoting a baby's healthy development, is respiration. Every time we breathe we take in an influence either for good or for evil, according to the quality of the air which surrounds us. Upon this point we cannot place too much emphasis, since it is precisely as we breathe that we live. In more respects than one are we creatures of our surroundings.

VALUE OF FRESH AIR FOR INFANTS

AS so large a part of infant existence is necessarily spent within doors, we ought never to lose sight of the fact that every moment of our lives is influenced by the air we breathe. Again, we must remember that "The blood is the life;" its action affects every part of the organization. How important, then, is the supply and the quality of the blood, and how necessary it is to know that pure air contributes to its health and nutritive power. To prove this, we have only to notice the wonderful revival of a poor little child when removed from some foul, vitiated atmosphere, and permitted to breathe sweet, fresh air.

On this point let me quote the words of one who speaks with all the authority of a great name, Miss Florence Nightingale. It will be seen that she has a word of warning for foolish extremes, while earnestly advocating pure air. "It is all nonsense what some old nurses say, that you can't give a baby fresh air without giving it a chill; and, on the other hand, you may give a baby a chill which will kill it (by letting a draught blow upon it when it is being washed, for instance, and chilling its whole body, though only for a moment) without giving it fresh air at all. And depend upon this, the less fresh air you give to its lungs, and the less water you give to its skin, so much the more liable it will be to colds and chills."

Let me here strongly protest against the foolish fashion of half smothering a sleeping baby, covering its head and mouth, at the risk of stifling it outright. This is the more senseless, as, by common consent, babies' caps have gone out of use, presumably because the advantage of keeping the head cool has been recognized.

Cots and beds in the nursery should be uncurtained, or nearly so. We might almost as well lay the child to sleep on the shelf of a press, or at the bottom of a packing box, as in a cot closely curtained round. An authentic story is told of a well-constituted child passing within a few minutes from a condition of spasmodic irritation, bordering on convulsions, into perfect health, owing simply to the admission of fresh air into a close, ill-ventilated nursery.

A thermometer should be kept in the rooms, and should not rise above 60° F., overheating being as unwholesome as the reverse.

Nervous irritability is a prominent characteristic of infancy, and pure air will be found to act as one of the most powerful nervous sedatives upon the tender system of a child. Whatever, therefore, affects the purity of the atmosphere should be quickly removed; proper places provided for dirty linen, etc. The air of bedrooms should be perfectly fresh; especially should we beware of "tired air" creeping in from the day nursery, just before the children's bedtime; chimneys should be kept open, bedclothes turned back and exposed to the air as soon as the child is up.

A FEW PRACTICAL NURSERY HINTS

FOLLOWING Miss Nightingale's example, however, in the extract given above, we must put in a word of caution against draughts. These can often be efficiently guarded against by the use of screens, and a little common sense should be exercised as to the position of the cots, the bath, etc.

Let me here again quote Dr. Squire, the writer whose words I referred to in my first article:

"The importance of careful and efficient ventilation of the rooms occupied by children can hardly be over-estimated. The air of a closed room soon loses its freshness, even when unoccupied. Chemically the proportion of oxygen may not be appreciably altered, but the more active, or organized part of it is changed. Innumerable particles are brought into contact with it, which, if not 'stealing and giving odors,' may add what is imperceptibly injurious, and will certainly take away from it the quality of freshness. Movement of air through a room is a first essential of ventilation. Then the quantity and rate of movement has to be considered, taking care that the temperature and other qualities are so preserved as to be both pleasant and wholesome.

"The efficient ventilation of a child's first nursery, under the special conditions of warmth required, demands a full allowance of cubic space to begin with. In calculating the necessary space for bedrooms, where equable warmth is required, any height exceeding ten feet is disadvantageous, and to be left out of account."

A ROOM fifteen feet square and nine feet high affords ample initial cubic space for a nurse and two children. With good and careful management, a nurse, infant, and two other young children have occupied a bedroom of this size without detriment to health. No useless articles of furniture or of drapery were allowed entrance; both a dressing-room and a bathroom were close at hand; care was taken to keep the air of the room pure; no open vessels were allowed to remain; the door, never quite closed, admitted light and air from the passage; the two windows were partly open on the summer nights; and the fire always lighted before bedtime in the winter. Children from seven to nine, or ten years of age may have separate bedrooms, and after that age a separate dormitory for each is requisite. A space fourteen or fifteen feet by eight or nine feet wide, permits of a bed four feet wide to be placed between the door and the wall, and a fireplace in the opposite wall to be beyond the foot of the bed. No double-bedded room should be less than fifteen feet square, and no bedroom should be without a fireplace.

The room door may be left partly open, and there will mostly be an open door either from the dressing room or the nurse's room. The doors must be so hung that when partly opened they will shield the bed, rather than direct the current of air onto it. The windows in the summer can be left a little open at the top; they should be provided with shutters, both to keep off draught and to shut out some of the light when this may be necessary; they aid materially in lessening the chill that in cold weather always strikes in from the windows. A stout linen or jute fabric makes a good protective window-curtain for the winter. All woolen hangings are objectionable in a bedroom, as they readily absorb moisture, and all organic particles suspended in it or floating in the air. The ceiling of the room should be such as to bear rubbing over; it is better of a gray or cream color than white, so as not to reflect too much light on the upward gaze of children. The walls of the bedroom are better distempered, or painted in some even tone of quiet color. If the wall is papered, it should be varnished over, and the paper must have no bright-colored, intricate pattern-spots, and no vivid greens likely to contain arsenic. The floor must not be carpeted all over, certainly not under the bed, and it is better to have the boards stained and left bare round the sides of the room. The top edge of the skirting-board should be rounded off in all rooms for children. Iron bed-frames should have round edges. Slips of soft carpet by the sides of the bed, and from the door to the fireplace, if not all over the center of the room, are sufficient. Kidderminster carpets are better than those of more open texture for bedrooms, and Dutch carpets, with a smooth woolen surface over a hempen framework, are specially suitable for children's rooms and the passages leading to them.

The windows, except for bedrooms, should always be continued up nearly to the ceiling, and are better lofty than large. In the evening, when lights are burning, they may be opened a little near the top, with such arrangements of curtains as to protect those in the room from draughts.

WASHING AND DRESSING A BABY

IN small houses, while the family is small, the best rooms are very properly used as nurseries. The nursing is good, for it is directly under the mother's eye. Here some of the common cares and duties that make a good nurse are practically taught. The simple precautions thus learned are not always attended to when the nurse acts independently of the mother. Old custom lingers long in nursery matters, longest, perhaps, in the first traditional handling of infants, where the experience of the nurse has to be trusted to. The most "experienced nurse" has to be distrusted. Experience is often pleaded as an excuse for carelessness, or as a cause for the nurse's convenience coming before the welfare of the child. To some nurses it is too much trouble to use a thermometer for the infant's bath, they can tell if it is the right heat; if not, it has been said, the infant will cry and look red if the water be too hot, blue if too cold. They are slow, also, to consult the thermometer on the wall; they like the room to be warm, and prefer a bright light from gas or lamps, when the night-light is all that should be allowed.

The temperature of the water used for washing an infant should be nearly that of the surface of the body—96° or 98° F. As the child grows older, the heat of the water should be gradually lessened, while the limbs should be allowed free exercise in a large tub. Some children do not bear cold water well; good sense, discrimination, and observation should be our guides in this as in all other matters.

VIGOROUS rubbing after the bath contributes much to the health of children as they leave infancy behind them. Of course a baby's tender skin should be most tenderly dried. It is soothed and protected by the use of violet powder after being washed. The best toilet powders are, in some degree, antiseptic, and are constantly improving in this direction.

Care should be taken with regard to nursery fireplaces. Iron or wire guards are really indispensable to prevent the terrible accidents which are only too common. It is, of course, well to wash and dress a baby near the fire, but mothers and nurses should never allow the child's eyes to be exposed to the glare of the fire, or its head to be heated. We should always bear in mind the delicate organization of an infant's eyes and brain, and the excitability of its nervous system.

An infant no sooner breathes than the heat of the body attains the normal. The first differences of warm or cold felt by the skin, the first sense of touch, excite the requisite movements to bring air into contact with the newly-diverted blood current, and life goes on at a full rate. Respiration is aided by a child's first exertion in crying; washing and rubbing also afford an exercise beyond the muscular kicks and struggles excited; all these quicken change and tend to develop heat.

When a child is put to sleep, whether by night or by day, light and noise should be carefully excluded. Even when they do not prevent sleep, they tend to render it unrefreshing.

Children sometimes suffer fatigue or chill from the way in which they are first dressed in the morning. They require a biscuit, or some milk as soon as they get up, and before the ablutions begin. It is much better to give them a general wash in warmed water, in which they could stand while being sponged over with cool or tepid water, than to chill them when their powers of reaction are at their lowest. The soap used should not be irritating from excess of alkali, or from impure and imperfectly combined ingredients. Babies most easily suffer from this, and also from want of care in the warmth of the water used, or from harsh rubbing.

In my next article, I will discuss the baby's clothing, and the importance of training children by rules of order and neatness.

PATIENT WORK OF MOTHERHOOD

BY MRS. JOHN WANAMAKER

FOR no other memory of life can we be so thankful as for the one that goes back so far that it seems to be the first of all impressions, the face and form and influence of a Christian mother. That picture, of all pictures the most beautiful, is a talisman at every step of the life road. To be in your own child's heart and life what your mother was to you, is not the least of loving and loyal things in honoring her memory, or in serving the small man or little woman who has come into your home to call you mother.

Better than the old silver, or rare China heirlooms, to hand down to those who are growing up in our homes, is the memory portrait of a mother's tireless watch and work in forming the character of the children. The painting of such a picture is not the flash or dash of one inspired hour, but the patient mother-work of every day, commencing early with each young life, by no other artist than herself. However much we owe to others for help in child training, if the genius and soul of the mother does not make the portrait, the image in the child-heart can never be the same in its influence and power.

The colors of the mother-artist must be wisely chosen, mixed with prayer and purpose and plan, and ground fresh every day for that day's particular work. "Neither chance nor convenience can produce a masterpiece," said one of the greatest living artists. "I mean to paint a great picture of the most important moment in the history of the war. It shall be the *chef d'œuvre* of my life. I shall read all the books of your generals and historians. I shall spend a year in consulting living witnesses of the war and visiting battle-fields, and then two years more shall be given to painting the picture." If the works of art that record our history are worthy of such forethought and planning, surely the painter himself, who creates them, is much more worthy of years of training and preparation for his work. That work of education must have first of all for its foundation the self-consecration of the mother. Every gleam of intelligence and indication of character must be caught and saved, day by day, in love's camera, until a well-matured plan is wrought out on which the new life is to be builded. Happy that mother who, in after days, comparing the up-grown child to the first plan for its life, can say, like the architect of the great bridge on the day of its completion: "It is like the plan; I am satisfied."

That beautiful May day in 1890, when the gentle-hearted old philanthropist of Cleveland, Mr. Wade, accompanied his friend through the structure erected as a memorial to President Garfiled, he said, modestly: "I have spent years on this work; I could not afford to make a mistake and build it into permanence in stone and iron." Great as is the undertaking to build a bridge to be entrusted with human life, or the erection in enduring granite of the nation's tribute to a martyr president, the responsibility is incomparably greater in framing and girding a character that must stand through the eternal ages. The lofty tower of the cathedral, dangerous because slightly out of plumb, splitting with the weight and vibration of the bell, can be taken down and rebuilt aright, but the towering life-structure—never.

The training of children, either girls or boys, should be commenced at that moment when the mother can see in them the first gleam of the knowledge of right and wrong; when they know for the first time that one action merits—whether it receive it or not—reward, and another punishment, because of the action itself, not because of their parents' will. Prior to this, training can be nothing more than disciplining, but when this time arrives the mother's real duties commence, and from that moment date her responsibilities. Girls and boys require very much the same treatment in this matter of training, and I do not know that I believe in making very much, if any, distinction in it. The same amount of firmness, of common sense, of respect to individual character and regard for individual talents should be shown in the one case as in the other.

The greatest care must be exercised by the mother, as her children grow older, to retain their affection, to be one of, and one with them; to have her daughters talk over the people, and especially the men they meet, with her as they would with any girl friend, and to keep an ever-watchful eye over their girl and men friends alike. I believe most sincerely in girls' friendships, in the friendships a girl makes after she is fourteen or fifteen. They are apt to be her friends for all time, and the years of simple enjoyment and of care-exempted pleasures that come before the responsibilities of later life are assumed, are among if not the brightest of her life. After a girl is twenty she is very apt to make friends of married women, women other than those she has known in early girlhood, and who have since married. On these married friends she often lavishes affection and admiration in larger quantities than she has before given her girl friends. Such friendships are—if their objects are the right kind of women, and a careful mother will prevent an intimacy with any other kind—of great benefit to a girl, showing her a wider sphere of woman's influence than she has yet investigated. And anything which widens the appreciation and opens the intellect is valuable.

In these favored days no boy or girl has a finished education if it does not include acquaintance and skill in some calling that will yield a support in case of necessity. Not a human being of fair ability lives to-day in this country who cannot get an education sufficient to be independent of relatives and friends for a living. The "working plan" is wisest that includes the physical, intellectual and spiritual sides of each life. Girls and boys alike need plenty of fresh air in which to study, play and sleep. The fashion of English girls to walk in the country and climb the hills might well be copied in this land. The badly-ventilated recitation rooms of many of the public schools, not always from want of defective construction of the buildings, but often for want of thought or care of the janitor or governing director, is enough to invite the germs of ill health. One look at the white faces, narrow chests and bent shoulders of growing girls tells the story of lost power that no physic can restore—the overheating in many a mansion of nursery and living rooms, of which at the time we are unconscious until the slightest exposure of the winter's blast beats down the frail hot-house plant. Not infrequently the certain cause of the colds and fevers and pneumonias that turn the winter house into a hospital can be traced to badly-managed furnaces and poorly-ventilated homes.

Outdoor exercise for both girls and boys, skating, horseback riding, rowing, lawn tennis and the old-fashioned, almost out of sight croquet, promote healthy development of mind and muscle; ruddy cheeks and firm and graceful steps are best found in open air, along country roads, in the perfume of the clover fields and the scent of the autumn leaves. If the mind is to do its very best its first setting is a healthy body. With perfect health the path of intellectual training is smoother to the teacher and the taught. These are the golden days of American youth. The abundance and reduced cost of books, the new systems of teaching in kindergarten, seminary and college for girls and boys, the liberal endowments and appliances of educational institutions, bring the young people of to-day a priceless inheritance. Right well may they be glad that they were not born earlier, when there were fewer keys in reach to unlock the storehouses of knowledge, and less opportunity to put in motion the hidden forces and sleeping powers with which almost every life is endowed. With all the assistance offered, and encouragements in obtaining education, it must, nevertheless, be kept in mind that the proffered aids are but stepping stones, and the endeavor and actual effort must be the act of each brave-hearted young man and woman. While no one in these days need be without an education, yet the extent and character of it rests wholly with each individual. Close to the old-time class rooms, doors open into shops and studies where the eye and hand are taught the use of tool and brush and chisel; so that beside Greek and Latin the scholar can enter upon the lifework with practical knowledge.

For the really perfect life add to physical and intellectual attainments the culture of the heart; that life is one-sided that treads the round of counting-room or "change," of mill or workshop solely for the purpose of acquiring wealth or position. The development of the higher spiritual nature is needful to a well-rounded life and to reach the clearer air of peace and content. If the better manhood and womanhood within us is to have proper growth, the heart must be kept warm by pure friendships, right living and kindly deeds. The blessing of God on each day is not the impossible thing that so many think, and one such day counts more than a year unblest. Rich indeed is that son or daughter who is launched from the home shipyard with the equipment of a healthy body, cultivated mind and uplooking heart; no sea is too wide, no mountain too high and no task too great for such an one to overcome.

HINTS FROM A MOTHER'S LIFE

BY MRS. WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE

IN THREE PAPERS—CONCLUDING PAPER

[*Continued from the May* JOURNAL]

MRS. GLADSTONE

WHEN we approach the subject of the clothes of infants, the most important fact to be borne in mind is to have the clothing light, soft, and warm, varying with the seasons—so adapted that it may be put on and taken off easily. This latter point should always be borne in mind when either purchasing or making an infant's clothing, so that the child may be saved as much discomfort as possible while its clothing is being changed.

THE DRESSING OF AN INFANT

EVERY mother should see that the dress of an infant will admit of expansion of chest and stomach, with perfect freedom for limbs and joints. Much irritation, as Dr. Squire says, "is produced by keeping damp clothes close to the skin, and more when caustic soda has been used in washing, and is left from careless rinsing and drying. All impervious wraps are to be avoided; there must be frequent changes of linen." The supply of animal heat in a baby being small, the dress should be chosen with a view to warmth, but while taking every care to maintain a comfortable and equable warmth, do not coddle or overheat the child; beware of loading it with too many clothes, and of covering the neck with warm shawls or tippets within doors. All that is wanted is to keep the upper part of the dress sufficiently high to protect the chest and arms, for over-heating is bad and relaxing.

Exceptional circumstances, of course, demand exceptional care; for instance, in a case of premature birth the preservation of vital heat is the one thing to be attended to; it is safest to wrap the baby in flannel, or, as has been done with good effect, to imbed it in a basket of cotton wool, and not to expose it to air at all—at all events not till the doctor comes.

Never overlook the tendency in young children at the period of teething to nervous excitement. Keep the head cool. Avoid oversoft pillows, close wrapping up of the head, and heavy bonnets or hats. How often, from affection and pride, a velvet hat is chosen, laden with feathers or trimmings, which oppresses the poor little head. Such things are objectionable both in winter and summer. I would also warn mothers against the turned-up hat; it is almost sickening to see the poor children in perambulators, with the sun's full glare beating upon the susceptible head and eyes.

ON THE USE OF PERAMBULATORS

HERE I must allow myself a short digression upon the misuse of perambulators. Very valuable in themselves, when used with proper attention and common sense, it is difficult to speak with any patience of the cruel folly so often seen in the use of them. There are the sudden jerks, the rushes at dangerous crossings, the poor babies left to sleep in every variety of unwholesome posture; these and other heedlessnesses expose children to the risk of chills, with all their train of evil consequences, sunstrokes and even spinal injuries.

Nurses should exercise common sense, both out-doors and at home, to guard against the opposite dangers of heating and chilling children. How often does the former practice lead to the latter result?

Short contact with quite cold air or water, truly remarks the wise Dr. Squire, is injurious to infants; and prolonged exposure to the low temperature of a cold house or chamber still more so; most so when the air is not only cold but damp. In houses otherwise healthy, the onset of acute disease in children, of inward congestions, glandular swelling, tubercle, dropsy, has started from the occurrence of unusually low temperature in their rooms during exceptionally cold weather, when the means of obtaining sufficient warmth have been neglected or applied with difficulty. Children are also to be guarded against sudden changes of temperature. After some days in a well-warmed room the first promenade should be short. A child four or five years old cannot bear a long walk in cold weather, but soon tires, and is then still more liable to suffer from cold. Out of doors, children passing from a sheltered to an exposed position, the turn of a street, the draught in a passage, may get a chill: or returning indoors hot and excited from running or play, the wraps are removed, though the room to which they have returned is only half warmed, perhaps has become too far cooled from open windows or neglected fire, they catch cold more on coming indoors than on going out. An infant in arms is often chilled in this way; closely muffled at starting out, carried near the nurse's body under warm coverings, or shut in a carriage with closed windows, it is brought home hot and perspiring, and laid down asleep (its load of clothes removed) on a cold cot in the chill quiet of the bedroom, while the other children prepare for dinner; no wonder the youngest suffers first. Not only should the woolen clothes and coverings not be removed at once, but the chamber thermometer should be consulted. Prevention of illness is better than cure, and for both objects a thermometer in the children's room is indispensable.

HABITS OF ORDER AND MORAL TRAINING

I WILL now dwell shortly upon the importance of training the children themselves by means of good order and rule, and quiet, gentle discipline.

Children imitate before they can reason, hence the importance of setting them a good example from the first. How will it be, if instead of this they get used to seeing articles left about, drawers open, untidiness in little daily matters?

On the other hand, what a picture of brightness and happiness is the well-ordered nursery? "A place for everything, and everything in its place"—cheerful faces, freshness, innocent mirth. In these little ways the training for the future, both of mind and body, is begun, developing as they do with the child's growth. A notion seems sometimes to prevail that attention to trifling matters such as these should be set aside for the sake of more important considerations, but surely "these ought ye to do, and not to leave the others undone."

Our first notions of home start from the nursery. Here, where all the wants of early life are met, healthy development soon leads to conscious comfort. The youngest child has this happy knowledge. Rooted in the nursery, it grows and gains upon us there. Children come to feel that food, rest, quiet and pleasant ease belong to the place to which they are always brought back after all the changes that excite or tire, where some one shows them care and love, and the greeting of another self is sure. This kindly attention, with all around orderly, clean and cheerful, not only makes childhood happy, but leads to strength, good nature, trust, courage and virtue.

Such elements of comfort and completeness in a house are always serviceable; no better accommodations could be offered to friends or visitors than what is designed for the most cherished members of a family. If happily peopled by children, this part of home becomes to them the dearest spot on earth. It may afterward be the delight of children's children, the rallying point or center of a family, that shall attract its many members and hold them together, knitting the generations each to each.

It is the wise and loving discipline of nursery days which lays the foundation of all that is pure, and good, and lovely, and strong, in the character of man or woman. Upon the foundation given to a house much depends, almost everything in fact, and the same is true of a human being.

A FEW CLOSING WORDS

AND thus we are led, before closing these few hints, to say a word or two upon that most serious and vitally important subject, the moral influence of the nursery. Total ignorance upon this aspect of our little children's lives is only too common; and mothers, who anxiously "get up" all needful facts about the matters referred to above—ventilation, drainage, warmth, wholesome food, and clothing—never think of the watchful care necessary from the first, to train aright the natural instincts, and what may be called the moral germs of the little being whose immortal soul is unfolding in the midst, alas! of a world of sin and evil. Unutterable is the mischief that may be brought about by wicked, coarse-minded, or grossly ignorant nurses and nursery-girls. This is not the place to go into details upon so painful a subject; let it suffice to draw the attention of mothers to this matter, and earnestly appeal to them, as they love their little ones, to be on their guard.

In conclusion, we could scarcely do better than to carry away with us the wise words of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell:

"The youth who has grown up from childhood under the guardianship of really wise parents, in a true home, with all its ennobling influences, and has been strengthened by enlightened religious instruction, has gradually grown toward the natural human type." And again, and I am content that these shall be the closing words to this brief series of articles for American mothers:

"The mother's eye, full of tenderness, . . . must always watch over her children. Self-respect cannot be too early inculcated. . . . . Every thoughtless breach of delicacy should be checked with a gentle gravity, which will not repel or abash, but impress the child. . . . . In work or in play, in infancy or youth, the parent should be the first natural friend."

EDITOR'S NOTE—Mrs. Gladstone's series, concluded with this article, was commenced in the April JOURNAL, and copies of that and the May issues can be had for 10 cents each by sending to the JOURNAL office.