

exile—the “History of the Peloponnesian War,” by Thucydides; the “History of the Rebellion,” by Lord Clarendon. Fortescue, the Chief Justice in Henry VI.’s reign, wrote his great work on the laws of England under the same circumstances. Locke was a refugee in Holland when he penned his memorable “Letter concerning Toleration,” and put the finishing touches to his immortal “Essay on the Human Understanding.” Lord Bolingbroke had also “left his country for his country’s good” when he was engaged on the works by which he will be best remembered. Everybody knows Dante’s sad tale, and his miserable wanderings from city to city while the “Divine Comedy” was in course of production. Still more melancholy is it to review the formidable array of great works which were composed within the walls of a prison. First came the “Pilgrim’s Progress” and “Don Quixote;” the one written in Bedford Gaol, the other in a squalid dungeon in Spain. James I. (of Scotland) penned his sweet poem, “The Kynge’s Quhair,” while a prisoner in Windsor Castle; and the loveliest of Lord Surrey’s verses were written in the same place, under the same circumstances. Sir Walter Raleigh’s “History of the World” was composed in the Tower. George Buchanan executed his brilliant Latin version of the Psalms while incarcerated in Portugal. “Fleta,” one of the most valuable of our early law works, took its name from the fact of its having been compiled by its author in the Fleet Prison. Boethius’ “Consolations of Philosophy,” De Foe’s “Review” and “Hymn to the Pillory,” Voltaire’s “Henriade,” Howel’s “Familiar Letters”—to which we have recently directed attention—Dr. Dodd’s “Prison Thoughts,” Grotius’ “Commentary on St. Matthew,” and the amusing “Adventures of Dr. Syntax,” all these were produced

in the gloomy cells of a common prison. Tasso wrote some of the loveliest of his sonnets in a mad-house, and Christopher Smart his “Song to David”—one of the most eloquent sacred lyrics in our language—while undergoing confinement in a similar place. Poor Nathaniel Lee, the dramatist, is said to have revolved some of his tragedies in lucid intervals within the walls of a lunatic asylum. Plautus fabricated some of his Comedies in a bakehouse. The great Descartes, Berni the Italian poet, and Boyse the once well-known author of “The Deity,” usually wrote while lying in bed. Hooker meditated his “Ecclesiastical Polity” while rocking the cradle of his child; and Richardson slowly elaborated his romances among the compositors of his printing-office. Byron composed the greater part of “Lara” while engaged at his toilet-table, and his “Prologue at the Opening of Drury Lane Theatre” in a stage-coach. Moore’s gorgeous Eastern romance, “Lallah Rookh,” was written in a cottage blocked up with snow, with an English winter roaring round it. Burns dreamed one of his lyrics, and wrote it down just as it came to him in his sleep. Tartini’s “Devil’s Sonata” was another inspiration from Morpheus; and so also was Coleridge’s “Tubla Khan.”

Such were the extraordinary circumstances attending the composition of works which have amused and instructed thousands of people; such have been some of the methods, and such some of the habits of authors. Various and unintelligible often are the forms in which human genius will reveal itself; but quite as various, and perhaps quite as unintelligible, at first sight, are the ways in which it has surmounted the obstacles which opposed it, asserted its claims, and effected its development.

## THE FUTURE OF MY BOYS.



A GREAT writer has said that “a child should be treated as a live tree, and helped to grow, not as dry dead timber, which is to be carved into this or that shape, and to have certain mouldings grooved upon it.” This is true enough, but the difficulty for parents is to find out what is the

kind of tree. It is said that when Dr. Watts was a child he was exceedingly fond of verse-making. His father, a stern and rather strait-laced schoolmaster, was very much annoyed at this, and did all in his power to keep the boy from indulging his taste. According to the well-known story, on one occasion he threatened

to flog him severely the next time he found him making rhymes, upon which little Isaac fell upon his knees exclaiming—

“Oh, father! do some pity take,  
And I will no more verses make.”

Yet the son followed his bent, and has come to be regarded now as one of the first of English hymn-writers.

Numberless instances might be given of the same sort of thing—fathers and mothers failing utterly to discover their children’s peculiar bent.

Kepler, the astronomer, was brought up as a waiter in a German public-house; Shakespeare is supposed to have been a wool-comber, or a scrivener’s clerk; Ben Jonson was a mason, and worked at the building of Lincoln’s Inn; Lord Clive, one of the greatest warriors and statesmen that England can boast, was a clerk; Inigo Jones, the architect, was a carpenter; Turner, the greatest of English landscape painters, was a barber; Hugh Miller, the geologist, was a

bricklayer; Andrew Johnson, the late President of the United States, was a tailor; Captain Cook, the celebrated navigator, was apprenticed to a haberdasher; Bewick, the father of wood-engraving, was a coal-miner; Sir William Herschel, the astronomer, was educated especially for a musician; Michael Faraday, the philosopher, was apprenticed to a bookbinder; Jeremy Taylor, the poetical divine, was a barber, as was also Richard Arkwright, the inventor of the spinning-jenny; and Cowper, the poet, was brought up to the law, but hated the profession with a perfect hatred, and never, when he could help it, opened a book that bore upon it.

In reading these records, one cannot but wonder how much richer the world would have been if these men had found their vocation earlier. Of course each one in the cases cited possessed more or less of that genius which is inborn and cannot be created; but who shall say how much greater their influence would have been, had their start in life been in a more congenial sphere? The lesson for us should be to study the inclinations and tastes of our children, so that if we cannot make them men of genius, we can at any rate put them in a position where their talents will be best fostered and developed. But for this we shall require both sympathy and insight—sympathy to encourage the exhibition of the powers, and insight to “discern the signs,” and form an idea of their significance.

It is just this kind of insight that we parents need with regard to our children. Look at the boys. We know what is in them at present. There is little doubt what faculties they possess now. They have a very decided one for mischief. They can kick off the heels of their boots, and wear holes in the knees of their trousers, until the mother (and especially the mother who is not sure where the money is to be found for a new pair) scarcely knows what to do. They are noisy and fond of play, perhaps like a good many of their elders preferring it to work. Yet they are the men of the future. They have their work to do. And a large number of them have already given indications of the kind of stuff of which they are made.

I expect these same mothers know as much about this as any one. They have noticed the special characteristics of each, and like one of old they have “kept them in their hearts.” The danger with them is not that they will disregard these signs, but that they will rank them too highly, regard them as too full of promise, and fall into the old-fashioned error of looking on their geese as swans. To them Tommy possesses exactly the judicial qualities which fit him for a seat on the woolsack; and Fred has such a genius for arithmetic, he was born to be Chancellor of the Exchequer; while Jacky, in his frock-coat and short trousers, will be a worthy successor to Professor Huxley, or whoever else is to be regarded as the greatest scientific man of the day.

It is, of course, pretty certain that Fred will never be Chancellor of the Exchequer; but if he has a taste and a liking for arithmetic he possesses a most

valuable qualification, one which, if cultivated, will give him method and accuracy in business, and will teach him the proportions and relations of one thing to another. Was it not Mr. John Bright who said, “If a boy understand arithmetic thoroughly he is a made man?” All industrial activities are guided by the rules of number, and Fred possesses a talent which will go a long way towards making him a successful commercial man.

Children are by no means alike in these likes and dislikes. The misanthropical old bachelor tells us all babies are alike, and that the best plan of expressing admiration for one of them is to say, “What a baby!” They are no more alike than a Gloire de Dijon rose is like a Reynolds Hole. Nature never makes two things in the same mould. The mother would choose out her own among all the babies in the world. And neither are children alike. They all possess their own individuality, which needs to be studied and directed.

This is found out easily enough by watching the children, and noticing their ways when they do not know that they are observed. Take any number of children anywhere. Give them a box of bricks or cubes to play with. All will be delighted, but it is probable that only one will have an idea what to do with them. After a time it will be found that in playing with them this one has become the presiding genius. He directs affairs, plans the railways, makes the bridges, fashions the tunnels, and builds the houses. The others can imitate him, but they cannot originate the ideas as he can. If left to themselves they do nothing but put one brick on another in an aimless sort of way. Surely our little builder possesses powers which if developed would make an engineer, or an architect, or a surveyor.

Now give the same children a box of paints and some brushes. Our engineering friend is nowhere here; he only makes a daub, and spoils his clothes. That little boy in the corner, who could only do what his brother told him as far as the bricks were concerned, takes the lead now. He is interested directly, and if you will but give him a few hints he will take them in at once, and soon make quite a pretty picture. He possesses artistic power.

Now take the children and read to them a pathetic poetical story. If you look up after a time you will see one of them with his eyes full of tears. Perhaps presently he will beg you to stop reading; he cannot bear it. The others look at him wondering; they cannot see what there is to cry about. Ah! that boy is more highly gifted than any. He possesses an affectionate heart, and the divine gift of imagination. To him it will be given, to use the words of the German poet, “to see a burning flame in every bush, while others sit round and eat blackberries.” He will need the most judicious training of any, or his sensitive feelings will soon be blunted and hardened past redemption.

It is so with everything else. One child has an aptitude for one thing, and another for another. Every one has some faculty, which, if rightly directed, will help him to do good, useful work in the world.

It is no use grumbling because one is not like the others. Say that my boy does not get on at school as well as yours. Never mind, he can do something else. Perhaps books are not his particular line; but I do not doubt he has a line of his own, and if I can only find out what it is, and develop and direct it, I do not fear but that he will make his way and act his part. As Goethe says, "If we do our duty to our own minds, we shall soon come to do it to the world."

One thing we must make up our minds to, and that is that not all the boys are possessed of genius. All may, however, be possessed of diligence and perseverance, and with these attributes great results may be attained even with ordinary talents. Some distinguished men have doubted whether genius is anything but common sense intensified. Buffon said, "Genius is patience." John Foster said it was the power of lighting one's own fire. Sir Joshua Reynolds believed that all men, if they would, might be painters and sculptors. John Locke thought that all men have an equal aptitude for genius. Newton said that he had worked out his discoveries by "always thinking unto them." We, perhaps, cannot subscribe to this, for we know that diligence and perseverance alone would never have produced a Shakespeare, a Newton, a Bacon, or a Michael Angelo; but, at any rate, we will acknowledge that the men who have influenced the world most have been men of intense perseverance and indomitable energy in their own particular line.

What we must set ourselves therefore determinedly to do is to find out what is the child's special bent, and his special bent is that which he takes the most pleasure in. We all do best that which we delight in most. It is no use saying all children like play. Play is a word of wide signification. What kind of play? In this the parent may find the indications of what the child's future career should be.

I think fathers are sometimes rather hard upon their sons in this way. They leave the management of the children to the mother for many a year, and expect her to do the moralising and doctoring; and as long as the boys behave in a gentlemanly way, look healthy, and are not reported badly at school or home, their fathers do not observe them very much. Then when the important moment arrives when the decision

is to be made "what is the boy to be?" they know nothing about him, but allow the important matter to be decided by the boy's "inclination," an inclination which is probably the result either of a mere fancy or the chance speech of some acquaintance.

This is the reason why so many parents are disappointed in their children. It is almost too much to expect that any boy will possess sufficient decision of character, and knowledge of the world and of his own likings, to make the important choice for himself. If he is left to do it, it is more than probable that in a short time he will find he has "changed his mind" and acquired a thorough distaste for his business, and will either pursue it without interest, or, leaving it for something else, will find that one or two of the most valuable years of his life have been spent in an aimless endeavour. Far better would it be if the father would *direct* his son in his choice, and let that direction be determined by his knowledge of the boy's character and ability, rather than by his inclination.

One thing, which is most important, is too often forgotten in choosing a business, and that is the *health* of the boy. Many a young fellow has lost his life through being put to a business for which he was constitutionally unfit. Naturally delicate, he has been taken from home, where he had regular meals and a daily walk to and from school, and is kept all day chained to a desk in a gloomy, badly-ventilated office, or sent to learn his handicraft where he is compelled to work for long hours in a damp, dirty, impure atmosphere, with perhaps the additional disadvantage of poor food and late hours. Is it to be wondered at that, as the result of it all, he "goes off in a consumption?" Many a young man who has thus been condemned to an early death, might have lived a long and useful life if his natural or inherited delicacy had been considered when his future calling was determined. There are plenty of businesses which may be followed without any fear of injury to the health; but there are others which, if carelessly entered upon, are seriously riskful if not even destructive to life. These ought not to be followed by any individuals who cannot boast that they have truly "iron constitutions." PHILLIS BROWNE.

## LITTLE THINGS.

SOME little things we may not do  
Will haunt the longing heart,  
Sweet simple things might cause unrest,  
Though far from blame apart.

Last night a hand took mine I fain  
Had held in brief caress,  
But stranger doubts might have misread  
The touch of tenderness.

Last night I heard a song was wont  
To thrill me when a child;

Fain had I wept, but alien eyes  
Had looked askance and smiled.

Last night a flower was dropped—ah, me!  
My inmost soul was fain  
Instant to gather up the prize,  
When prudence said, "Refrain!"

But when the gala lights were out,  
Love played his own true part;  
I searched the darkened room, and now  
The flower lies next my heart.

GERTRUDE.